Activity: Heritage Quilt Squares

Keywords Defined:

- **Bird’s-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.
- **Composition** - arrangement or design of elements of an artwork to achieve balance, contrast, rhythm, emphasis and unity to make an effective expression of an artist’s idea.
- **Illustrate** - to create designs and pictures for books or magazines to explain or show what happens in a story.

Art Masterpiece: *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold
• **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.

**Quilting:** 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.

**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 2nd grade.

• Her mother taught her at home and took her to museums. She gave her daughter Faith paper & crayons to draw with. Her mother taught her to sew, and gave her bits of cloth, needle and thread to make things.

• 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. She went on to prove him wrong!

• 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 Faith started out, there were very few galleries that would show the work of black women, but she persevered and eventually was accepted as an artist.

• Faith Ringgold 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 emeritus of art at the University of California.
Possible Questions:

- What kinds of things do you see in this painting?
- Does this painting tell a story?
- Notice the girl “flying”... she’s getting a bird’s-eye view.
- How would you describe the lines, the shapes, & the colors? Is there repetition?
- What would you title this artwork?
- Does it make you want to learn how to quilt? What kinds of quilts have you seen in your experience?
- What is worth remembering about this painting?

Activity: Heritage Quilt Squares

1) Give each student a 12 x 12-inch sheet of scrapbook paper with a design that they like. Allow them 3-4 choices to keep the choosing process simple. This design is the “back” of their quilt. Students must write their names on the colored side so they can identify their quilt square later.

2) Turn the page over so the white side is facing up. Have them choose and glue (with a glue stick) 12 different fabric squares around the edges of the paper as a frame. It works best if the glue stick is used on the paper first, then the fabric placed on top (glue-stick is too difficult to spread directly onto the fabric).

3) The fabric squares should have patterns that represent their life and personality, and no two squares on their quilt should have the same pattern. Encourage the students to work quickly on their quilt block so there will be plenty of time to finish their drawing. Neatly stack extra fabric squares in their proper bags, and collect the bags for later use.

4) As their "Frames" dry, explain to the students that they will be illustrating the center of their "heritage quilt square" with a scene from their life. They are to think of a short story from their life (such as a vacation, a family activity, a family tradition, etc.) and think of a picture to go with the story.
5) Pass out the 6-inch square pieces of cardstock, and have the students illustrate their story, beginning with pencil sketching to solidify their ideas. Mention that they may want to draw the picture as from a bird’s-eye view, the way Mrs. Ringgold did in *Tar Beach*.

6) When they have completed their sketch, they will use markers to write a few sentences about their story around the edge of the cardstock square. Then they will color in their sketch with fine-tip markers.

7) Using a glue stick, glue the 6-inch square cardstock drawing in the center of the “quilt” to complete the project.

8) **DO NOT SEND HOME:** Please collect the quilt squares and return them to the Art Masterpiece Coordinator for laminating. The Coordinator will return the artwork to the classroom in approximately a week.

9) Lay the quilt squares out individually in the classroom or in the Art Masterpiece Drying Rack (found in the corner of the copy room) so the glue can dry overnight without sticking to the other students’ work.

10) When the glue is dry, the quilt squares will be laminated by the Art Masterpiece Coordinator to be sent home later as a special memento of CTA Humphrey. Quilt squares will be displayed together to form a combined “Class Quilt” in the classroom until the end of the school year. Students will take their individual Heritage Quilt Squares home at that time.

**Materials Needed:**

- 12 x 12-inch scrapbook paper, white on one side, designs on the other
- Printed cotton-blend woven fabric (pre-cut into 3-inch squares and sorted into bags of ~50 squares that the students can choose from)
- Permanent glue sticks
- Pencils
- 6-inch square pieces of white cardstock
- Fine-tip markers
Artwork Examples: