



Through the ARTS

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Susan Rosoff, Associate

@ 2012

## KRISTOPHER BENEDICT



Kristopher Benedict

*The Rat Who Retired from the World*, 2010

Intaglio and relief print, 12" x 12"

Used with the permission of the Sue Scott Gallery, New York New York

**Arts Integration:** Visual Arts and Language Arts

**Target Audience:** Grades 4-12

**Description:** Students read, interpret, and illustrate a fable, *The Rat Who Retired from the World*, with a sequence of relief prints.

### Curricular Objectives:

**Visual Art:** Students describe and reflect on works of art by Kristopher Benedict as well as on their personal works of art. The students use critical thinking skills to create a series of relief prints that interpret a fable.

**English/Language Arts:** Students analyze the fable *The Rat Retired from the World* to determine its purpose.

### Lesson Logistics:

**Materials:** Image of Kristopher Benedict's print

#### For Language Arts/English part of the lesson:

The fable *The Rat Retired from the World*

Grades 4-8 Story form found at:

<http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/20130>

Grades 9-12 Poetry form found at:

<http://www.musee-jean-de-la-fontaine.fr/jean-de-la-fontaine-fable-uk-223.html>



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Worksheet (included in lesson) and pen

### For the Visual Art part of the lesson:

Flat Styrofoam pieces (can be meat trays with edges cut off)  
Printer's ink (thick tempera, or acrylic paint is a substitute)  
Brayer (a soft rubber roller)  
Cookie sheet or piece of Plexiglas for inking surface  
Heavy weight paper to print on  
Wet paper towels or wipes (for cleaning hands during printing)  
Newspaper to keep table surface clean

Space: Classroom

## Vocabulary

Visual Art: Suite (*works in a series*), print, intaglio, relief, contour lines, crosshatching (See *Notes on Printmaking* for information on printmaking terms.)

English/Language Arts: Fable (*a folktale in which animals have human characteristics; there is generally a moral to the story*)  
dervise or dervish (*in this case, one who claims extreme poverty*)  
niggard (*stingy person*), hermit, irony

## Lesson Procedure:

### Starting the lesson:

Ask students if they remember the story of *The Tortoise and the Hare*. Discuss what happens in the story.

- Who tells the story? (the hare)
- What is the purpose of the story? (to teach a lesson)
- How does this story conform to the definition of a fable?
- If you were going to illustrate *The Tortoise and the Hare*, what would the illustration look like? Why?

### Building the Lesson:

### Reading the Fable

Kristopher Benedict based *The Rat Who Retired from the World* on a fable written by the French author, Jean de La Fontaine. Whether as a class or with students working independently, read La Fontaine's fable, *The Rat Retired from the World*. Ask:

- What happens in the story?



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- Who is the main character?
- What do you think of the hermit rat's behavior?
- Where does the author use irony?
- What are we expected to learn from this story? (To share.)

### Analyzing the Print

- Assign groups to analyze Kristopher Benedict's *The Rat Who Retired from the World*. Ask students to work collaboratively using the worksheet at the end of the lesson to "Read the Picture." If possible, use a document camera to project the image so that everyone can easily see the print.
- Share and discuss the information students gleaned.
- In the Resources section is a selection of artwork by other artists who illustrated the fable. Compare and contrast those prints to Benedict's.

### Creating Prints

- Benedict came to Orlando in 2010 to work with Flying Horse Editions, printing a suite of 14 intaglio and relief prints. Benedict used an intaglio (incising) process to create most of the contour lines and crosshatching. He used a relief printing process to print the broad areas of color.
- Ask students to think about and then sketch design ideas for illustrations to depict different parts of the story.
- Students then make a practice drawing of their final illustrations. (Note: Remember that when you print, the design will come out in reverse. The lines incised in the Styrofoam will not have any color – the raised areas are what will print.)
- Draw on the Styrofoam with pencil to transfer the final illustration. The styrofoam becomes the printing plate.
- Put a small dab of ink on the cookie sheet or Plexiglas. Use the brayer and roll the ink back and forth until the Styrofoam is evenly covered with ink. When the ink has little points, you have rolled enough. (Hint: roll away from your body to pick up ink, quickly roll toward your body to get rid of excess ink).
- Roll the inked brayer onto the flat Styrofoam printing plate, making sure the entire surface is covered in ink. You may need to repeat the inking and rolling several times, but don't overdo or the ink will drift into the incise lines and blur the final image.
- Place the paper on top of the inked Styrofoam. Using clean hands, rub the paper lightly across the Styrofoam so that it picks up ink from the Styrofoam. (The back of a spoon is also a good tool.)
- Slowly peel the paper away and allow the print to dry. You can make multiple copies of this print by repeating the inking process, and pressing a new sheet of paper onto the Styrofoam plate. Make at least three prints (one for classroom display, one to take home, and one to share.)
- Reflect on the work you created:  
What is best about it?



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What could be better?

What might you do differently next time?

### Assessment:

Students determined the purpose of the fable.

Students successfully used the “Read the Picture” strategy to understand the main point in Benedict’s print of the rats.

Students created prints that reflect additional aspects of the fable.

Students made a relief print.

### **Summary:**

Illustrations can augment our understanding of fables.

### **Documentation:**

Hang the prints up in the classroom in a sequence that illustrates the story.

### **To Do another Day:**

- Re-write LaFontaine’s fable so that it has a modern day setting.
- Change the point of view in the story, telling it from the point of view of the rats who ask for help.
- Report on the story as if you were a journalist.
- Expand your students’ understanding of fables. The Florida Alliance for Arts Education (FAAE) has a curriculum on their website with connections to two fables from *Uncle Monday and other Florida Tales*. The fables and accompanying illustrations by by Kitty Kitson Petterson are here:  
*The Alligator and the Eagle* [http://www.faae.org/curriculum/UM\\_Alligator\\_Eagle.pdf](http://www.faae.org/curriculum/UM_Alligator_Eagle.pdf)  
*Why the Rabbit is Wild Today* [http://www.faae.org/curriculum/UM\\_Rabbit.pdf](http://www.faae.org/curriculum/UM_Rabbit.pdf)  
To explore how to create texture in art like Petterson did in her illustrations, go to [http://www.faae.org/curriculum/EUM\\_va\\_9-18.pdf](http://www.faae.org/curriculum/EUM_va_9-18.pdf). You will need to scroll down to find the page titled “Draw What You Feel (A Lesson on Drawing Texture)”
- Read additional tales in *The Fables of La Fontaine*, illustrated by Marc Chagall (New York: The New Press, 1995). The poetry is shaped on each page to reflect the action, and the wonderfully colored illustrations are fanciful and quite different from the other images referenced. (The story about the rat is not included, however.) (Caution: Preview the tales before class use, as occasionally Chagall uses nude figures.)

### **Resources:**

Thumbnail images of the entire suite of Benedict prints are available at

<http://www.suescottgallery.com/programs/prints/Kristopher-Benedict/The-Rat-Who-Retired-From-the-World>

There are many 19<sup>th</sup> century illustrations of *The Rat Who Retired from the World*:



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Philippe Rousseau (painting), late 1860s

<http://www.arthermitage.org/Philippe-Rousseau/Scene-from-La-Fontaine-s-Fable-The-Rat-Who-Retired-from-the-World.html>

Jean Grandville, black and white illustration

<http://www.agorat.org/articles/Fichier:Grandville-le-rat-qui-s-est-retire-du-monde.png>

From *Illustrated Weekly*, January 6, 1876

<http://devilduck.tumblr.com/post/1033403099/the-rat-retired-from-the-world-1876>

An 1883 black and white illustration by Auguste Delierre

<http://www.fotolibra.com/gallery/197027/la-fontaine-fables-the-lions-engraving-by-auguste-delierre-1/like/>

Illustration with the poem version of the fable

<http://www.musee-jean-de-la-fontaine.fr/jean-de-la-fontaine-fable-uk-223.html>

### Books

A book of Jean de La Fontaine's fables illustrated by Marc Chagall is available at

<http://www.amazon.com/Fables-Fontaine-Jean/dp/1565844041>

*The History of Printmaking*, published by Scholastic, gives a good overview of printmaking and artists who have used this process. It can be ordered on-line from many different bookstores.

### Background:

**Jean de La Fontaine** was a French writer who lived during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1668 he published a book of fables and folk tales that often featured animals. He drew heavily on *Aesop's Fables*, but also referenced tales from Asia and tales by native storytellers. The original fables were written as poetry, but many translations now appear in story format. His portrait and a long biography are here: <http://www.nndb.com/people/419/000105104/>.

**Kristopher Benedict** received his B.A. degree at The Cooper Union, and his M.F. A. at Columbia University. He is represented by the Sue Scott Gallery in New York, where he has had several one-person exhibitions. (<http://www.suescottgallery.com/artists/Kristopher-Benedict>) In addition to his studio work, he teaches at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA. His artwork is included in several museums nationally, including the Orlando Museum of Art. Benedict came to Orlando in 2010 to work with Flying Horse Editions, printing a suite of 14 intaglio and relief prints. Benedict used an intaglio (incising) process to create most of the contour lines and crosshatching. He used a relief printing process to print most of the colors.





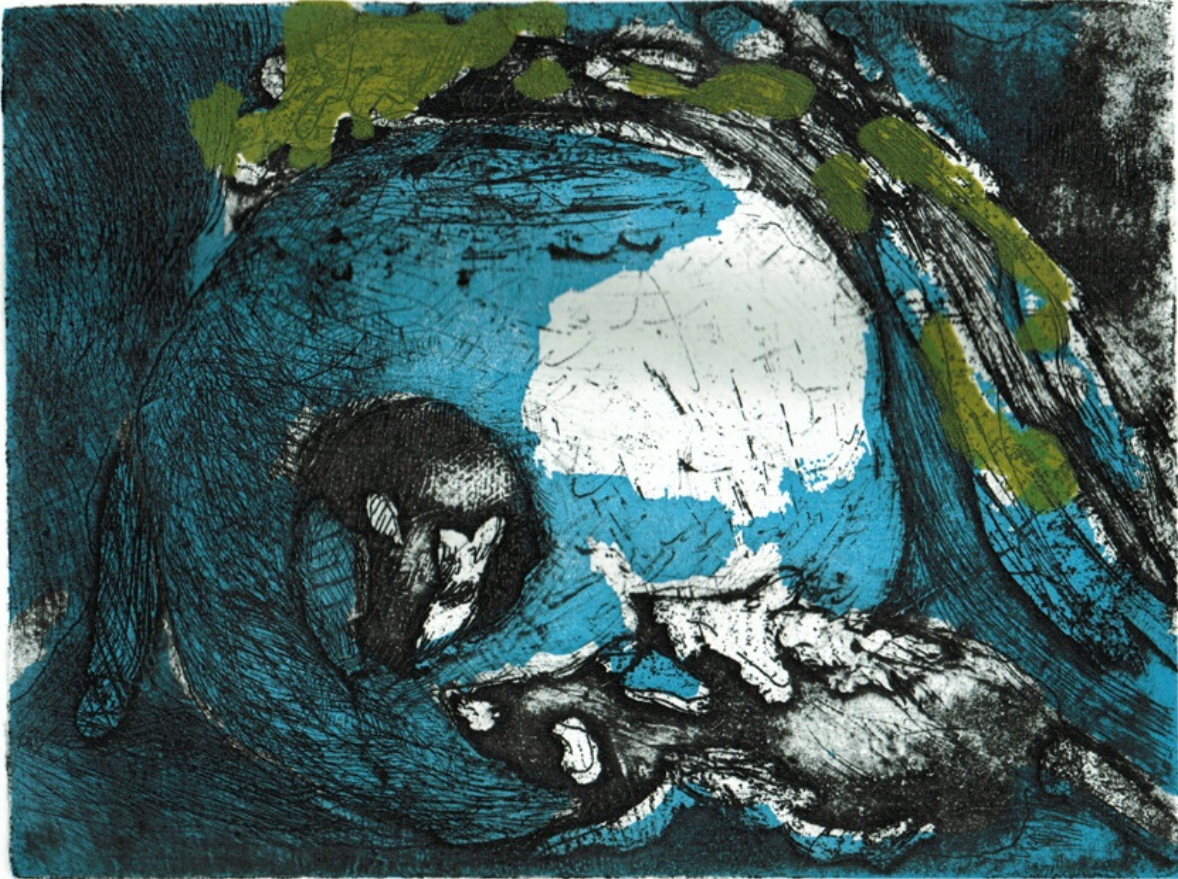
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## Student Worksheet: READ THE PICTURE



© Kristopher Benedict, *The Rat Who Retired from the World*, 2010

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### THE MEMBERS OF OUR GROUP INCLUDE:

**Work collaboratively with the members of your group to answer these questions. Elect a person to take notes about what you discover. Be prepared to share your answers in class.**

- What is happening here? What makes you say that?
- Where do you think this scene might be taking place? Why do you think so?
- What is the largest object in the print? Why do you think Benedict make it so large?
- Why do you think Benedict used cool colors?
- What part of the story did Benedict represent?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What do you notice about the artist's technique? What kind of lines did he use? Where did he put color?
- Do you like this work or not? Why?





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