

18/03/2010 – Thursday/giovedì - Sansepolcro, Italia

My first day of observations! I was in class all day and I didn't get out of the palazzo until 6:30 p.m./18,30. Thursday was the first day of a huge four day-fair in Sansepolcro. The streets were lined with vendors selling everything from gummy-sharks to hardware to bunnies. After passing multiple opportunities to buy scarves and light bulbs, I wasn't sure what I could observe that would qualify as scientific, until I looked up and saw the moon.



18,45- I need to learn the names for the phases of the moon. Is this a “waxing crescent?” I don't think “beautiful” is a scientific term. I didn't know what direction I was facing when I took the picture. I forgot to check the weather, but my estimate would be about 50 degrees Fahrenheit, which is about 10°C. It wasn't too windy and it wasn't raining.

This was not a promising start to my observation journal. My next observations will have to be better.

19/03/2010 – Friday/venerdì – Sansepolcro and Anghiari, Italia

~ 9,30 - I meant to wake up early to see the sunrise, but I forgot. I decided to look for nature inside the palazzo. We have several plants inside as well as John Rose's garden that grows in Palazzo Alberti's surprisingly elegant elevator shaft. I will have to learn the names of all of these plants.



~17,30 -The wonderful teacher I worked with last semester in the local middle school took me out for dinner in Anghiari. From the wall of the city, I observed that it was an overcast day. I forgot to check the actual temperature, but it is slightly colder than inside the palazzo, which is 18°C, so my estimate would be 16°C.

After walking through the small town for about an hour, the sun had set. Even though it was getting dark, I could still see the clouds and the mountains in the distance.

My primary observation was that I need much more language to describe weather and distances. I also forgot to bring a watch!

20/03/2010 – Saturday/sabato – Sansepolcro, Citerna, and Monterchi, Italia

Today is the vernal equinox, but it is at 18,32, so is the special sunrise today or tomorrow? I really considered getting up at 6,00 to watch the sunrise, but I just didn't make it in time.

Jane, my host-mother and her mother, my host-grandmother, Nara, met me at 10,00 for a cup of tea in town. Jane asked if I would like to visit nearby towns, Citerna and Monterchi. As we walked to her car, I noticed that some cherry blossoms were blooming. When I took my camera out to take a picture, as well as to document the time, I realized the battery had died! I was going to have to rely on paper and pencil for my observations!



We drove to Citerna, which is a small walled town 15 kilometers from Sansepolcro. I believe we arrived around 10,45. Fortunately, someone has posted a picture on the internet of the view of Monterchi from Citerna on an overcast day. Except for the fact that I could see snow-topped mountains in the distance, this picture closely resembles what I observed. The view, even with some haze, was lovely. I don't have any specific details about the birds I heard singing; I just noticed that birds were singing. On the main road I saw a hound dog napping on a doorstep. I think the dog was somewhere between 40 and 50 pounds, which would be about 18-22 kg. He was the third sleeping

dog I observed that morning. I stopped to pet him, and when we resumed our walk, he followed us to the piazza. While Jane, Nara and I were having a pastry at the local shop, the dog curled up in the piazza next to an elderly black cat with only one quarter of a tail. After our snack, Jane went to get some bread and I went to the piazza and sat between the dog and cat and realized they had selected a spot that had been warmed by the sun.

Approximately thirty minutes after we arrived, we left for Monterchi, which is 2.2 kilometers south, to see Piero della Francesca's "*Madonna del Parto*." Along the drive, the overcast day didn't detract from the picturesque Italian countryside; which I now know is a human construct, but the human beings did an excellent job.

After the museum, Jane brought me back to their home in Sansepolcro, which is outside the city wall, a few kilometers up in the hills. It was now approximately 12,30 and the overcast day was transforming itself into a sunny day. While Jane prepared lunch, she suggested that I take some time and explore the property. I don't think most people would be as excited as I was by her offer to meet and feed her chickens, but I was very happy. I tossed approximately half a kilogram of salad greens over the wire fence into the enclosure and sat on a stone wall to observe the chickens. Over the next thirty minutes, I thoroughly enjoyed comparing and contrasting their colors, size, eyes, movements, and anything else I could think of.

Nine chickens in all.	The black and gray chicken was the most vocal and most aggressive.
I think they are all female.	Two chickens were missing many feathers around their necks. (Jane said this was due to "pecking order.")
Their purpose is to lay eggs.	All of their combs were approximately the same size and color, but each had a distinct shape.
One is gray and black, one is brown, one is tan, one is gray, the rest were a mix of copper and brown.	A few of them didn't mind where they went to the bathroom.
I think they all had orange eyes.	They ate all of the lettuce leaves first; some were more aggressive than others to get to the food. The stems were eaten last, and more slowly than the leaves.
Their leg movements were very slow and deliberate, but their head movements were very jerky and abrupt.	When a gate closed on the property, all of the chickens were quiet and moved towards the corner of the habitat closest to where the sound originated.

The sound of the gate closing was that of my host-father, and my host-dog, Bacco, returning home. This was the first time I had seen them since I've been here. Over lunch, I felt immensely grateful for all of the kindness this family has offered me.

21/03/2010 – Sunday/*domenica* – Sansepolcro, Italia



After a few days of observations, I was noticing how much I hadn't noticed before. I also needed to learn from all my mistakes. I bought a whistle because it has a compass and thermometer attached to each side, as well as a little magnifying glass. I charged my camera battery. I made a worksheet for daily observations with reminders to note the time, temperature, weather, sunrise/set and a metric ruler. I will get better at this!

Science class won't be limited to the classroom, and the Swabs prefer to have class outside. In addition to exploring Sansepolcro, we will have field trips to Gubbio, Caprese Michelangelo, and Assisi. Dr. Swab and Mr. Ed can teach anywhere about anything. In the meantime, if I have questions, I can usually find the Swabs in the staff office, studying web sites, maps, books, newspapers, and their own observation journals. The Swabs are adding another dimension to my experience learning about Italian history, culture, and art. If this class is anything like the others I have completed so far, I will have a much deeper appreciation for the world around me.

