

Artists on Tour

Cindy Matyi, Celtic Designs & Music

Little Town of Spirals



STUDY GUIDE

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PERFORMANCE/WORKSHOP INFORMATION

1) DESCRIPTION OF ART FORM

A spiral is a symbol. A symbol is a drawing which is a simple shape that people use to explain a complicated idea.

In ancient times, people used the spiral to describe Creation or the Thread of Life. We also know that spirals are found in many forms of nature such as: petals on a rose or seeds in a sunflower, spider webs, tornadoes, water going down the drain, curling vines, curly hair, our DNA, a pig's tail, throwing a football, cinnamon rolls.....(watch out for tree rings – rings within rings but not spirals!)

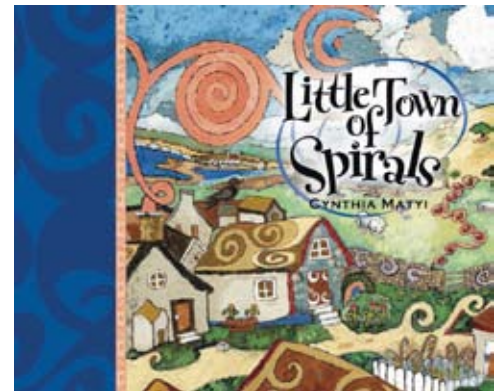
To draw a spiral you begin with a circle which starts big on the outside and winds into the center, then back out again. Practice drawing this in the air with children. (Children under the age of four may not be ready to do this but some can at three and a half.) Children between the ages of five to seven will usually be able to do a spiral freehand with practice. With older children we can use dots and templates to help create a more geometrically exact spiral.

2) STORY SYNOPSIS

The book *Little Town of Spirals* is a picture book suitable for grades preschool to third and especially good for young readers ages three to eight. Even toddlers enjoy the images, colors and hidden pictures. The text is a rhyme which is fun to hear and read.

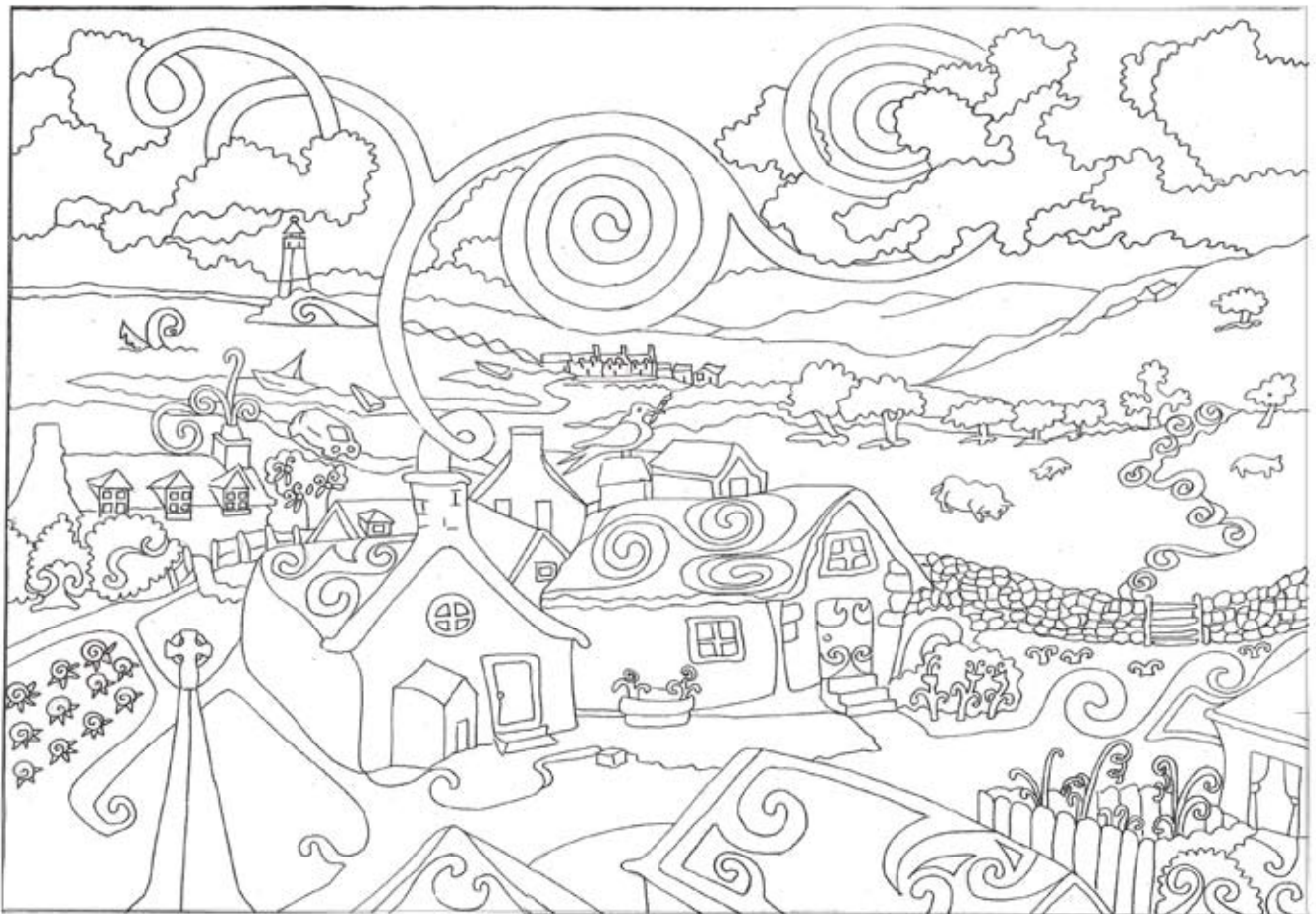
“In a little town of spirals somewhere,
All the people have curly hair....”

The story describes an intriguing place where everything turns into spirals. The landscapes resemble Ireland or Scotland as they were taken from the artist's sketch books while visiting those countries. Sixteen oil paintings were used to create the book and efforts were made to reproduce the texture of paint applied with a palette knife. “I can see the paint but I can't feel it” is a comment often heard.



3) DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

It is fun for children to look for the spirals and also to find the bird with the paintbrush on each page. Teachers, parents and librarians all have positive comments about the interactive qualities of the book. The characters are friendly, safe and just quirky enough to be unforgettable. There are some unusual animals with spiral characteristics and the bedtime story quality of *Little Town of Spirals* is enhanced by the appearances of mythical “Father Night” and “Mother Moon.”



4) TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Art terms which may be used: symbol, geometric shapes, tessellation, profile, fool-the-eye, texture, palette knife, inspiration.

Book creation terms might include: binding, folios, printing, design, color matching.

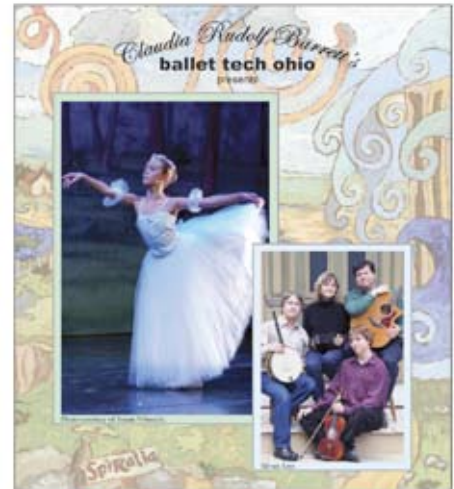


OPTIONAL

If time permits we may demonstrate or discuss other Celtic Art motifs such as combining spirals to form patterns (tessellation), knotwork, Celtic faces, zoomorphic creatures, and illumination.



We may also discuss how *Little Town of Spirals* was adapted to the ballet *Spiralia*, which was performed at the Aronoff Center, and how the spirals worked well for the dancers.



Spring Loose!

- * *Spiralia*—A world premiere based upon renowned Celtic artist Caoilfhionn MacRí's children's book, *The Little Town of Spirals* accompanied by the live music of the Silver Arm and Ian Barrett.
- * *Les Sylphides*—Mikhail Fokine's romantic ballet for Chopin's string and harp featuring outstanding Sergey Pakharenko, principal guest artist of the Baltimore Civic Opera Company.
- * *Family Rumble*—A hilarious farce of bullfighting and football by Michael Wardlaw.
- * *Filles of Paris Pas de Deux*—With Carville Amador, principal dancer of the Cincinnati Ballet Co.
- * Guest appearance of Revolutionary Dancer Theater of K11.

Aronoff Center, Jaroson Kaplan Theater
Friday May 29th, 8:00 p.m. and Sat. May 30th, 2:00 and 8:00 p.m.

Tickets: Adults \$25, Students and Seniors \$15.
To order tickets visit www.cincinnatiarts.org or call 513-487-1313 (2187).
For more information go to www.ballettechohio.org

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1) Practice spirals in the air to loosen up and get the arm movement going. Practice spirals on paper or on the board, try combining three interconnected spirals together (ages 7-9).
- 2) On single sheets of paper or perhaps with a group working on one large sheet together, we will create our own "Little Town of Spirals." Children are encouraged to find new ideas for the town using spiral patterns (spiral staircases, flowers, smoke from chimneys).
- 3) Spiral drawing using hula hoops with chalk on sidewalk, driveway, or playground.
- 3) Music – Some children have said the spirals remind them of music. Playing some Celtic traditional music during the drawing often enhances the experience.
- 4) Creating a book of your own – Teachers may want to use some of these ideas when the children create books later.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ Where do we find spirals in nature?
- ◆ What does a spiral make you think of?
- ◆ Where can you find spirals on your body?
- ◆ Can you see spirals in moving air, clouds, water?
- ◆ How will you use spirals in your own art?

LIST OF IMAGES

- 1) Cindy photo (study guide cover)
- 2) Book Cover (p. 2)
- 3) Spider Web page from *Little Town* (p. 2)
- 4) Coloring page (p. 3)
- 5) Page of spirals (p. 4)
- 6) Spiral on sidewalk (p. 4)
- 7) Drawing spirals (p. 4)
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- 10) Ballet poster for *Spiralia* (p. 5)
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- 12) Printers who helped make the book (p. 6)
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