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## *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold

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Keywords: Birds Eye View, Collage, Color, Composition, Illustrate,  
Landscape, Mood

Activity: Class Quilt

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### Keywords Defined:

- **Birds Eye View** - a scene shown from high up in the air as a bird in flight might see it
  - **Collage** - work of art created by gluing bits of paper, fabric, scraps, photographs or other materials to a flat surface
  - **Color** - an element of art. The hue, value, and intensity of an object.
  - **Composition** - arrangement or design of elements of an artwork to achieve balance, contrast, rhythm, emphasis and unity to make an effective expression of an artists' idea.
  - **Illustrate** - to create designs and pictures for books or magazines to explain or show what happens in a story.
  - **Landscape** - a painting or drawing showing a scene from nature, often including mountains, trees, rivers, fields and other outdoor scenery.
  - **Mood** - the feeling or emotion suggested or created in the viewer by a work of art
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**Important lesson:** What is a quilt? Quilting is an art form. African-American women are credited with the beginning of quilt-making in America. Making quilts was part of their duties as slaves and they made them for the plantation owner's family. Quilts were part of Faith Ringgold's family tradition.

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### Meet the Artist:

- Faith Ringgold was born in Harlem, N.Y. in 1930. She grew up during the time of the Great Depression. As a child she had asthma so she didn't go to school until 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.
- Her mother taught her at home and took her to museums. She gave Faith paper & crayons to draw and bits of cloth, needle and thread to make little things. Her mother taught her to sew.
- While she was at college, Faith had a professor who didn't like her drawings and told her that he didn't think that she would be an artist.
- Faith Ringgold began her artistic career more than 35 years ago as a painter. Today, she is best known for her painted story quilts - art that combines painting, quilted fabric and storytelling. When she started out, there were hardly any galleries that would show the work of black women.
- She has exhibited all over the world and has permanent collections in many museums in New York City. She has also written and illustrated over a dozen children's books. She has received more than 75 awards for painting and writing.

- Faith is married with two children, three grandchildren and is a professor of art at the University of California.
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### Possible Questions:

- What kinds of things do you see in this painting?
  - Does this painting tell a story?
  - Notice the girl "flying"... where would you like to get a birds eye view of?
  - How would you describe the lines, the shapes, the colors? Is there repetition?
  - Do you like it?
  - What would you title this artwork?
  - Does it make you want to learn how to quilt?
  - What is worth remembering about this painting?
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### Activity: Class Quilt.

#### Supplies: Drawing paper

Fabric (pre-cut into 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch squares - (note: May substitute wrapping paper but we don't supply it - you will need to bring it from home)

Crayons or Markers

Scissors

Glue

### Project Description:

1. Give each student 2 piece's of drawing paper & have children sign their names on the back of one piece of the drawing paper.
2. Have them glue a row of fabric squares around all sides of the piece of paper with their name on it, as a frame.
3. As their "Frames" dry, explain to the children that they will be creating a "heritage quilt" of a scene from their life. They are to think of a short story from their life (such as a day at the beach, a family picnic, a family tradition etc...) and think of a picture to go with the story. They may use the extra sheet of drawing paper to jot down the story and sketch out their illustrations to get their ideas all worked out.
4. When they have their ideas set, have them use markers to write the story on the paper on the paper around the inside of the border of the fabric - be sure that they leave space for their illustrations. (as an option, you may also choose to have them write their stories on a separate piece of paper and cut it out and glue it onto the fabric - this will look more like the print! Your choice!)
5. Have them illustrate their story in the center of their composition. Mention that they may want to draw the picture as from a bird's eye view, as Mrs. Ringgold did in *Tar Beach*.
6. Attach parent letters to back of finished works and display as desired by the teacher! (Full names may go on the back) (You may want to display as one large collage like an actual quilt!)