

## The Littlest Matryoshka: Russian Art & Reading

A Virtual Lesson for K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade

### Introduction

This lesson plan was designed for Indiana young learner (kindergarten-second grade) classrooms and homes as part of an initiative to create learning materials with Russian and East European content during the COVID-19 crisis of 2020. The goals of the lesson are to introduce students to *matryoshka* or nesting dolls, encourage students to make predictions, and familiarize them with the parts of a book. This lesson addresses Indiana Academic Standards in both English language arts and visual art. This lesson offers opportunities to extend and adapt the lesson, giving educators flexibility in which activities they wish to employ in the classroom. Educators may adopt the activities for use in a lesson plan of their own or they may use the lesson plan in full.

Educators may also contact Indiana University's Russian and East European Institute (REEI) to arrange for faculty, advanced graduate students, or international students to give a presentation on folk art in Russia and Eastern Europe, popular matryoshka designs, or another related topic. Please contact Mark Trotter for further information about the Russian and East European Institute or any of its outreach programs at [martrott@indiana.edu](mailto:martrott@indiana.edu).

### Compelling Questions:

- What are the parts of a book?
- What is a matryoshka? What does it look like?
- How can you guess what will happen next in a story?
- What is most important when you retell a story?
- Why are Russian nesting dolls a symbol of Russia even though they are made all over the world?
- What is a symbol of the United States?

### Standards Connections:

#### English Language Arts

##### *Reading: Literature*

K.RL.1 Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

K.RL.2.1 With support, ask and answer questions about main topics and key details in a text heard or read.

K.RL.2.2 With support, retell familiar stories, poems, and nursery rhymes, including key details.

K.RL.2.4 Make predictions about what will happen in a story.

K.RL.3.2 With support, define the role of the author and illustrator of a story in telling the story.

1.RL.2.1 Ask and answer questions about main idea and key details in a text.

1.RL.2.2 Retell stories, fables, and fairy tales in sequence, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

1.RL.2.4 Make and confirm predictions about what will happen next in a story.

2.RL.2.1 Ask and answer questions (e.g., who was the story about; why did an event happen; where did the story happen) to demonstrate understanding of main idea and key details in a text.

2.RL.2.2 Recount the beginning, middle, and ending of stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

2.RL.2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and how characters affect the plot.

2.RL.2.4 Make predictions about the content of text using prior knowledge of text features, explaining whether they were confirmed or not confirmed and why.

##### *Speaking and Listening*

K.SL.3.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

1.SL.3.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

1.SL.4.2 Add drawings or other visual displays, such as pictures and objects, when sharing information to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

2.SL.3.1 Determine the purpose for listening (e.g., to obtain information, to enjoy humor) and paraphrase or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

2.SL.3.2 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says to clarify comprehension, gather information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

2.SL.4.2 Create simple presentations that maintain a clear focus, using various media when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

#### Visual Arts

### *Creating*

Kindergarten VA:Cr1.2.Ka Engage collaboratively and/or individually in creative artmaking in response to an artistic problem.

1st VA:Cr1.2.1a Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.

2nd VA:Cr1.2.2a Make art or design with various materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.

Kindergarten VA:Cr2.2.Ka Begin to identify safe and non-toxic art materials, tools, and equipment.

1st VA:Cr2.2.1a Demonstrate safe and proper procedures for using materials, tools, and equipment while making art.

2nd VA:Cr2.2.2a Demonstrate safe procedures for using and cleaning art tools, equipment, and studio spaces.

Kindergarten VA:Cr3.1.Ka Explain the process of making art while creating.

### *Responding*

Kindergarten VA:Re.7.2.Ka Describe what an image represents.

1st VA:Re.7.2.1a Compare images that represent the same subject.

2nd VA:Re.7.2.2a Categorize images based on expressive properties.

Kindergarten VA:Re8.1.Ka Interpret art by identifying subject matter and describing relevant details.

1st VA:Re8.1.1a Interpret art by categorizing subject matter and identifying the characteristics of form.

2nd VA:Re8.1.2a Interpret art by identifying the mood suggested by a work of art and describing relevant subject matter and characteristics of form.

### *Connecting*

Kindergarten VA:Cn11.1.Ka Identify a purpose of an artwork.

1st VA:Cn11.1.1a Understand that people from different places and times have made art for a variety of reasons.

2nd VA:Cn11.1.2a Compare and contrast cultural uses of artwork from different times and places.

### **Lesson Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Make predictions about what will happen in a story
- Identify various parts of a book (spine, front cover, etc.)
- Retell a story using their own memory and created images
- Recognize Russian nesting dolls (matryoshka)
- Describe how characters in the story respond to major events in the story
- Compare feelings they have experienced with feelings experienced by characters in the story

### **Prerequisite Knowledge:**

No prerequisite knowledge is needed for this lesson.

### **Materials & Setup**

For this lesson plan, the educator should be able to show the video "[Russian Art & Reading "The Littlest Matryoshka."](#)" The ability to stop the video periodically so that the educator can ask questions will be necessary. Other materials include a globe or ability to show a world map; the ability to show pictures of a matryoshka via Google image search or through printed pictures; a book; crayons, colored pencils, or other coloring utensil; and paper.

### **Learning Plan**

1. Start the lesson by showing the students pictures of matryoshka. These images can be printed or displayed on a screen. Ask the student what they are seeing. What colors are painted on the matryoshka? What images are painted? Tell the student that these are matryoshka or Russian nesting dolls. They are a symbol of Russia. Show students their location on a world map or globe. Explain to them their location, first very specifically, and then more and more broadly, explaining the location of their city, state, country, and continent. Then show them Russia. Ask them what they can tell about Russian by its location on the map.
2. Tell students that they will be watching a video where a book will be read to them. Ask them what they think the book will be about. When they are ready, begin the video (<https://youtu.be/inGFCYNxa3A>)
3. At the 3:20 mark of the video, pause. Take the book that you have for this lesson and ask students to tell you the different parts of the book. Does your book have a book jacket? Does your book have a dedication page? Why do books have spines? Who is the author of your book? What is an illustrator? If students have a difficult time telling you about the different parts of the book, try asking the same questions about another book more familiar to the students. When the students can recognize and understand the various parts, push play.
4. At the 5:30 mark, the reader asks if students can keep their eyes wide open. If you like, pause the video and see who among you can make the biggest eyes. This can give students a short break and help them reengage in the video. Before you push play again, ask the students why they think the sisters are going to America. What do they think they will do there? Why does the student think that? Push play when ready.

5. Pause the video at 7:03. Ask the students how they think Nina feels to be outside the shop in the snow. What about her sisters? What do they think will happen next?
6. At 9:28, the reader asks what the students think Nina is doing at that moment. If necessary, pause the video to hear students' answers.
7. Pause the video at 11:44. Ask the students how they think Nina is feeling. Have the students ever been far away from people they love before? How did they feel? Ask the students what they think will happen next. Why do they think that?
8. Pause the video at 13:31. Ask the students how they think all of the sisters feel. How have the students felt when they were together again with people they love? Who do they think was more excited, the dolls or Jessie?
9. When the video has ended, ask the students if they liked the story. Why or why not? Did they have a favorite part?
10. Ask the students to describe what a matryoshka looks like. If need be, you can go back through the video when Nikolai was making the dolls or the author's note, or you can go back to the images that began the lesson. Ask students why they think nesting dolls from Russia are the best known. If matryoshkas are a symbol of Russia, what would they say is a symbol of their country, the United States? Why do they think these images represent countries?
11. Announce to the students that they will be asked to retell "The Littlest Matryoshka" using pictures. Invite them to draw a scene or scenes from the book to help them in their retelling. As they draw, ask them why they are drawing specific figures or using certain colors. Why are those choices important to the story? Students can spend as much or as little time drawing and coloring as they like.
12. When their pictures are ready, invite students to retell "The Littlest Matryoshka." Be sure to guide them when events are out of order or when they forget important moments to the story.
13. To end the lesson, ask students whether they would rather be an illustrator or an author, reminding them of the two roles. Invite students to call a relative or friend later that day to retell today's story and tell them to hang their pictures at home. Together with students, safely clean your creative space.

#### Assessment Suggestions:

Use the retelling and accompanying drawing as an assessment. Are students able to retell the story in sequence with key details? Do the drawings reflect the story? The next time you read with students, ask them about the various parts of the book and have them explain why each part is important. Educators may also incorporate think-pair-share as an assessment, with students retelling the story in pairs and again later as a group.

#### Adaptations, Extensions, and Other Resources:

- Color coloring pages of matryoshkas:
  - <http://www.dinokids.org/05-coloringDolls/002-coloringDolls-matrioshka-00.htm>
  - <http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/matryoshka-dolls>
  - <https://www.justcolor.net/relaxation/russian-dolls/>
- Create other crafts inspired by Russian art: <https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/russia-crafts>
- Instead of watching the video, read the book. You can find it at your local library or [buy it here](#).
- Read about the author, [Corinne Demas](#) and [the book](#) on her website.
  - [Watch a puppet show production](#) of "The Littlest Matryoshka" at the [Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art](#). "Picture Book Theatre presented an adaptation of The Littlest Matryoshka at the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Amherst, MA in 2018 and 2019. Founder/Director Therese Brady Donohue created the marionettes used in the performance by three puppeteers." Quote from Demas' website.
    - You can find photos of Picture Book Theatre's [behind-the-scenes work here](#).
    - Invite students to make their own puppet version of the book. They can do this instead of or in addition to their drawings.
  - Design and color [your own matryoshka made of paper](#).
- Read about the illustrator, [Kathryn Brown](#).
- Read about other kinds of Russian folk art: <https://www.rbth.com/arts/326619-russian-handicrafts>
- [Slavic Story Time](#) is a collection of hour-long lessons centered around reading a story from Russia/Eastern Europe, doing a craft or activity and sometimes singing a song.
- [This blog contains ideas on using matryoshkas](#) to help count, learn comparatives & superlatives (small, smaller, smallest, etc.), and ordering & sequencing.
- [View the folk art collection virtually](#) at the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia
- Visit the Russian and East European Institute's [K-12 Outreach & Resource Page](#) for other ideas.