

COVERED IN QUILTS

SUBJECTS: Math, Visual Arts, Social Studies

STUDENT SKILL: (Math) The student will identify two-dimensional geometric shapes and objects in everyday situations. (VA) The student will experiment in color mixing with various media. (SS) The student will describe how people get their basic needs.

OBJECTIVE: The student will create a quilt block, using several colors and an assortment of geometric shapes.

BACKGROUND

Women have used quilts as a practical form of art expression for many years. In the past, quilts served an important purpose. They were an economical way for women to keep their families warm in the wintertime. Women would stitch together flour sacks made from cotton, worn out work jeans or scraps of material from well worn, outgrown clothing. The seamstress would piece the scraps together to make a square, called a block. When she had enough squares to make a cover for the bed, she would stitch them all together to make the top of the quilt.

Cotton batting was placed between the two layers to provide insulation. Cotton batting is cotton fiber from the cotton plant which has been wadded into rolls or sheets. If the seamstress was making the quilt for someone else, to earn extra money, she would be very careful to remove all the seeds, twigs and leaves from the batting. She did that to make sure there were no lumps in the quilt. If she was making it for their family, she would sometimes leave a few leaves and seeds inside. In some quilts that are very old you can still feel the seeds and twigs between the quilt layers. Quilts were usually made from cotton, because it was easy to hand-stitch and held its shape well. Cotton absorbs moisture and allows it to evaporate. It is also easy to wash and springs back into its original shape after washing. Cotton fabric is extremely durable and has been used to make clothing or coverings since around 2200 B.C. Quilting bees were popular gatherings for women and young girls. They were the best place for young girls to learn to quilt and visit with their friends at the same time. Friends would come together in someone's home and work

MATERIALS

pictures of quilts
or actual quilts

construction paper
in several colors



VOCABULARY

piece

quilt

batting

quilting bee

together to complete a quilt. Many times the women in a community would get together and make a quilt to celebrate a milestone in someone's life. They would make quilts to celebrate the marriage of young couple, the birth of a baby, a prosperous harvest or even a death in the family.

Today quilting is no longer just a woman's art. Artists, some of whom are men, experiment with shades, shapes and texture to create beautiful works of art. Today quilts are as likely to be used to decorate a wall as to provide warmth. Numerous U.S. museums own quilts and display them as historical works of art.

ACTIVITY

1. Bring pictures of quilts or actual quilts for students to examine. Share background material.
2. Explain to students that they will be designing their own blocks. Provide construction paper in several colors. Instruct students to cut a nine-inch square from the color of their choice.
3. Draw a variety of geometric shapes on the board, or hand out geometric manipulative shapes which students may use as patterns.
4. Instruct students to choose the colors they wish to use in their quilts and cut them into the geometric shapes they prefer. Bring quilt books to class from which students can get ideas for designs, or use the quilt patterns found in the pattern page section of the book.
5. Have students explain their blocks. Ask why they chose the colors they chose and how they arrived at their designs.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Display the quilt blocks in your classroom. Have students use quilt books to research the designs they have used and find historic fact about them. Then invite another class in, and have student share their findings.
2. Make a paper quilt by taping all the class quilt blocks together. Display for others to enjoy.
3. Invite members of a local quilting group to visit your classroom and show some of their creations. Ask the visitors to bring a small quilting frame, if possible, and to talk about how they go about planning a quilt.
4. Have students make fabric quilt blocks and make a classroom quilt. Auction off the quilt at the end of the school year to raise money for future projects.

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Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom
Oklahoma 4-H Programs
205 4-H Youth Development
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
405-744-8889
<http://www.agclassroom.org/ok>



RESOURCES

Amor, Jennifer, Flavor Quilts for Kids to Make, American Quilter's Society, 1991.

Ernst, Lisa, Sam Johnson and the Blue Ribbon Quilt, Morrow, 1992.

EVALUATION

Did the students enjoy creating their own quilt blocks? Were they able to make the geometric shapes fit together?