



# REEEC

Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center  
University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign

## Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum

### **Decorating your own spring egg (Ukrainian Pysanky)**

*20 minutes prep, 30 minutes of class time*

This unit is designed to allow students to interact with the Ukrainian springtime tradition of decorating eggs, known as *pysanky*. Students will be introduced to Ukraine through both photographs and stories, enriching their understanding of this location and the art of decorating *pysanky*.



#### **Required Materials:**

1. Small wooden eggs. (A bag of 50 of these could be purchased from Amazon for around \$15. For a less expensive alternative, students could also be given a printed egg shape to decorate with either markers or glued paper.)
2. Marker sets for students to use.

**Preparation:** Place one wooden egg at each student's assigned seat. Have two small boxes available at each table, allowing students to share once they begin decorating their eggs. Be sure to write names/initials of each student on the bottom of each egg.

#### **Lesson Plan:**

1. Begin by asking the children what country we live in, and then help them locate that country on a map or globe. Then show them where Ukraine is on a map/globe. (2 mins)
2. Use the printed images to introduce the class to Ukraine, showing a picture of the capital city, Kiev, along with a picture of the *pysanky*, accentuating the intricate and colorful handmade designs on each egg. (5 mins)
3. Explain to the students that you will now tell them the story of how *pysanky* came to be such an important springtime tradition in Ukraine. Using the printed illustrations as a guide, tell the story of a cold Ukrainian winter and a young girl who decides to save the small birds from freezing outside. Because of her selfless act of welcoming the birds into her home and thus sparing them from the elements, the birds decide to provide the town with eggs in the springtime once the winter has passed. Thus the tradition of decorating eggs as a symbol of new life in the springtime was born.
4. Explain the activity to the class (10 mins):
  - a. First, they are each going to receive their own wooden egg, found at their assigned seat.
  - b. Next, they are able to select the colors with which they wish to decorate their eggs. Emphasize the patterns found on the eggs in the printed pictures. Tell them that lines and shapes work well for creating such patterns.
  - c. Students will have the remainder of the time together to work on their egg, designing it however they choose. When finished, the egg is ready for them to take home at the end of the day!