

November/December Artist: Marc Chagall

Slide 1: Photo of Marc Chagall

Marc Chagall was born in Russia in 1887. He was the oldest of nine children. Although his family was very poor he loved growing up in this small, Jewish community which would influence his art his whole life. His father was a herring merchant and his mother ran a small grocery store. His artistic skills revealed themselves in his youth. His ability was noticed by a local art teacher.

Slide 2: I and the Village (1911)

This is one of his most famous paintings. Chagall is known for this dream like quality in his paintings. He often used images from his childhood spent in Russia. He studied art at a small school in his hometown and then later traveled to St. Petersburg where he continued his schooling.

Slide 3: Paris Through the Window (1913)

In 1910 he moved to Paris. It was the center of the art world. Chagall was excited to be among so many artists, but missed his native land. In this work the man is looking out at the city of Paris but his head is also looking back at his homeland.

Slide 4: The Fiddler (1913)

Music was a large part of Chagall's Jewish upbringing. The village shown in the painting is similar to one he grew up in. The famous musical, Fiddler on the Roof, got it's name from this painting.

Slide 5: The Birthday (1915)

This was painted a few weeks before Chagall married his sweetheart, Bella. He wanted to capture the feeling a love and hope for their future. He often painted people floating in the air because he thought that showed happiness.

Slide 6: Over the Town (1918)

Chagall often painted himself and Bella flying over various cities, like this one of his hometown. He wanted to show that the love they shared was stronger than gravity itself.

Slide 7: Bride and Groom of the Eiffel Tower (1939)

Love is a constant theme in his work. He said;
"Only love interests me, and I am only in contact with things that revolve around love."

After he married, he and his wife settled in Paris. They had a daughter, named Ida, who completed their happy family. Chagall often included both realistic and fantastical elements in his work. What part is realistic and what is some of the fantasy?

Slide 8: Bonjour Paris (1939)

The Eiffel Tower is landmark in the city of Paris where Chagall lived for many years. Here he has brought the Tower to life as the night fades and the day starts. What parts of this painting tells us it's morning?

Slide 9: Cow with Parasol (1946)

During WWII Chagall's daughter, Ida, convinced him it would be safer to leave France and travel to America. She accompanied her parents on the voyage and protected his paintings. It was a sad time, in his usual happy life. His wife Bella died while they were living in the US and he painted very little. Once the war was over Chagall decided to start making art that would make people smile. Here is an example of picture that is fanciful and silly.

Slide 10: La Mariee (1950)

Chagall painted many wedding themed artwork. Here the woman is wearing red, which makes her stand out, but has flowers and a white veil suggesting she is a bride. Other animals and objects float around her in typical Chagall style.

Slide 11: Circus Horse (1964)

This painting is reminiscent of the early Russian circus which Chagall might have seen. The bright, vivid colors and energetic atmosphere gives the viewer the feeling they are at the circus, watching all these crazy acts.

Slide 12: Chichester Cathedral (1962)

Although Chagall is mainly known for his paintings, this versatile artist created art in many other mediums such as book illustrations, stage sets, ceramic, tapestries and stained glass. He started working with stained glass while in his 70's.

Slide 13: Four Seasons (1972)

This is a series of mosaics designed by Chagall to celebrate the arrival of each season; spring, summer, winter and fall. It's located in the Chase Tower Plaza in downtown Chicago. He created the picture in France and the picture was enlarged and then transferred to large panels where the mosaic pieces were placed. Many people worked together to bring Chagall's vision to life.

Slide 14: America Windows (1977)

While working on The Four Seasons he was inspired by the commitment to public art that he offered to make these windows for the Art Institute of Chicago. They were used to commemorate the 200th birthday of the United States.

Slide 15: Marc Chagall with his Four Seasons mosaic

Marc Chagall is associated with several major artistic styles but wanted to be known as an individual. His dreamlike pictures and bright colors make him stand out. He continued to create art until his death in 1985. He was 97. He once said:

"If I create from the heart, nearly everything works; if from the head, almost nothing."

Art Project Ideas

Artsy Craftsy Mom website has a variety of ideas. Just search for Marc Chagall. Three that would be easy are called: Chagall Inspired Art, Oil Pastel Houses and Stained Glass Windows.

Children's book Papa Chagall Tell Us a Story by Laurence Anholt is a fun story that can be read to younger grades, like Kinder and 1st, instead of the slide narration.