South Dakota Artists Curriculum Unit

Myra Miller

“Pheasant and the China Connection”

Provided by the South Dakota Art Museum
Brookings, South Dakota
Unit of Study: Myra Miller, painter

Title of Lesson Plan: Pheasant and the China Connection

Grade Level: 3 – 5
South Dakota Content Standards

U.S. History:

3.US.2.1 Students are able to describe characteristics of a community.
South Dakota Content Standards

Science:

3.L.2.1  Students are able to explain how animals instinctively meet basic needs in their environment.

3.L.3.1  Students are able to describe how species depend on one another and on the environment for survival.

3.L.3.2  Students are able to explain how environments support a diversity of plants and animals.

4.L.2.1  Students are able to identify behavioral and structural adaptations that allow a plant or animal to survive in a particular environment.

5.L.3.1  Students are able to describe how natural events and/or human influences may help or harm ecosystems.
South Dakota Content Standards

**Economics:**

3.E.1.1 Student are able to explain ways producers use resources to produce goods and services.

4.E.1.1 Students are able to describe how the economic needs of South Dakotans and people in other regions of the United States have been met.
South Dakota Content Standards

Listening, Viewing, & Speaking:

3.LVS.1.4 Students can demonstrate presentation skills.

4.LVS.1.3 Students can express ideas and convey information in an oral presentation.
Assessment Strategies

- Class discussion
- Observation of student research skills
- PowerPoint or GarageBand presentation graded with a set of rubrics
- Individual/group presentation skills
Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about South Dakota artist Myra Miller.
- Students will explain the origins of the ringed-neck pheasant to South Dakota.
- Students will explain when the ring-necked pheasant was chosen to be the state bird.
- Students will explain why the ring-necked pheasant was chosen to be the state bird.
- Students will analyze how the ring-necked pheasant has adapted to survive in South Dakota’s environment.
- Students will create a PowerPoint presentation (or an enhanced podcast) about the ring-necked pheasant.
Time Required
- 2 – 3 class periods of 45 - 60 minutes each

Materials/Technology Needed
- Image of Myra Miller’s print: untitled (pheasants) SD Art Museum reference number 1973.08.08
- Access to Internet and library resources to conduct research about the ring-necked pheasant
- Access to computers with PowerPoint or GarageBand software
The South Dakota State bird is, of course, the ringed-neck pheasant. Many people do not know that the origin of this bird is actually from China. It was successfully introduced to South Dakota in 1898 and became the official state bird on February 13, 1943. (Below, I have listed a few resources that have good information to help student research.)

This print of Myra Miller’s, untitled (pheasants), is a tribute to the significance this bird has had on South Dakota, not only for the food it provides, but also the economic benefit that pheasant hunting has generated for the state.
Lesson Description

- Begin by showing the class the image by Myra Miller subtitled “Pheasants”. Ask students to discuss what they see. Ask students to explain why they believe she chose to create a painting of this bird. Also, explain what the significance is of how the bird is displayed in the painting.
Lesson Description continued

- Divide the class into small groups. Each group will be responsible for researching and creating a PowerPoint or podcast presentation about a different aspect of the ring-necked pheasant. For example, you could have each group research a different topic listed below of the ring-necked pheasant and its relationship to South Dakota (these are only a few suggestions):
  - Origin of the ring-necked pheasant to South Dakota and why it was chosen to become our state bird.
  - Explain the habitat and nesting habits of the ring-necked pheasant and how it has adapted to survive in South Dakota’s wide ranging climate.
  - Identify areas of the state that have high concentrations of pheasants. Could also explain how pheasant populations have changed over time (weather conditions, poaching or too many hunters)
  - Explain how the ring-necked pheasant is important to the South Dakota economy. Could go into detail of how much tourism money is generated by pheasant hunters, etc.
  - Explain what the Game, Fish, and Parks Department is doing to help the conservation of pheasant populations in the state.
Lesson Description continued

- Students would show their presentations to the rest of the class.
Enrichment

- Bring in a guest speaker to talk to the class about pheasants and their significance to the state. This person could be from the Game, Fish, and Parks Department, or someone from the town’s Chamber of Commerce.
Bibliography/Resources

- Miller Painting Collection at the South Dakota Art Museum
  - Myra Miller Print: untitled (pheasants) SD Art Museum reference number 1973.08.08


Myra Miller Presentation to Students
Myra Miller

- 1882 – 1961
- Painted for her own pleasure
- Only training in art was with the Rogers sisters, Laura and Anna, well-known Milbank, SD artists
- Mainly a self-taught artist
- Best known for her paintings on South Dakota game birds
- Began painting about 1900, when she was 18 years old
- Paintings look very realistic
- Also was a farm wife on a 1000 acre farm with 3 children
- Also collected rocks, moths, and butterflies
- Practiced photography
Bibliography

- South Dakota Art Museum Collection
  - Myra Miller

*For more information about Myra Miller, contact the South Dakota Art Museum*
untitled (pheasants)
Other Examples of Myra Miller’s Artwork
untitled (gladiolas)

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
untitled (pansies)