During the month of December, the Green Room Friends have been investigating the works of Eric Carle. The prolific author has written and illustrated over 20 books! We introduced Eric Carle to the friends by sharing a picture of him and talking about what it means to be an author and what it means to be an illustrator. Friends quickly learned that an author’s job is to think of the story and write the words for the book and the illustrator’s job is to animate the story with pictures. Over the past weeks, we’ve read many of Eric Carle’s books. We’ve compared the types of stories he has written, and we have looked at the different styles of illustrations he has done. We’ve been careful to take notice of each book’s front cover, inside cover and each of the pages inside for the variety of ways Carle used his gift of art to fill his stories with color and life.

Our Favorite Theme Books

- During our first week, we focused on insect stories with description language like: The Very Hungry Caterpillar, The Grouchy Ladybug, The Clumsy Click Beetle, and the Lonely Firefly.

- During our second week, we focused on art and color books like Draw Me a Star, The Artist Who Painted the Blue Horse, The Mixed-Up Chameleon, and Little Cloud.

- During our final week, our book focus was on Rooster’s Off to See the World, a story that allowed the friends to think about the different characters in that one story. It led to days of enacting the actions of those characters on our Green Room stage.

Mango Monkey Says…

You get what you get and you don’t get upset! At 4 years old, it is difficult to accept disappointment and deal with frustration sometimes. We used the book “You Get What You Get” by Julie Gassman to open up a dialogue with the friends about what it means to feel disappointed and what ideas we can come up with to help us get through a frustrating time. Friends thought of ideas like taking a deep breath, trying others’ ideas, and being patient when we have to wait to do something we want. The saying “You get what you get, and you don’t get upset” is a phrase we use in the Green Room and that can easily be transitioned to the home.
Week 1

What is an Author?

During our first week, we asked the question, “What is an author?” We used the variety of insect stories that Carle has written to take a closer look at how Carle carefully choose words in his titles to tell us more about what we will be reading. Carle used words like hungry, grouchy, clumsy, and lonely to describe the insects in his stories, using the words to paint a picture in the reader’s mind before we even open up the book. As we read these insect stories, we discussed the components of a story- a beginning, a middle and an end. We did a variety of sequencing activities to reinforce the importance of structure and order in story telling. Friends were delighted when it was their turn to be their very own author when we made our three page books. Friends were invited to decorate their cover, write the name of the author (themselves) and dictate to their teachers what happens at the beginning, the middle and the end. Friends were then invited to share their stories with their circle time friends.

Week 2

What is an Illustrator?

Our second week’s focus was on Carle’s illustrations. We used Eric Carle’s most colorful and artistic books to help draw the friends’ eyes to his style. Carle uses an interesting and recognizable collage style. We designed art activities in which friends can create illustrations much like Carle would make. We painted using a variety of scraping tools to mix colors together in an interesting way. After reading “The Artist Who Painted the Blue Horse,” friends painted a variety of animals from the story in their own way. We had collage pieces at the art and writing center all week for friends to explore and create. Magnet shape pieces were available for friends to make an illustration by combining common shapes. We even had an opportunity to invent our own color. Friends mixed a variety of colors together to get their desired shade. After naming the color, friends painted a large piece of paper with their one-of-a-kind color.
During the third week, we used a single story to engage the friends in enacting the tale on stage. We read “Rooster’s Off to See the World.” After talking about the characters and what they each do in the story, friends took the stage and made the story come to life. The characters included the rooster, cats, frogs, turtles, fish, and fireflies. As the teacher told the story, friends listened for their turn to enter on the stage. The characters went on a journey together but quickly learned that there is no place like home. Friends learned to take a bow after their performance while members of the audience applauded and eagerly waited for their turn to take the stage as an animal character. We used a variety of games during this unit and specifically during this week to reinforce literacy and math elements. The “What Rhymes?” game is one that challenges the friends to find two objects that have the same ending sound. In the Rooster’s Off to See the World Game, friends are challenged to identify a number on a spinner and select the corresponding animal to add to their collection. The winner is the first friend to collect all the characters from our story.

Center Spotlight:

The Stage

Usually the stage area is home to our dramatic play center or the block area. At least once a year we transform that space into a stage. We first work together using our large blocks to build a safe, slightly heightened stage. Then, friends help set up a space where the audience can view the play from chairs. We have a designated area for costumes and props. For the “Rooster’s off to See the World” play- friends wore necklaces with pictures of their character around their neck. The firefly character had the unique responsibility of shining a flashlight on the characters when the narrator instructed them to do so.

When the stage wasn’t used for our story telling production, we used it as an open space for children to come one at a time or in small groups to share a song, joke or story. Friends were excited to have a turn with the microphone and, while they waited, they learned to be an attentive and respectful member of the audience.
Make Shop Experiences

December was a month of engaging in light and color activities in the Make Shop. When friends entered the space, the first thing they noticed was that the lights were out. Overhead projectors were available for the friends to select a variety of materials to place in front of the light to project the image on our curtain. Friends also quickly discovered that when they stood in between the light and the curtain they made a shadow. With music playing, friends made their shadows dance on the curtain.

As the friends became more familiar with the projectors and with how to make a shadow, shadow puppets from our favorite Eric Carle stories were added to our materials. Friends used these shadow puppets to retell stories with the peers.

Music Experiences with Mrs. Hraber

Mrs. Hraber integrated music into our Eric Carle theme this month. Pete, the metronome character the friends have really grown to love, read the story, “Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you See?” Then the friends practiced taking turns drumming to the tempo of the story with a variety of colorful drums. Then, the friends enjoyed hearing and singing, “Today is Monday.”
Special Visitors and Goodbyes

Miss Debbie, Children’s librarian at the Carnegie Library, shared some Eric Carle books to kick off our unit. She used fun pop up books to really gain the children's interest.

Our student teacher, Danielle Sallmen, poses with Mrs. Opferman’s friends during her last week with us. We wish her luck in her next teaching adventure!

City Charter High School Student, Cynthia posed with the afternoon class on her last day. We truly appreciated her presence in the PM class!
Our Month in Photos