

Classroom Activity

Soaring Fire

Essential Question	How can music inspire visual forms of artistic expression?
Grades	K–5
Time	One-two class periods
Art Concepts	Figurative art, abstract art, line, rhythm, composition
Materials	Pencils, erasers, colored pencils, markers, watercolors, brushes of various sizes, drawing paper, watercolor paper
Talking About Art	<p><i>The Firebird</i> is a famous ballet based on a Russian folk tale about an evil sorcerer named Koschei who has thirteen princesses under his spell. When a prince wanders into Koschei’s garden one day, he meets the Firebird, a magical bird with fiery, glittering plumage. She gives him one of her feathers so that he can call on her if he ever needs help. Later, the prince falls in love with one of the princesses being held captive by Koschei and vows to set her and her companions free. In the end, the prince defeats Koschei with the help of the Firebird and frees the princesses.</p> <p>When Chagall was asked to design the costumes and scenery for <i>The Firebird</i>, he spent a lot of time listening to the music that Igor Stravinsky composed for the ballet to get ideas for his designs. We are going to do the same by first listening to the part from Stravinsky’s music for <i>The Firebird</i> when the Firebird herself appears onstage and dances (approximately the fourth to the ninth minute). Then, we will create our own images of the Firebird character. While you listen to the music, close your eyes and imagine what might be happening on the stage. What is the Firebird doing? How is she dancing? What does she look like? What colors are present in the scene? Share your impressions with a partner.</p>
Making Art	<p>Listen to the music again. This time, create an expressive, interpretive drawing of the Firebird while you listen. First, use only pencil on drawing paper to create the bird form. Listen to the rhythms of the music, maybe even follow one instrument, while you create the lines of your bird form. It is okay if your bird looks abstract. When you are satisfied with your bird form, recreate it on watercolor paper using a combination of watercolors, markers and color pencils. Think about the composition before you begin—where will you place the bird on the paper? What colors will you use? After you have completed your artwork, be sure to give it an imaginative title.</p>
Reflection	<p>Display the completed artworks around the classroom. Walk around the room and view all of them and then discuss the following together as a class. How did the music inspire each person’s artwork? What kinds of lines did each person use? Which artworks are more abstract and which are more figurative?</p>

Reflection
(cont.)

You can also compare your artworks with Polish-American artist Theodore Roszak's drawings *Firebird Study* (1949) and *Bird Forms* (1954), which are also inspired by Stravinsky's music. Take a moment to look at *Firebird Study* and *Bird Forms* (they can be viewed online at collections.lacma.org). What words would you use to describe the drawings? What kinds of lines does Roszak use? Where did he place the bird(s) on the paper? What kind of personality do you think his Firebird has? Do you think Roszak's Firebird is moving or still? What else do you notice? Discuss the similarities and differences between his artworks and yours.

Curriculum Connections

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.K-5

K-2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners. 3-5.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.READING.K-5

K.7 With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts). 1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events. 3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting). 4.9 Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures. 5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

CCSS.VAPA.K-3

K.1.2 Identify and describe basic elements in music (e.g., high/low, fast/slow, loud/soft, beat). K.4 Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of music and the performance of musicians according to the elements of music, aesthetic qualities, and human responses. K-2.1.3 Identify the elements of art objects in nature, the environment, and works of art, emphasizing line, color, shape/form, texture, and space.

Classroom Activity

Melodies and Monster Masks

Essential Question	How can music and costumes help tell a story onstage?
Grades	3–6
Time	Two class periods
Art Concepts	Two dimensional, three dimensional, mask, relief, additive, scoring, pleating, curling, kinetic, contrast, scale
Materials	Large paper supermarket shopping bags, magazines or wrapping paper, colored construction paper, corrugated paper, tape, scissors, markers, tacky glue or white glue, staplers
Talking About Art	<p>The following exploration can be adjusted depending on developmental level:</p> <p>Talk briefly about ballets. What is a ballet? Have you ever seen a ballet? What are the differences between ballets and plays? Ballets are different from plays because they don't have any dialogue (conversations between the characters or singing)—the story is told completely through the instrumental music, dancing, backdrops, costumes, and lighting.</p> <p>Then, spend a few minutes listening quietly to Igor Stravinsky's "Infernal Dance" from the ballet <i>The Firebird</i>. Discuss what you think could be happening onstage during this part of the story. Who is involved in the action? Are they humans or fantastical creatures, or both? What colors do you envision?</p> <p>Next, explore the following summary of the music and the larger narrative of the ballet:</p> <p>The piece of music you just heard is called the "Infernal Dance," from the ballet <i>The Firebird</i> by Igor Stravinsky. <i>The Firebird</i> tells the story of Prince Ivan Tsarevich, who meets the Firebird, a magical bird with fiery, glittering plumage, while he is hunting in the forest one day. The Firebird gives him one of her feathers before they separate so that he can call on her if he ever needs help. Then, Prince Ivan strays into the realm of the evil sorcerer Koschei and learns that he is holding thirteen princesses captive. Prince Ivan falls in love with one of the princesses and enters Koschei's palace to free her and her companions. At this moment, Koschei commands a group of monsters (his palace guards) to attack Ivan. The "Infernal Dance" is performed during the struggle between Ivan and the monsters. Eventually, Ivan is able to defeat the monsters with the help of the Firebird, who forces Koschei and his guards to dance until they fall asleep.</p> <p>How does your new knowledge about the ballet's story change your original interpretations of the music? Explore the ways that the music helps express the action during this particular moment in the story. What do you think the monsters look like?</p>

Talking about Art (cont.)

Next, view images of Chagall's costume design and costume for the Blue-and-Yellow Monster. Chagall designed all of the costumes for the ballet while listening to the music and thinking about the story. Do you think his costume design is a good visual expression of the "Infernal Dance"? Did you imagine the monsters similarly or differently? How can colors, body positions, and other details help visualize the ballet's story as well as the music?

Making Art

Now we are going to create monster masks inspired by the different elements of *The Firebird* we have been exploring: the music, the story, and the costumes. We will be using paper shopping bags and special paper folding techniques.

What are the qualities that make a monster scary or impressive? Make a list on the board as a class and then create a few sketches or word webs to organize your ideas for your monster mask.

Your teacher will demonstrate a few paper folding techniques—fringe, pleating, curling, for example (see sample board below). Discuss what you could DO with these techniques in a mask. For example, fringe could be used for hair, pleats could be used to create a furrowed brow, etc. Then, practice three different paper folding techniques with scissors and colored paper. You can use what you make on your mask if you like.

Using all the materials you have available, create your own paper bag mask inspired by *The Firebird*. You can cut shapes out and add them (additive) or make holes (subtractive) in the bag. You can also use glue or tape to add layers of colored paper for texture or you can attach 3D shapes to create dimension or relief.

Teachers, have examples of all of the above on display!

Reflection

Share your mask with a partner and discuss your creative process. Which elements of *The Firebird* story, music, and costumes did you find most inspiring? What ideas or qualities does your mask express? How do your classmates' masks relate to *The Firebird*? What was the most challenging part? How do you think a different piece of music or a different story might affect the way people view your monster?

The Firebird doesn't need to be the focus! The lesson plan can be adjusted according to the time period and culture under study. If students are studying the Harlem Renaissance, they can work with jazz music and costumes, for example.

Curriculum Connections

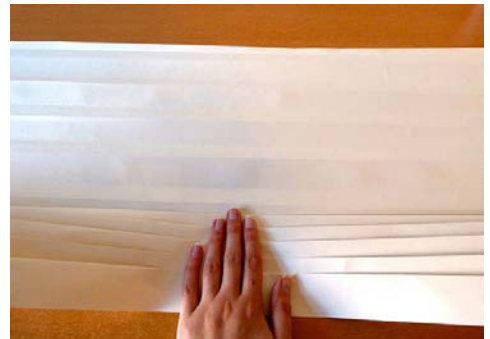
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3-6.7

3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting). 4.7 Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text. 5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem). 6.7 Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

Curriculum Connections
(cont.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-6.2
3.2-5.2 Determine the main ideas and supporting details/paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. 5.5-6.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes. 6.2 Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

Examples



Classroom Activity

The Grand Hat Jubilee!

Essential Question	How are hats and other headpieces used in celebrations? How can a hat express a mood or idea?
Grades	3–8
Time	One-two class periods
Art Concepts	Rhythm, movement, shape, wavy, curvy, texture, linear, geometric, organic, abstraction, drama, performance, fantasy, costume, surreal
Materials	Brightly colored poster paper and construction paper, scissors, Elmer's glue, glue sticks, tissue paper, feathers, pipe cleaners, ribbons, glue gun, staplers, invisible or transparent tape, markers, wire (optional)
Talking About Art	<p>After fleeing Nazi-occupied France with his family during World War II, Chagall lived in New York, where he was commissioned to create the scenery and design the costumes for <i>Aleko</i>, a ballet about a tale of passionate love, betrayal, and tragedy based on an 1824 poem by Russian author Alexander Pushkin.</p> <p>View and discuss Marc Chagall's <i>Clown Playing the Violin</i> (1941–1942) and <i>Study for Backdrop for Aleko: The Carnival (Scene II)</i> (1942). Look closely at both artworks and consider their formal elements as well as their expressive content. How would you describe Chagall's style? What kinds of lines and colors did he use? Why do you think he chose the colors he did? What kinds of feelings do they evoke for you? In what ways does color affect mood? Who do you think the characters are? What type of setting are they in? What do you think they are doing? What makes you say that? Are any of the characters wearing hats? What do their hats say about them?</p> <p>Consider the following questions and write your answers on a sheet of paper: Have you ever been to a carnival, festival, or other large celebration? What kind of things can you see and do there? How would you describe the mood? Do people wear hats? Do you think that carnivals and other celebrations in the past were different than they are today? Consider differences in costume, setting, music, activities, and types of performers. Share your answers with a partner. Then, spend a few minutes brainstorming about the sort of headpiece you would like to make. Draw a sketch on your paper or write down descriptive words and attributes.</p>
Making Art	<p>Using <i>Clown Playing the Violin</i> and <i>Study for Backdrop for Aleko: The Carnival (Scene II)</i> as inspiration, create a festive headpiece out of paper and other materials that communicates a specific mood (happy, sad, joyful, powerful, etc.).</p> <p>First, cut a head band from a sheet of poster paper, then measure the band around your head and ask a partner to make a pencil mark where the ends should meet. Trim off any excess paper and staple, tape, or glue the ends together.</p>

Making Art
(cont.)

Using the materials available, decorate your headband, attaching the materials with staples, tape, or glue. Add any final details to your headpiece using markers, crayons, or colored pencils.

Reflection

Facilitate an in-class gallery or catwalk and reflect on the art-making experience in oral form. How would you describe your head piece? What was the process of creating it like? What mood does your hat express? How? What parts of this activity did you like best? Did you learn anything about yourself as you worked on your headpiece?

In groups of three or four, create a collaborative story that describes your hats, the type of event where they would be used, and who would wear them. Make sure everyone in the group participates in the writing process. Then, read the story aloud to your group and make any final edits. Share the story with the class. Compare the writing process with the art-making experience. What are the similarities and differences?

Curriculum Connections

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WRITING.3-8.3

3-5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
6-8.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA.LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.3-5.4

3-5.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

CCSS.VAPA.3-4.1.5

Identify and describe elements of art in works of art, emphasizing line, color, shape/form, texture, space, and value. 3.3.3 Distinguish and describe representational, abstract, and nonrepresentational works of art. 3.5.2 Write a poem or story inspired by their own works of art. 4.4.3 Develop and use specific criteria as individuals and in groups to assess works of art.

Examples



Classroom Activity

It's All in the Family

Essential Question It's All in the Family

Grades K–3

Time One class period

Art Concepts Color, portrait, symbols, foreground, background, bookmaking

Materials 8 ½ × 11 inch cardstock (assorted colors), lined paper, printer paper, pencils, colored pencils, staplers

Talking About Art Visual artists often explore their personal identities, cultural backgrounds, and important family traditions in their practice. Marc Chagall's painting, *Violinist on a Bench*, sheds light on the artist's Jewish background and his love of music. Chagall grew up surrounded by family and community members who often played music or sang songs to express themselves and celebrate their religious faith.

The subject of *Violinist on a Bench* is a klezmer violinist, a popular figure in Ashkenazi Jewish culture. Klezmer violinists are respected members of their communities who play traditional songs during Jewish ceremonies and festivals.

View and discuss the painting together. What do you see? What kinds of lines, shapes, and colors did Chagall use? What do you think the figure in the painting is doing? What else can you tell about him?

Making Art Begin by thinking about a person in your family or community who is important to you. What makes them the person they are? Make a list of their personal qualities—do they love to read, sing, cook, garden, build things, or tell stories? What objects or colors could you use to represent them?

To make a book, fold a sheet of colored cardstock in half widthwise. Then fold three or more sheets of paper in half, put them inside the cardstock cover and staple it together along the fold. Open your book and draw a picture of the person you chose. Add to your picture by writing down descriptive words or drawing objects and symbols that represent this person.

You can also decorate the cover of your book, use the other pages to add more special people in your life, paste in photographs, or invite family to add to the book in their own words. Older students can write a story or poem about the person in their book.

Reflection How has this person influenced the traditions in your family and/or community? How have they influenced you? Are some of the people that you and your classmates chose similar or do they like to do similar things?

Curriculum Connections

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.K-3

K-2.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. K-2.5 Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings. K-3.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners. K-3.3 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue. K-2.5 Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WRITING.K-3

K-2.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. 3.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.READING.K-3

K-1.3 Identify and describe characters, settings, and major events in a story. 2-3.2 Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

Classroom Activity

Setting the Scene

Essential Question	How can you create a visual setting for a story? In what ways can artists collaborate to bring a story to life?
Grades	6–12
Time	One-two class periods
Art Concepts	Setting, composition, scale, color, proportion
Materials	Large watercolor paper, solid and/or liquid watercolors, brushes, water bowls, napkins, pencils, watercolor pencils or regular colored pencils
Talking About Art	<p>Take a careful look at Marc Chagall's <i>Study for Backdrop for Aleko: A Wheatfield on a Summer's Afternoon, Scene III</i>. What do you notice? What is the mood created by the warm colors? How did the artist use lines to show details?</p> <p>Chagall made this backdrop study for scene three of the ballet <i>Aleko</i>, which is based on a poem by famed Russian author Alexander Pushkin. Although it appears simple at first, this landscape is a complex element that connected scene three's narrative, music, and costumes. Chagall's use of bright yellow played on the characters' heightened emotional states, the scene being a confrontation between the main characters. Our eye is drawn to the detail of the small blue boat, which contrasts with the large orange-red suns at the top of the picture. Consider the question: why do artists make studies (or sketches) before committing to a final piece?</p> <p>This study was later transformed into a backdrop proportional to the stage. Imagine dancers moving in front of it. How do you think they engaged with the scenery? Chagall worked very closely with the Russian choreographer Léonide Massine to develop the scenery and costumes for <i>Aleko</i>. This project was personal for Chagall because the story evoked themes of exile, nomadism, Russian literature, and Eastern European folk music, all of which he either experienced or explored in his artistic practice.</p> <p>Unlike working on a painting alone in the studio, designing for the theater involves a lot of collaboration (or working together) with other artists, such as dancers, musicians, playwrights, directors, choreographers, and actors. The process involves making compromises and reworking ideas until the whole thing comes together in the best possible way.</p> <p>What are some things that you have had to collaborate on with peers? What was the experience like for you?</p>
Making Art	Work with a partner to select a scene from a work of fiction (play, novel, or story) that you like, or one that is studied in class. Imagine this scene being performed onstage. What would the setting look like? How would the characters engage with the setting? How much (or little) detail would be shown?

Making Art (cont.)

Next, make two or three sketches (on your own) of possible backdrops for the scene you selected. When creating the **compositions**, think about the **scale**, or size, of the backdrop and the images on it in comparison to the characters onstage. Is it a landscape, a cityscape, a close-up of one detail, etc.? Consider how **color** will create a tone or mood for the scene. Does the scene take place in daytime or night? Is it happy (bright colors) or somber (dull/dark colors)?

Once you complete your sketches, compare them with your partner's sketches. Have a conversation about what is necessary to include in the final backdrop, what can be discarded, etc. Then, come up with a plan (maybe another sketch!) for yours and your partner's final backdrop, which will be a large watercolor painting. Be sure to make the **proportions** of your backdrop's different elements bigger to fit the larger size of the paper.

After you and your partner lightly sketch in the final backdrop, experiment with the paints on a scrap piece of paper first. Practice mixing the paint to create new colors. If you add more water, the color becomes more transparent while less water and more paint will create more saturated, bright colors. Play with overlapping transparent washes with vibrant colors and using different line thicknesses to create texture. Use larger brushes to paint big areas and small brushes for fine details.

Reflection

Hang up all of the completed artworks around the room and have a gallery walk. Then, each pair of partners can write a short report together or share their answers to the following questions verbally with the class:

- How does your backdrop help show the mood of the scene?
- How did you use color and line?
- How did you play with scale?
- How do you imagine the characters interacting with the scenery you designed?
- How did you collaborate with your partner to create the final backdrop?
- What skills do you think artists need to have to collaborate (work together) with directors, playwrights, choreographers, and/or musicians to bring a story to life?

Curriculum Connections

Teachers can do this activity in connection to a play or novel read in class. Students can also collaborate with one another by writing their own scene or short story and having a partner or another group of students design the backdrop.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

Curriculum Connections
(cont.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.7

Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

VA:Cr1.1.6a

Combine concepts collaboratively to generate innovative ideas for creating art.

VA:Cr1.2.7a

Develop criteria to guide making a work of art or design to meet an identified goal.

VA:Cr2.1.8a

Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of artmaking or designing