Interrupting Chicken
Written & Illustrated by David Ezra Stein
Germ File Author: Sarah Yale


- **Summary**: Papa Chicken attempts to read a bedtime story to his daughter, but every time the story gets going, the little red chicken interrupts the reading to save the classic characters from danger. Based on a favorite knock-knock joke and interweaving timeless stories within the story, *Interrupting Chicken* is both relatable and memorable.

- **Awards Received**: 2011 Caldecott Honor Book, 2012 Monarch K-3 Readers Choice Book Award (3rd Place), The Golden Kite Award Book

- **Review**: From *School Library Journal* (Gay Lynn Van Vleck, Henrico County Library): “In a picture book that is as charming and comic as *Pouch!* (Putnam, 2009), Stein again represents an affectionate parent’s trials with a vigorous child… Stein’s droll cartoons use watercolor, crayon, china marker, pen, and tea. The rich colors of the characters perfectly contrast with the sepia pages of the storybooks. This is one of the rare titles that will entertain both parent and child.” (Preschool-Grade 2.)

- **Author/Illustrator Information**: [www.davidezra.com/](http://www.davidezra.com/)

- **Discussion Questions**:  
  - Pre-reading:  
    - Have you ever had someone read you a bedtime story before?  
    - Have you ever had a difficult time not interrupting a story that you knew the ending to?  
  - Mid-reading:  
    - What do you predict will happen when Papa Chicken begins the next story?  
  - Post-reading:  
    - Why did the little red chicken continue to interrupt the stories?  
    - How did Papa Chicken feel when little chicken interrupted the story?  
    - What did Papa Chicken suggest to solve the problem? Did it work? What happened?
**Curricular Activities:**

- **Drama:**
  - Have students act out the story as you (or another student) read it aloud.

- **Reading/Oral Language:**
  - Have older students (3rd grade) read the story aloud to younger students (Kindergarten or 1st grade), just as Papa Chicken reads to the little red chicken. Extend this activity by letting the younger students chose books they’d like to “read” aloud or share with the older students.
  - Read other stories where the main characters find themselves breaking the rules with good intentions (like the little red chicken, who is just trying to save the characters in her bedtime story from danger). Discuss why they do this, why the rules exist, and when it is okay to break them. What are the consequences?

- **Social Studies:**
  - Have students brainstorm historical events that the little red chicken could “interrupt” with warnings. What would she say to warn the historical figures? How would this change history?
  - Have a class discussion about classroom rules (like not interrupting the speakers/being good listeners) and how sometimes it is difficult to follow those rules. Ask, “Have you ever been interrupted before? How did you feel?”

- **Art & Technology:**
  - Make little red chicken and Papa Chicken finger puppets and have students act out the story.
  - Have students recall what classic stories Papa Chicken read aloud to the little red chicken (Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, Chicken Little). Then have them brainstorm a list of other well-known stories that the little red chicken might have known and interrupted to aid the main character(s). Have students chose a title from the list and illustrate the part of the story where the little red chicken would interfere. Use examples from Interrupting Chicken to illustrate how Stein uses speech bubbles (like a comic) to warn the story characters.
  - Have students use storytelling/illustrating computer programs to illustrate the little red chicken interrupting a bedtime story (as they did in the art activity above).

- **Writing:**
  - Have students finish writing the rest of the little red chicken’s story, “Bedtime for Papa,” individually or as a class.
  - Have students write and illustrate a bedtime story for their parents like the little red chicken did for Papa Chicken. Encourage them to share it with their family at home, read it to the class in the Authors Chair, and/or add it to the classroom library.

- **Math:**
  - Count how many times the little red chicken interrupts Papa’s stories.

**Related Books:**

- Books about interrupting: *A Children’s Book about Interrupting: Help Me Be Good* (Joy Berry), *My Mouth is a Volcano!* (Julia Cook)
Books about story-time and breaking the rules (with good intentions): *Library Lion* (Michelle Knudsen)

Readers also enjoyed/purchased: *Blackout* (John Rocco), *Children Make Terrible Pets* (Peter Brown), *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* (Philip C. Stead)

**Other Titles written and/or illustrated by David Ezra Stein:**

- *Pouch!* (Zolotow Honor Book)
- *The Nice Book*
- *Love, Mouserella*
- *Because Amelia Smiled*
- *Monster Hug!*
- *Ned’s New Friend* (*Cowboy Ned & Andy*)

**Websites for further study and/or enrichment:**

- Book Trailer (Candlewick Press YouTube): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqB-Jue1oeA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqB-Jue1oeA)
- “In the Studio” video interview with David Ezra Stein on *Interrupting Chicken* (step-by-step development of story and artwork illustrations): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_ul5VQEcs&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_ul5VQEcs&feature=relmfu)

**Extra Information & Ideas:**

- Collaborate with the school art teacher(s) to create lessons discussing/exploring the techniques and process David Ezra Stein employs in creating the illustrations for his children’s books.
- Create an Author Study unit on David Ezra Stein, comparing his books and specific writing techniques he employs that students can use in their own writing.
- Have students interview the school librarian and/or other school staff members who read stories aloud to the students about what it feels like to share a story with children... including what it feels like to be interrupted.
- Engage another staff member in an *Interrupting Chicken* read-aloud, with one staff member reading the part of Papa Chicken and the other reading the part of the little red chicken, acting out the story as it goes along.
- Related Common Core & AASL Standards for Curricular Activities:
  - **CC.1.SL.2** Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
  - **CC.1.RL.7** Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.
  - **CC.1.RI.2** Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
  - **AASL 1.1.2** Use prior and background knowledge as context for new learning.
  - **AASL 1.1.9** Collaborate with others to broaden and deepen understanding.