

## Lesson Title

**Marc Chagall Dreamscapes: Floating Memories Watercolor Lesson (Surrealism-Inspired) for Grades 2–5**

## Grade Levels

2nd–5th (works great as one “big idea” lesson with grade-level tweaks)

## Standards Covered (National Core Arts Standards – Visual Arts)

*(Condensed where the skill is the same across grades.)*

- **VA:Cr1.2.2/3/4/5a:** *Artists and designers shape artistic investigations* (develop and explore personal ideas). ([arteducators-prod.s3.amazonaws.com](http://arteducators-prod.s3.amazonaws.com))
  - **VA:Cr2.1.2/3/4/5a:** *Organize and develop artistic ideas and work* (create personally satisfying artwork / explore & invent). ([National Arts Standards](#))
  - **VA:Cr3.1.2/3/4/5a:** *Refine and complete artistic work* (revise, add detail, finish with care). ([National Arts Standards](#))
  - **VA:Re7.2.2/3/4/5a:** *Perceive and analyze artistic work* (describe how art conveys ideas/feelings). ([National Arts Standards](#))
  - **VA:Cn11.1.2/3/4/5a:** *Relate artistic ideas and works with societal/cultural/historical context* (connect Chagall + surrealism to student choices). ([National Arts Standards](#))
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## Lesson Objective

Students will **draw familiar people/places from memory**, arrange them in a **dreamy “floating” composition** (Chagall-inspired), and use **bright watercolor with strong contrast** to make shapes stand out—then explain how surrealism can tell a story that doesn’t have to “make sense.”

## Lesson Description (Teacher Notes)

Marc Chagall’s work often shows **memories, towns, people, animals, and symbols** drifting through space like a dream. In this lesson, students will create a “dreamscape” where **normal rules (up/down, scale, gravity)** are optional.

**Key move (don't skip!):** students **rotate the paper** while drawing. It's the easiest way to trick the brain into drawing something "upside down" without panic—and it instantly gives that floating, surreal feeling.

**Suggested pacing:** Two 30-minute sessions is the sweet spot so kids can actually add the good stuff (details + richer paint). One 45-minute version is included for tight schedules.

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## Vocabulary

- **Surrealism:** Art that explores dreams, imagination, and surprising combinations that may not be realistic. ([The Museum of Modern Art](#))
  - **Dreamscape:** An artwork that looks like a dream world.
  - **Composition:** How the parts of an artwork are arranged.
  - **Contrast:** Strong differences (light/dark, bright/dull) that help shapes stand out.
  - **Foreground / Background:** What looks closer vs. farther away in an image.
  - **Scale:** The size of something compared to something else (tiny house, giant sun, etc.).
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## Materials (plus prep + sanity-saving tips)

### Student Materials

- Pencil + eraser
- Watercolor set + watercolor brush (round size 6–10 works great)
- Watercolor paper (or thick drawing paper—watercolor paper is happiest)
- Black marker (optional for outlining after painting dries)
- Paper towels + water cups
- Name labels or pencil for names on the back

### Teacher Prep

- Print or project 2–3 Marc Chagall examples (focus on "floating" + bright color)
- Pre-fill water cups (or "water station" to reduce traffic jams)
- Demo sheet: one quick example showing *paper rotation + floating layout*

### Student-friendly tool care (quick script)

- "Brushes go for a swim, not a bath." (Dip, wipe, paint.)
- "Gentle brush = pointy brush." (No scrubbing like it's a stain.)
- "One rinse between colors... unless you love mud."

**Affiliate disclaimer (copy/paste ready):**

“Some links in this materials list are affiliate links—meaning I may earn a small commission at no extra cost to you, and I only share the exact stuff I’d use in my own art room because your sanity (and your supply budget) matters.”

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## Lesson Sequence (choose your timing)

### Option A: One 45-minute class (the “we move fast and accept chaos” version)

#### 1) Introduction (5 min)

- Show Chagall images: “What do you notice?” (floating, bright colors, mixed-up scale)
- Mini idea: “Art doesn’t always have to make sense to be meaningful.”

#### 2) Guided Demo (8–10 min)

- Demonstrate: brainstorming *familiar people + places*
- Show **paper rotation**: “I’m turning my paper so my person can ‘float’ sideways.”
- Quick layout: 3–5 floating items + big simple background shape (sky/space/town)

#### 3) Independent Work (20 min)

- Draw first (pencil). Encourage BIG shapes + details.
- Paint: bright colors + contrast (dark next to light, warm next to cool)

#### 4) Clean Up (5 min)

- Water dump, brush rinse, palettes closed, names checked

#### 5) Closure (3–5 min)

- 2–3 share-outs: “What’s floating? What memory is this about?”
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### Option B: Two 30-minute classes (recommended)

#### Session 1 (30 min): Draw it like a dream

##### Intro (4 min) + Demo (6 min)

##### Independent Drawing (16–18 min)

- Requirement: **Rotate paper at least 3 times** while placing objects

- Add 5+ details (windows, patterns, clothing, flowers, etc.)

#### **Cleanup/Closure (2–4 min)**

- Quick partner share: “What’s one thing that’s ‘not normal’ on purpose?”

#### **Session 2 (30 min): Paint it bold**

##### **Warm-up (2 min)**

- “Today we paint for CONTRAST. Your shapes should pop.”

##### **Demo (5 min)**

- Show: painting one shape bright + surrounding area lighter/darker
- “Outline optional” tip: outline **after** paint dries if needed

##### **Painting Time (18–20 min)**

- Encourage: varied colors, intentional contrast, simple background wash

##### **Cleanup + Gallery Walk (3–5 min)**

- Silent gallery walk: students leave 1 sticky-note compliment (or verbal “glows”)
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## **Examples (Teacher Notes + quick scripts)**

Show **a range**: simple vs. detailed, lots of floating vs. a few floating, wild color vs. limited palette. This helps kids feel safe making different choices (and prevents the “everyone copies the teacher sample” situation).

Little script snippets:

- “If it looks like a dream... you’re doing it right.”
  - “Gravity is optional today.”
  - “Rotate your paper—your brain will thank you.”
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## **Cross-Curricular & Extension Resources (with URLs)**

1. **ELA Extension (Artist Bio + Quick Write)**: Read a kid-friendly bio and write: “If you could paint a memory that floats, what would be in it and why?”

<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Marc-Chagall/273587>

([Britannica Kids](#))

2. **Social Studies / Art History Extension (Surrealism):** Discuss how surrealism explores dreams and imagination; compare to a dream journal entry.

<https://www.moma.org/collection/terms/surrealism>

([The Museum of Modern Art](#))

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## Differentiation Strategies (3 solid, real-life ones)

1. **Break it into two sessions (already built-in):**
  - Session 1: draw + details
  - Session 2: paint + contrast + optional outline  
Slower workers finish confidently; fast finishers enrich the background or add symbolic details.
2. **Scaffold choices (especially for Grades 2–3):**  
Provide a “menu” of floating items: person, house, tree, sun/moon, pet, favorite object. Students choose 3–5.
3. **Support fine-motor / confidence needs:**
  - Let students draw larger shapes (fewer items, bigger forms)
  - Offer light tracing of **one** key shape (like a house template) so they can focus on surreal placement + painting

**Fast finisher boosts:** add a patterned sky, a second “tiny story” object, or a border of repeating symbols.

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## Assessment & Reflection (rubric + 2 options)

### Simple Rubric (4 levels)

#### Criteria

1. **Floating composition / paper rotation used**
2. **Familiar people/places shown from memory**
3. **Watercolor contrast makes shapes stand out**
4. **Craftsmanship:** care with paint, details, effort, cleanup responsibility

## Levels

- **4 Exceeds:** strong surreal layout + intentional contrast + rich details
- **3 Meets:** clear floating layout + good contrast + some details
- **2 Developing:** floating idea is emerging; contrast/details need more time
- **1 Beginning:** minimal completion; needs step-by-step support

## Assessment Option A (super quick)

### Exit Ticket (1 minute):

- “One thing I made float was \_\_\_\_.”
- “I used contrast by \_\_\_\_.”

## Assessment Option B (more formal, still kid-friendly)

### Mini critique in pairs:

- “I notice...”
- “I wonder...”
- “My favorite contrast area is...”

Tie-in essential question vibe: *How do artists communicate meaning when art isn't realistic?* ([National Arts Standards](#))

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## Call to Action

If you try this lesson, I'd love to see it in action—**send photos of students working (hands-only is fine)** and a few finished dreamscapes. I'm building a “real classrooms” gallery so other teachers can see how wildly different (and awesome) the outcomes can be.