

## **Illinois State Museum – MuseumLink Art**

*Teachers' Orientation Pages to:*

### **Illinois Quilts and Quilters: Keeping Us in Stitches Collection and Exhibition**

The quilt collection of the Illinois State Museum numbers over 300 quilts. Included are more than 100 Amish quilts, 200 traditional quilts spanning the years 1825 to the present, and a number of art quilts by artists of the twentieth century. This online exhibit features examples from all three categories. The Illinois Amish Quilt Collection Exhibit will open at **the Illinois State Museum, Springfield** in April of 2000, and will travel to our other sites for several years. The other quilts are seen occasionally in exhibits, as are special exhibits of quilts not owned by the Museum. For example, the art quilts of **Joan Lintault** will be shown in Springfield in 2000. Each year the Museum presents a spring quilt exhibit at our Rend Lake Gallery in southern Illinois.

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/exhibits/changing/lintault/main2.html>.

#### **Images**

The images of the quilts are presented as thumbnails on the front page of each section. This lets the viewer preview the contents and also compare the patterns as if from a distance. By clicking on the image or label, the viewer gets a popup window of an enlarged image. In some cases, images of details are shown to point out interesting design features. There are also photographic images of a quilter who is demonstrating basic techniques used in hand sewing and quilting. This section can be accessed from the left menu and from the text of each section.

#### **Text**

The text provides a variety of information about quilting and quilters. The makers of some quilts are unknown, while there is a lot of information about other quilters. The text gives information about the origins or patterns and the popular colors or fabrics of various eras. This information is integral in dating quilts and in understanding why quilts look the way they do through history. The text notes that some patterns reoccur century after century, but in the color schemes and fabrics popular in their era – creating different looks. There is a question for thought in each popup window. Teachers could use these as topics of discussion, rewording them for the youngest students, or older students could answer them as they go through a section of quilts. The purpose is to look more closely at the quilts and think about aspects of quilting.

Quilting, like any special subject, has its own vocabulary of terms. Sometimes these words look familiar, but are used in a special way. We provided an extensive glossary of terms we used in the text, with definitions that pop up in a little window, so as to be the least disruptive to reading.

#### **Interdisciplinary Use in History**

Quilting has been prominent throughout the western settlement of the United States. In addition to the patterns being handed down, it is the tradition of community activities like quilting bees and barn raising. Quilting represents thrift, recycling, and family feelings. Many of your students' families have a quilt somewhere in their family history. There are

many children's literature books (on the **Print Resources** list) that relate cultural history and tell a story at the same time.

### **Language Arts**

Quilts can be a stimulus for writing stories, essays, and reports about quilts, family, culture, feelings, and events. Students can keep a journal of their quilting-making project. Individuals can bring a quilt to school and relate its history in relation to the members of the family (from written drafts).

### **Mathematics**

Geometric quilt patterns are a good way to practice the skills of measuring angles, figuring square inches and feet (and estimating yardage), and using fractions. Students can look at various geometric quilt patterns online and in quilting books (see resources sections) for inspiration or modeling and draw their own pattern on graph paper. They can then measure and mark the angles that a quilter would need to know in order to make templates and cut fabric. Quilters would estimate yardage needed for batting and backing and binding by arranging multiple blocks on a grid, adding borders, and figuring out the final dimensions.

### **Grade Level for Activities – Some Real-Life Examples**

The developer of the quilting activities is a quilter who has taught quilting to elementary students age 6 to 12 in the museum and in a classroom in the last three years. The **geometric quilt design activity** was written for and was tested by a second grade class who visited the museum. They toured a quilt show for 45 minutes, talking about geometric shapes in quilts and about art quilts. Then for 45 minutes, they



- arranged patterns of pre-cut squares and triangles of fabric onto a paper grid and glued down the final design
- worked with their table of 6-10 students a pattern for a small quilt top of their squares and glued them to poster board.

The classroom teacher plans to add this activity to her yearly quilting unit.

A group of girls, age 6 to 8, made **appliqué wall quilts** with fusible web and an iron. This method works faster than sewing for all ages. Outline quilting stitches can be sewn around the edges of the motifs later on. (**photo**)

### **Sewing a Real Quilt**

A third/fourth grade class hand-sewed a **full-size** 72-inch square nine-patch quilt to raffle off to pay for a field trip. Each child pieced nine pre-cut squares of cloth, following directions and modeling demonstrated in class. The students use free time to complete

one or two nine-patch blocks. The teacher helped them keep stitches small and straight. The students arranged the blocks in the order they thought looked good for a five-by-six block quilt and chose their school colors for the sashing and backing. The quilter assembled the quilt by machine.

Only two blocks needed adjustment for size—an outstanding job for any group of people. The quilt went back to school for the hand tying of knots (a traditional alternative to stitching for the quilting stage).

### **Story Quilt**

One of the teacher-advisors on the Museumlink project created a DBAE approach to a quilt unit (on art quilter Faith Ringgold, in which fourth graders watched a video of her work, discussed the elements that made her style unique, painted a central panel, and designed and colored a geometric border that was ironed on). We have adapted this unit to incorporate the use of the WWW. This unit takes four art classes of 50-60 minutes each. The use of several class periods let the students absorb the knowledge about the artist and the art form and reinforce it in their own work in a way that a one-period activity would not do.



### **Resources for Quilting:**

<http://ariel.ccs.brandeis.edu/~heddi/index.htm#ideas>

*Quilting with Children* gives a teacher illustrated steps and good instructions on making different kinds of quilts with groups of children. A listserv is also available with this site.