

14-B Brooklyn Bridge, c. 1919–1920

Joseph Stella (1877–1946)



14-B Joseph Stella (1877–1946), *Brooklyn Bridge*, c. 1919–1920. Oil on canvas, 84 x 76 in. (213.36 x 193.04 cm.). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn. Gift of Collection Société Anonyme.

The Art

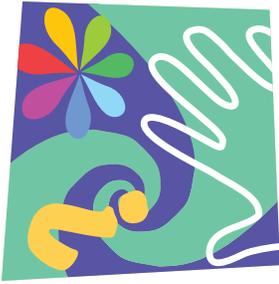
Joseph Stella painted his picture of the Brooklyn Bridge on canvas with oil paints. He created the painting in a special style called Futurism, which was a new, more modern way of thinking about art that began in Italy. The painting of the bridge is about the sights and sounds around it—the people, tugboats, trains, and trolley cars—as well as the bridge itself, with many lines, angles, and arches. The artist got the idea to paint the bridge after standing on it alone one night listening to the sounds and watching the lights and busy pace of the city below. He wanted the painting to show his feeling of being closed in with a lot of noise and color all around him.

The Artist

Stella was born near Naples, Italy. He came to the United States to study medicine but ended up enrolling at the New York School of Art. He later studied art in Paris, France. Stella believed the new art style called Futurism was a perfect way to capture life in New York during a time when the United States was moving toward the machine age. He was known as the first American Futurist.

The Historical Perspective

The Brooklyn Bridge is a type of bridge called a suspension bridge. When it opened in 1883, it was the largest suspension bridge in the world. The bridge was a symbol of the United States at a time of growing cities and rapid social change. Stella tried to capture the big size of the bridge and the movement of car lights at night in his painting.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look closely at the artwork. What do you see? What colors are there? Introduce new vocabulary and books on bridges and related topics.

Describing



- ✓ What do you see in this painting?
- ✓ Does it look like a photograph or painting? How do you know?
- ✓ Do you see the traffic lights? What color are they? What colors are they on our streets?
- ✓ Have students find these objects:
 - ◆ Towers of the Brooklyn Bridge (top, center)
 - ◆ Traffic signal light (lower center)
 - ◆ Bridge cables (from the edges to the center of the composition)
- ✓ What time of day is it? (It is night. The sky is dark. There are deep, dark shadows and shining lights.)
- ✓ Are there any cars on the bridge? Some of the lights look like headlights.

Analyzing and Interpreting



Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- What is a bridge? Why do we need bridges?
- What is the difference between a photograph and painting?
- What do you like about this painting?
- Encourage children to imagine what Stella heard as he stood on the bridge at night. The bridge is over a river. He might have heard tugboat horns, sirens, subway trains, and cars and trucks rumbling over the bridge.
- How would you feel if you were crossing this bridge? Where could people go when they cross a bridge?
- Do you think you could paint a picture of a bridge?
- Is there anything else you would like to say about this artwork?



Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

arches	excursion	sash
balance	horizon	suspension
bridge	observer	trolley
commuters	piers	vehicles



Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can

- ✓ study a bridge in their community.
- ✓ create the bridge using recycled materials.
- ✓ sing and play the game "London Bridge Is Falling Down."



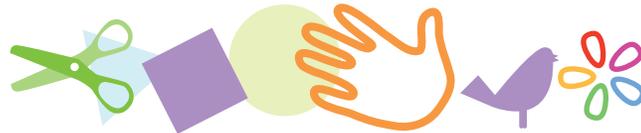
Books

Bridges Are to Cross by Philemon Sturges (Penguin Young Readers Group, 1998)
This book discusses different kinds of bridges, from train bridges to fortified castle bridges, and provides an example of each.

Pop's Bridge by Eve Bunting (Harcourt Children's Books, 2006)
This picture book about the building of the Golden Gate Bridge is told from the point of view of a boy whose father is on the crew.

Three Billy Goats Gruff by Paul Galdone (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981)
Three clever billy goats outwit a big troll that lives under the bridge they must cross on their way up the mountain.

Twenty-one Elephants by Phil Bildner (Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2004)
A young girl asks P.T. Barnum to walk his 21 elephants across the Brooklyn Bridge to prove it is safe.



Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ Recognizing and learning different shapes, patterns, and positions in space are important for young children. Guide children in comparing various parts of bridges in terms of similarities and differences—long lines, short lines, and other words from the vocabulary list.
- ✓ Build bridges with blocks, Legos, clay, play dough, and art sticks.
- ✓ Record children's words on chart paper as they describe the troll, reading the list back to them as you point to each word.
- ✓ Allow children to make a troll puppet or drawing.

The ideas listed are just a few of the many activities that could be used to introduce or extend children's learning. Your knowledge of your children and families supports your ability to ensure positive learning experiences and outcomes for students. As an educator, you probably have ideas for books, songs, finger plays, and activities that you have thought of when introducing or extending children's learning related to the "*A Head Start on Picturing America*" artworks. We encourage you to confer with your colleagues, visit the local library or bookstore, and share your ideas with others.