



Classroom Guide

Title: **Rechenka's Eggs**

Author: **Patricia Polacco**

Illustrator: **Patricia Polacco**

Theme: Eggs are remarkable in both art and nature.

Program Summary: An injured goose rescued by Babushka, having broken the painted eggs intended for the Easter Festival in Moskva, lays thirteen marvelously colored eggs to replace them. She then leaves behind one final miracle — in egg form — before returning to her own kind. The author, Patricia Polacco, demonstrates the traditional Ukrainian egg-painting art (pysanky), and shares how she got the idea for this story. Viewers will gain a new appreciation for the egg in art as LeVar decorates eggs, and finds objects that are egg-shaped. Viewers also see the practical side during a montage of animal babies emerging from eggs.

Topics for Discussion:

When the goose was well, Babushka let her go even though she wanted her to stay. Discuss the importance of returning wild animals to their natural habitat after they have recuperated from an injury.

From LeVar's experiment in the full program, viewers learn that eggs are strong; however, it is well known that they break easily. Discuss with students how an egg can be both strong and fragile at the same time.

Invite students to share experiences they have had with friends that are animals.

Curriculum Extension Activities:

Take a walking tour of the classroom, school building, and school grounds searching for things that are elliptical in shape. When students spot something, have them write it on small pieces of paper (about two inches long) cut in the shape of an egg. Hang a large piece of paper cut into an ellipse on the wall and glue the students' papers onto it. Locate other books by Patricia Polacco and study her illustrations.

After reading, have students decide what they consider to be the five most important events in the story. (This will require some discussion and justification and possibly voting before they arrive at five events.) Write each event on a slip of paper and put it inside a plastic egg. Put the eggs in a basket and invite students to open the eggs and arrange the events in the order in which they happened in the story.

Patricia Polacco uses many patterns of color and shape in her drawings. Have students locate some of these patterns in *Rechenka's Eggs*. For example, there are patterns on



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the eggs, quilts, rugs, clothing, tablecloths, domes and buildings of Moskva, even on Babushka's chamber pot. Give students a strip of paper (such as cash register tape) and some colorful markers and have them create patterns using the traditional pysanky designs of triangles, circles, stars, and flowers. Display their patterns in the room.

Brainstorm a list of animals that hatch from eggs. Display this list in the classroom so that students can add to it as they learn more about animals. Have them research the size of different animals' eggs and record the information on the chart. Later, they might wish to cut apart the chart and rank the eggs in order by size.

Set up a series of egg "questions" for students to investigate for an entire week. Pose one question a day, such as "What is the heavier part of an egg—the shell or the insides?", "Which is heavier—a hard-boiled egg or a scrambled egg?" "Which is heavier—a raw egg or a hard-boiled egg?" "Which is heavier—a hard-boiled egg or a soft-boiled egg?" And "Which is heavier—the egg white or the yolk?" Post the question along with two egg-shaped pieces of paper, one for each of the choices. Have students make a prediction and mark a tally on the egg of their choice. Later in the day, conduct the "test" and verify predictions.

Have students do a simple adaptation of the pysanky technique. They might use a white crayon or a paraffin stick to draw designs on an egg and then dip it in dye or paint it. For a paper adaptation, have students draw a design in crayon on an egg-shaped piece of paper, and then paint over the design with watercolors.

Cut apart egg cartons and use the individual "cups" to make a graph in response to the question, "How do you like your eggs — fried, scrambled, or hard-boiled?"

Discuss the concept of "dozen." Have students think of things that often come in a dozen besides eggs. Explore other collective terms, such as "a pair of _____," "a set of _____," "a bunch of _____," etc. Extend this discussion to include group terms for animals, beginning with the very familiar, such as "herd" and "flock," and moving to more unusual terms.

Book Review:

The Talking Eggs by Robert D. San Souci, illus. by Jerry Pinkney



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Supplementary Booklist:

I Can Hear the Sun by Patricia Polacco

Eggbert, the Slightly Cracked Egg by Tom Ross, illus. by Rex Barron

Related Themes:

- healthy eating
- animal babies
- spring season

Related Reading Rainbow Programs:

- Program #38 — Chickens Aren't the Only Ones
- Program #14 — The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash

About the Author/Illustrator: Patricia Polacco describes herself as coming from a storytelling family. These family stories have inspired the writing of many of her books. The making of pysanky eggs is featured in another of Patricia's books, *Chicken Sunday*. She is the author/illustrator of two other Reading Rainbow feature books, *Mrs. Katz and Tush* and *Appelmando's Dreams*.