

# YOU ARE AN ARTIST

video art lessons

## From Nana's Back Porch: Famous Artist Eric Carle

Hello, this is Nana from my back porch. Thank you for joining me today. You are all artists!

Hello artists, this is Nana. I'm talking to you from my back porch. And today I'd like to talk with you about a famous artist who absolutely is one of my favorites. He is a artist and an author, and a wonderful, wonderful storyteller through his paintings. His name is Eric Carle. He is acclaimed and beloved as the creator of brilliantly illustrated and designed picture books for very young children.

His best known book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* has eaten its way into the hearts of millions of children all over the world and has been translated into 66 languages and has sold over 50 million copies. Since *The Caterpillar* was published in 1969, Eric Carl has illustrated more than 70 books, many of them bestsellers, which he also wrote. And more than 152 million copies of his books have sold all around the world.

Mr. Carle was born in Syracuse, New York in 1929 and moved with his family to Germany when he was six. He was educated there and graduated from a prestigious art school in Stuttgart, but his dream was always to return to America, the land of his happy childhood. His mother's homesickness drew the family back to Stuttgart in the 1930s, when the nazi regime sent most people in the opposite direction.

During World War II, he remembered hiding for hours in a cellar as the bombs fell all around them. Once he told of waiting in a stream when a gunner fired on him from a plane. Well, the shooter missed. In his teens, Mr. Carle joined forced laborers, building trenches along the defensive lines. His father had been drafted into the German army and was imprisoned for years by the Soviets.

Mr. Carle told NPR radio during an interview that everything to him was gray and brown. Houses were camouflage with grays and greens and browns. Years later, his artwork was instantly recognizable for its palette. The silvery white of the moon, the burning yellow orange of the sun, and the luscious green of a leaf. And yet he was frustrated that he could not get more colorful.

His style was influenced by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and other modern painters. He was secretly introduced to him by an art teacher in Germany. The Nazis had labeled the modern art as degenerate and not something they want taught. So they had labeled modern art not something that children should ever speak of. And what he had seen, his teachers showed him. He was told to just remember it.

In 1952, he returned to the United States and began an advertising career in New York. He debuted as a children's illustrator in 1966. With a publication of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See*. This book remains today as a star on children's bookshelves and its publication introduced Mr. Carle to the pleasures of creating books for the young.

He has said that his life was beginning to move on to its true course. The long dark time of growing up in Germany, the discipline of the school years, the years of dutifully performing work in an advertising firm, were finally over. "And the child in me was joyfully coming to life," he said.

The very hungry caterpillar has a subtext or what we call a hidden story. Perhaps the caterpillar's eating frenzy seemed to recall the feasting after years of war time hunger. You could even go the route of the Christian interpretation as a story of hope. How a little insignificant ugly worm can grow into a big, beautiful butterfly, and fly into the world.

Mr. Carle received thousands of letters from his young fans every year. Before his death on May 23rd of this year at the age of 91, he said that many children unburden themselves to him. When they wrote letters, they even asked him to be their father. Mr. Carle said when he thought of his own father, he was left with a sadness. That artwork was an antidote. He said, "The child I am helping might just be me."

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*"There are no mistakes in chalk pastel art!" - Nana*

Thank you for joining with me today. I've so enjoyed telling you stories about Eric Carle, because he was kind enough to tell young children, my children and grandchildren, so enjoyed his work. And, so, I close by saying thank you. Thank you, Mr. Carle.

Let's get together again soon and we'll talk about all kinds of artists! And always, always remember that You ARE an Artist.

Thank you for listening, artist friends! Please leave a review and share this with a friend. We invite you to join us in the You ARE an Artist Clubhouse at [ChalkPastel.com](http://ChalkPastel.com) where we have over 700 (Yes, 700!) video art lessons. We would also love for you to join us on Instagram, Facebook, and more, and be sure to tag us when you share photos of your artwork. We cannot wait to see. I'll be talking to you again soon.