LET'S LOOK & LEARN
TAKING FLIGHT: WHERE THERE’S IMAGINATION THERE’S A WAY

Making Connections
This painting tells a story by using references to art history and images that have meaning. Let’s look closely at these artistic devices so we can explore these connections with other artistic areas.

Discussion
In the Little Red Hen story, the hen’s imagination helps get her out of trouble. Have you ever used your imagination to invent situations or problems for which you think up the solution and then plan out the steps to solve the problem? What do you think set the story apart from the Little Red Hen story?

Art Connection
Scan an article in the newspaper that describes the Little Red Hen story. Is there anything in this article that describes the Little Red Hen story? What is the Little Red Hen story about?

About the Artist
Margo Selaki

The Flight I
Margo Selaki, 2002
Oil, varnish, and bee’s wax on canvas

The Media
Margo Selaki created this painting using the media of oil paint, varnish, and bee’s wax. Selaki has developed a process to make her paintings look yellow, cracked, and aged. She uses bee’s wax purchased from the farmer’s market because it has a rich, yellow consistency. She models the surface of the painting with the bee’s wax and melts it into a smooth matte sheet. Next she paints the painting in a large restaurant feature to allow the wax to cool and harden. When the wax is hard she gently pulls the back of the canvas into the wax cracks, then rubs paint into the cracks. The aging melts the wax in the painting smooths with the “scratches” visible from underneath the wax.

The Painting
Margo Selaki uses symbolism and her imagination to create paintings that tell a story. Just like the children’s stories she still admires, the characters in Selaki’s paintings have dreams, fears, and love of adventure. There is usually a message or moral to the story. Each painting is like a chapter in an ongoing narrative for which Selaki herself doesn’t always know the ending until she paints it.

Her painting, The Flight I, is part of a series of retail narratives in which a hen is the main character, looking to accomplish something while facing her greatest fears. As a young girl, Selaki was inspired by a version of the Little Red Hen story about a hen who gets caught by a fox and put into a well. The hen must use her imagination and creativity to get out of trouble. In this painting, the hen woman has invented a pulley and rope system to “fly” above her farm. Why do you think she included the skyscrapers with the World Trade Center Twin Towers in her painting?

The Creative Process
As part of her creative process, Selaki writes in an artist journal where she records ideas for the images and themes in her paintings. Before she begins The Flight I, Selaki took flight as she wrote the following sentences in her artist journal:

“It is a fact that here unfortunately cannot fly. My hen woman is trying to learn how to fly. She’s practicing flying attached to a pulley system. Because the hen woman is... a serious character this training procedure is her way of gently training herself to be comfortable using a variety of techniques. This way, if and when she gets her flying right, she will be likely to have a few flights.”

Selaki has been influenced by the 20th century movement, Surrealism, and the 20th century surrealistic art movement in Europe. Selaki says she has been influenced by the 20th century movement and that it has influenced her work. The flight symbolizes, in this painting, the hen woman’s desire to fly. The pulley system is a symbol of her hopes and dreams for the future. The skyscrapers with the World Trade Center Twin Towers in her painting is a symbol of her desire to fly.

About the Artist
Margo Selaki is a contemporary artist who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She has a Master of Fine Arts degree in drawing and painting from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. She also has a Master of Art degree with K22 certification in design, drama, and Visual Art from the State University of New York at Brockport. She taught elementary art for seven years and believes a good curriculum makes art fun for all.

Artistic Statement
As a child I spent hours by myself or with friends playing make believe with small plastic figures and animals. Now as an adult, I do most of my imagining inside my head. The Flying Hen Woman is just one of many make-believe characters which I continue to play inside my own imagination. I am a natural storyteller, using imaginative creatures and places to tell stories dealing with my feelings, worries, and desires. I offer you my imagination, a combination of my thoughts, make-believe characters, and stories from my childhood. It is that place where I can deal with feelings and desires.

Vocabulary

Artist Journal
A book artists use to explore their ideas, feelings, and record their research. The journal might include drawings, words, quotes, photographs, or found objects. The journal can be used to pose questions about art and life, to work out solutions, and to provide a means to inspire artwork.

Imagination
The ability to form mental images of things or events. The ability to combine and deal with reality by using the creative power of the mind and deal meaningfully with universal problems.

Perspective
The technique of representing three-dimensional objects and depth relationships on a two-dimensional surface.

Surrealism
A 20th century movement in art and literature that attempts to express the working of the subconscious. Surrealism is also characterized by fantastic images with strange juxtapositions used to represent unconscious thoughts and dreams. Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, and Joan Miro are major Surrealist artists.

Symbolism
The practice of representing things by means of accurate symbols, significant objects, or relationships. For example, the color red may symbolize passionate, emotions, or animals’ characteristics can signify a trait such as a bull stock market or a person who is "catty."