LESSON PLAN

Creatures for Teachers

Inspired by Charles Marion Russell and My Friend Rabbit by Eric Rohmann
Created by Therese Straseski, artist/instructor at Joslyn Art Museum
Grade Level: Elementary

Overview
What critters did cowboy artist Charles Russell see on the range? Create and print animals using a foam mono printing technique in this mash-up workshop inspired by special exhibition, My Friend Eric Rohmann on view at Joslyn (August 29, 2015–January 3, 2016). Students will use simple printing techniques to create a monoprint.

Anticipatory Set
Eric Rohmann’s art is considered Illustration, and his art is specifically made for publication in books. In contrast, Charles Russell’s paintings are one of a kind and done in a realistic style. Rohmann’s animal illustrations convey humor and playfulness (and coincidentally Russell did as well when he created illustrations). He uses block printing in his My Friend Rabbit series. Printmaking is different than drawing or painting because it uses a plate, that can have ink rolled over it multiple times to make multiple images. Mono print is a single print. Rohmann brings his animals to life with comical situations and facial expressions. We will emulate this in our animal prints.

Objectives
• Students will create a mono print—one of a kind print.
• Students will investigate facial expressions.
• Students will collaborate with other students by sharing printing plates.
• Students will learn how a print is different than a drawing.
• Students will be introduced to printing plates, brayers, and ink.

Resources
• Eric Rohmann, My Friend Rabbit
• Christine Schmidt, Print Workshop
• You Tube videos:
  o Ready to Roar Reading time: My Friend Rabbit by MS Children’s Museum  3:02 https://goo.gl/F5vNrl
  o My Friend Eric Rohmann by NCCILL [National Center for Children’s Illustrated Literature]  2:17 https://goo.gl/CEg0gu
  o Eric Rohmann by Reading Rockets  18:23 https://goo.gl/6Xz9cl
  o Meet Eric Rohmann by Reading Rockets  1:07 https://goo.gl/4WwtAk
• Joslyn Art Museum’s Charles Marion Russell teaching poster*
• Brian W. Dippie, Remington & Russell: The Sid Richardson Collection book*
• Peter H. Hassrick, Charles M. Russell book*

Supplies
• black construction paper, 9x12
• scissors
• dull pencil or wooden stylus
• scrap paper for thumbnail practice drawing [newsprint]
LESSON PLAN

- printing foam cut to three sizes: large, medium, and small
- brayers
- Plexiglas or other smooth surface to roll out ink
- Blick brand water based block printing ink
- bench hooks
- small phone books or scrap paper cut 6x8

Vocabulary
- texture
- printmaking
- mono print
- brayer
- ink and ink blends
- shape
- line
- facial expressions
- sense of place

Lesson Outline
1) Students will work together in groups of three or four. Each student will have a different size foam: small, medium, or large. Talk about how the animals are stacked up in My Friend Rabbit. Will the animals on the bottom hold the most weight on their shoulders? Will he be angry? Happy? What does this facial expression look like? Draw this on scrap paper.

2) Trace foam square on scrap paper a couple times for thumbnail sketches. Show how to fill the whole page/square no matter which size animal you have. Remind students their first idea is seldom the best. Artists always brainstorm many ideas before they settle on the best one.

3) Place drawing on top of foam and transfer image to foam, or ask them to redraw it on foam. Remember the pressure on foam needs to be firm to show up well, but not so heavy they tear the foam.

4) Trim around animal leaving about a quarter inch border. This is so animal isn’t a square. Just round off edges. Hopefully if they filled their foam square with image, there will be very little to trim.

Printing
While students are putting their finishing touches on their foam:
- I always make inking (dirty) table separate from their work/printing space.
- If possible, make it a centrally located table.
- Cover inking table with brown paper.
- Put out ink for rolling it with brayers.
- I call them to the inking table by groups when I have a large class (24).
- Blends: I like to put two color blends on plexi. Turquoise and pink are a fun blend because they become purple when rolled out.
- You don’t want to roll out ink too early or it will harden. It is water based block printing ink.
- You can cover it with saran wrap to preserve it for a later class.

Demonstration:
1) Have students watch you go through the whole inking process before it is their turn.

2) Take just your foam to ink/dirty table [black paper always stays on clean worktable or home base]

3) Tear a sheet of phonebook paper before start inking, put foam on top

4) Show them how to just touch the reservoir of ink at top of plexi and roll out a thin layer until they hear the sizzle. Then roll the brayer over the foam animal until fully inked. I show them partially inked plate to illustrate that you need more ink.
LESSON PLAN

5) Take phonebook paper and foam back to work table.

6) Lift foam off inky phonebook paper. Fold and place inky paper out of way.

7) Placement. Think about placement of your animal. If it is medium sized animal it will be in middle of paper. Large animal will be on bottom and small on the top.

8) Place foam ink side towards paper, turn paper over, and rub backside of paper. Turn paper over and peel foam off black paper. Viola! Your first animal print.

9) Have students repeat with their partners' animals so they have a stack of creatures.

Additional ideas

- Make a background for your animals featuring on the habitat of the animals.
- Watercolor a landscape focusing on horizon line, foreground, middle ground, and background.
- Have students research and compile examples of the animals before they draw them.
- Change up what kind of environment/habitat in which their animals live. Example: Jungle, Prairie, Savannah, Desert.
- Upper primary would enjoy having a more in-depth session on drawing animals realistically.

Academic Standards
Available on online version at www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers [select Lesson Plans, then Art of the American West]

About the Exhibition

Drawings, paintings, and prints comprise this exhibition of children’s book art by author-illustrator Eric Rohmann, winner of the Caldecott Medal for My Friend Rabbit and a Caldecott Honor for the wordless Time Flies. Illustrations from those and ten other books are represented — including Bone Dog, Clara and Asha, and The Cinder-Eyed Cats — among over 70 finished artworks, sketches, storyboards, and process pieces.

Eric Rohmann grew up in a suburb of Chicago. As a boy, he played Little League baseball, read comic books, collected rocks and minerals, insects, leaves, and animal skulls. He liked to draw and make pictures that told stories. Rohmann has an MS in studio art from Illinois State University, an MFA in printmaking/bookmaking from Arizona State University, and has also studied anthropology and biology.

IMAGE: “The plane was just out of reach,” from My Friend Rabbit, 2002, hand colored relief print, © Eric Rohmann
Coyotes are fast-running carnivores that are closely related to wolves. They use a wide variety of vocalizations to communicate with one another, including howls, high-pitched cries, barks, squalls, and growls. They also respond to sirens or fire whistles at any time of the day, although they are most often heard at dawn and dusk.
American Bison

A bison’s hump is composed of muscle supported by a long vertebrae. This allows the animal to use its head to plow through deep snow. They are closely related to cows, but the Yellowstone Herd is the only herd that remains genetically free of cattle genes.
Gray Wolf

They gray wolf (also known as the Timber Wolf) lives in treeless plains. They used to live all over North America, but after almost going extinct, they are now only found in Alaska, Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin. They hunt in packs and often prey upon animals that are much larger than they are.
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Baby Bison

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The black tailed prairie dog is not a dog at all. They are a small burrowing rodent- a type of ground squirrel. Prairie dogs live in short-grass prairies and mountain plains. Explorers Lewis and Clark sent a prairie dog to President Thomas Jefferson during their expedition.

Prairie Dog

The black tailed prairie dog is not a dog at all. They are a small burrowing rodent- a type of ground squirrel. Prairie dogs live in short-grass prairies and mountain plains. Explorers Lewis and Clark sent a prairie dog to President Thomas Jefferson during their expedition.
The Bison is the heaviest land animal in North America, weighing up to a ton. Despite their massive size they can run up to 40 mph and jump up to six feet vertically. Bulls (males) are larger than cows (females) but both have horns.
Jackrabbit

Jackrabbits are large, long-legged, long-eared hares. They are similar to rabbits but are much larger and usually have long ears tipped in black. They are fast-moving animals that leap and can live in a variety of environments.
American Bison

Millions of bison were slaughtered for sport, for their hides, to clear the Plains for settlers and their livestock, and to control the Plains tribes. American Plains Indians used bison for food, clothing, shelter, tools, and ceremonial implements - nearly everything to survive physically and spiritually.
Greater Prairie Chicken

The greater prairie chicken, otherwise known as a pinnated grouse or a boomer, is native to North America. The species was once abundant but today is extremely rare due to habitat loss. Males defend "booming grounds" with the hopes of attracting females with their displays in which they inflate air sacs on the sides of their necks and snap their tails.
Greater Sage Grouse

The greater sage grouse is the largest grouse in North America. They depend on sagebrush for food year-round, especially in the winter when it is the only available food source, but they will eat wildflowers, insects, and other crops in the spring and summer. Adult males can grow up to two feet tall, while females are much smaller.
The pronghorn is the fastest land animal in the Western Hemisphere. It can achieve speeds up to 53 mph and maintain that speed for a mile and a half without slowing down. They form mixed-sex herds in the winter but break up in the spring with the young males forming bachelor groups, females forming groups, and adult males living solitarily.
Bullsnekae

The bullsnake is a large nonvenomous snake that averages about four to six feet, although specimens of up to eight feet four inches have been recorded. Bullsneakes are constrictors who eat small mammals such as mice, rats, pocket gophers, squirrels, and rabbits. They will sometimes imitate the rattlesnake in order to scare away threats.
The pika is a small mammal with round ears and no external tale. Pikas are also known as “whistling hares” due to their high-pitched alarm call made when diving into their burrows. They are diurnal herbivores and they do not hibernate so they spend the summer collecting and storing food to eat during the winter.
Raccoons have extremely dexterous front paws and are noted for their intelligence. Some studies show that they are able to remember the solution of tasks up to three years. The raccoon's scientific name, Procyon lotor, means “washer dog,” although it is more closely related to the bear family.
Bobcat

The bobcat is a North American cat is about twice the size of the domestic cat. It prefers to eat rabbits and hares but will hunt anything from insects to small deer. The bobcat is mostly solitary and stays confined to well-defined territories, where it is active around dawn and dusk. Despite being heavily hunted, it has maintained a relatively high population.
Prairie dogs hibernate in their burrows during the winter, surviving on the energy from fat tissue that was collected during the year. Each burrow has a “toilet,” nursery room, and resting area, but the burrows can be overtaken by other animals such as snakes, black-footed ferrets, and burrowing owls.
Prairie dogs are social animals that live in groups. White-tailed prairie dogs live in small groups in scattered burrows, while black-tailed prairie dogs live in large groups with a complex of burrows called “towns.” They show affection by kissing and grooming other members of the group.
Jackrabbits can run immediately after being born, unlike many other mammals. They are nocturnal and can leap ten feet at a time going at speeds up to 40 miles an hour. They can also swim if they need to and will dog-paddle with all four feet to escape harm.
The pronghorn might look like an antelope but it is actually a completely different animal. They were brought to scientific notice by Lewis and Clark in present day South Dakota, but their territory spans across the continent. They are migratory animals and can travel up to 170 miles during seasonal migration each year.
In the early spring the greater sage grouse will congregate on "leks," ancestral strutting grounds that they return to every year. Males will strut, fan their tail feathers, and swell their breasts to reveal bright yellow air sacs. The combination of movements makes a unique noise that can be heard across the plains. http://www.aboywhocriedheron.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Greater-Sage-GrouseM7RS1.jpg