

Reviewed by **Lauren A. Baker**

The Museum

Written by Susan Verde/Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds
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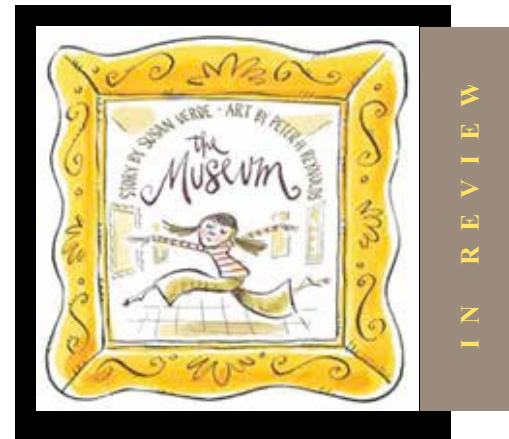
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“**W**hen I see a work of art, something happens in my heart.” This is the opening line of Susan Verde’s delightful book, *The Museum*. Each page is filled with whimsy, from Peter H. Reynolds’ illustrations to the rhyming words to the playful font. Together we accompany a little girl on her trip through an art museum, where Reynolds’ illustrated works represent those by renowned artists.

Our students will view famous works of art and be motivated to craft a new dance, improvisation, or instrumental composition, while having that sense of ownership the little girl shares at the end of the story.

The little girl first encounters and is moved to action by Kandinsky’s “Color Study.” She poses like Degas’ “Little Dancer,” and swirls around like the stars she sees while viewing Van Gogh’s “The Starry Night.” Next she creates her own living sculpture after viewing a Calder piece. She begins to feel tired and decides to rest while looking at Rodin’s “The Thinker.” Here the book shifts from reacting to the art through movement to examining the feelings and expressive qualities of the paintings. Our little girl feels sad while looking at works from Picasso’s Blue Period, feels

hungry with Cezanne’s “Still Life with Apples,” and expresses joy as she pictures herself skipping through Monet’s “Field of Poppies.”



She screams along with Munch’s “The Scream,” makes faces at a Picasso, and giggles at three pieces by Joan Miró. As the story moves to its conclusion, the little girl is faced with a blank canvas. At first she is confused and unsure of what to do. Then she closes her eyes and a world of color and shapes bursts in front of her. When she opens her eyes, the canvas is no longer blank, but filled with her own imagination. As the museum closes for the night, the little girl reminisces about her day and realizes that “The museum lives inside of me.”

The Museum introduces children to a variety of well-known artworks and also provides an exercise in movement and improvisation. The little girl is not quietly viewing the art; she is reacting to it, allowing herself to be transformed by what she is seeing, actions that go hand in hand with Orff Schulwerk. Using dance, chant, and improvisation with a sense of child’s play to teach musical concepts is the heart of what we, as Orff educators, do. Let us be as uninhibited as this story’s little girl to create and try something new. *The Museum* begs to be brought to life. Our students will view famous works of art and be motivated to craft a new dance, improvisation, or instrumental composition, while having that sense of ownership the little girl shares at the end of the story.

This book also reminds us of visual and musical artists who inspired each other. Kandinsky is well known as the painter of music and for his ability to transfer that passion onto the canvas. The story of Mussorgsky and Viktor Hartmann is another example of this

creative effect. After Hartmann's untimely death, Mussorgsky attended a gallery exhibition of his friend's work. He was so inspired by what he saw, he composed *Pictures at an Exhibition*. My colleague and art teacher, Marlo Lee, links art to music with a collage project based on Romare Bearden and his ties to jazz. In the music classroom, teachers might allow students to listen to pieces by Schoenberg and paint what they hear. Viewing a visual masterpiece like "The Starry Night" may lead to composing music to accompany it. Perhaps these examples will inspire you and your art teacher to collaborate on an interdisciplinary project.

The Museum is a reminder that great painters, poets, and musicians inspire each other, and their masterpieces provide inspiration for teachers as well. *The Museum* will get your creative juices flowing and help you find your muse. ■

LAUREN BAKER is the music specialist and choral director at Clovercroft Elementary School in Franklin, Tennessee. She graduated from Belmont University and received her master's degree in music education from the University of North Texas. She has successfully completed three levels of Orff Schulwerk teacher education and is past president of the Middle Tennessee AOSA Chapter. She was recently awarded Elementary Teacher of the Year for Williamson County.