



1980–83

Cotton; running stitch

76 1/4 x 62 1/2 inches (193.7 x 158.8 cm)

PEARLIE POSEY

American

The Ella King Torrey Collection of African
American Quilts, 2006, 2006-163-7

LET'S LOOK!

What are some of the animals in this quilt? What are they doing?

How would you describe the mood of this quilt? What do you see that makes you say that?

What are some strategies that the artist used to make the different animals stand out?

"ANIMALS" QUILT

Although Posey made pieced quilts for many years, she was inspired by her daughter, Sarah Mary Taylor, to make appliqué quilts toward the end of her life. Due to her failing eyesight, she would have Taylor cut out the forms, then she'd group the figures together on blocks of fabric, often varying their arrangement in each section. Posey created lively quilts and became known for her use of bright colors. In this quilt, animals run, play, and gather together. Each block seems like an excerpt from a larger story. Posey's use of contrasting colors and values adds to the animated feeling of the quilt.

ABOUT THIS ARTIST

"In my time, would be a family there and a family there and a family there and we would get together and tear up old clothes, overall and linings and everything and piece quilt tops and linings...If I was ready to quilt one, well, four or five women Sunday morning come to my house and put one in. That's the way we quilted, just quilt and laugh and enjoy ourselves."

—Pearlie Posey

Pearlie Posey lived a life of physical labor, spending her days working on plantations in Mississippi and her evenings taking care of her family. She suffered the loss of her mother at age five and was raised by her grandparents. Nonetheless, her mother spent time at the end of her life sewing quilt tops so that she could provide warmth and love for her daughter even after she was gone. Later in life, Posey's grandmother taught her how to make pieced quilts such as nine-patch, four-patch, and strip quilts. Material and thread were scarce, so they used what they had, obtaining thread by unraveling flour and meal sacks.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

Elementary School – Valerie Flourney’s The Patchwork Quilt

Read this story and discuss what the quilt means to Tanya, her grandmother, and the other members of their family.

Elementary School – Stories

As a class, imagine Posey’s quilt is a storybook, with each square showing a different scene in the narrative. You can view the quilt together as a class. Brainstorm how all of the scenes in the quilt fit together, or have individual students determine what is happening in each quilt block, then tie them together into one long story as a class.

Middle and High School – Alice Walker’s short story, Everyday Use

Have students read Alice Walker’s short story *Everyday Use*. Discuss the characters’ sense of their heritage and their relationships to the quilts. What are the arguments for giving the quilts to Dee or to Maggie? Why do you think Mama makes the decision that she does at the end of the story?

ART

Elementary School – Appliqué Quilt

Have students draw animals or people in interesting poses, either from images in magazines and newspapers, or from life. Make templates of the images, trace them onto cloth, and cut them out. Ask students to create a scene with the figures by applying them to a background square of cloth with stitches, glue, or a double stick fusible web product such as Steam-A-Seam 2 Double Stick (available at craft stores), which attaches pieces of fabric together with the heat of an iron. Taking inspiration from Posey’s quilt, assemble the students’ blocks together in a class quilt.