



Philadelphia Museum of Art

**GEE'S BEND:
THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE QUILT
AND AFRICAN AMERICAN
QUILTMaking TRADITIONS**



**A RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR TEACHERS**

**How curious a land is this,—how full of untold story, of tragedy
and laughter, and the rich legacy of human life; shadowed
with a tragic past, and big with future promise!**

– W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

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Pictured on the sticker:

Blocks, Strips, Strings, and Half-Squares Quilt, 2005, by Mary Lee Bendolph (Collection of the Tinwood Alliance. Photo by Stephen Pitkin, Pitkin Studio, Rockford, Illinois)

OVERVIEW

This resource guide was developed by the Division of Education of the Philadelphia Museum of Art to complement the exhibition *Gee's Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt* (September 16–December 14, 2008) and to serve as an ongoing resource for teachers. The guide provides information about ten quilts created by African American women who worked throughout the twentieth century. Six of the quilts are on view in the *Gee's Bend* exhibition and the remaining four are in the permanent collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The ten quilts in this guide suggest the range of the many styles, influences, and materials found within African American quilting traditions. The quilts have many stories to tell of artistic innovation, triumph over hardship, and pride in heritage. It is important to note that these quilts are a small sampling of a much larger production, for many quilts have been lost to history. Each quilt is a product of its own particular social, historical, and personal context. For this reason, the text prioritizes the quiltmakers' own words, biographical information, and descriptions of their working methods.

Note: The quotes from the artists were taken from personal interviews and therefore reflect the informality of that form of communication. As you read the quotes, listen for the richness of the spoken word and the rhythms that characterize the dialect of the American South.

RESOURCES

The resources listed below can be used to introduce the material to K–12 students as pre- or post-visit lessons, or instead of a Museum visit.

- A full-color poster
- A CD-ROM containing a PowerPoint presentation that includes digital images of the quilts examined in this printed guide and “looking questions” to initiate discussions
- Information about ten quilts and the artists who made them
- Language arts, social studies, math, and art curriculum connections
- A selected chronology
- A resource list for further study
- A vocabulary list, which includes all words that have been bolded in the text

QUILT BASICS

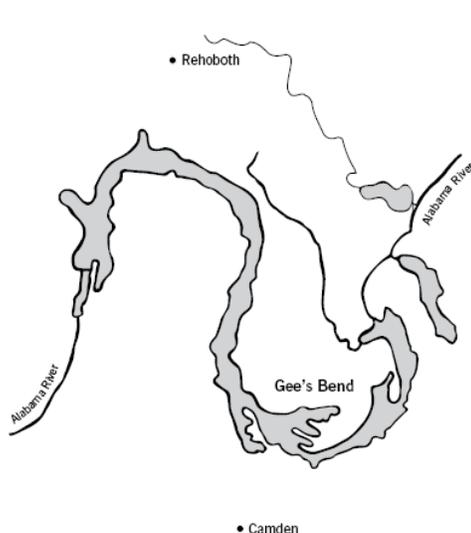
- Most quilts are made of three layers: a **top** that is decorative, a middle of soft **batting** that adds thickness and provides warmth, and a **back**.
- These three layers are stitched, or **quilted**, together.
- The quilts included in this guide fall into two categories: **pieced** and **appliqué**.
Pieced quilts have a top made of bits of fabric stitched, or pieced, together.
Appliqué quilts have tops that consist of background blocks of fabric with cutout shapes of fabric sewn on top.

ABOUT GEE'S BEND

Gee's Bend, Alabama, is a rural community of about 700 people, most of whom are African American, located on a fifteen-mile stretch of land nestled in a hairpin turn of the Alabama River. The area is named for Joseph Gee, who established a cotton plantation there in 1816. In 1845, Mark Pettway bought the estate, which encompassed thousands of acres of land and 101 enslaved people. Pettway also forced slaves from his North Carolina home to walk across four states to Alabama. Many residents of Gee's Bend are descendants of these people, a large number of whom still bear Pettway's last name.

After the American Civil War (1861–65), the majority of the freed slaves in Gee's Bend became tenant farmers and remained in the area. During the **Great Depression** (1929–39), the price of cotton plummeted, causing economic strife in Gee's Bend. It was identified as one of the poorest towns in the nation, prompting the administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to establish a program to build new homes and offer residents low-interest mortgages. While many African American families in the South moved North in the ensuing years, these homeowners stayed.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., visited Gee's Bend in 1965 and encouraged citizens to register to vote and to join him in a march to Selma, Alabama. Many Gee's Bend women were jailed for these actions. In additional retaliation, the ferry service that connected Gee's Bend to the larger town of Camden was cancelled, cutting off access to services and supplies (this ferry service was restored in 2006). Still, the community endured, and when King was assassinated in 1968, two farmer mules from Gee's Bend were chosen to pull his casket. For over a century, the people of Gee's Bend have come together to overcome the struggles of poverty, isolation, and prejudice. Although Gee's Bend remains geographically remote, it is recognized worldwide as a center of artistic production and a symbol of community perseverance and pride.



QUILTMaking IN GEE'S BEND

The quiltmakers of Gee's Bend first garnered attention for their skills in the 1960s, when the **Freedom Quilting Bee**, a sewing cooperative that produced quilts and other sewn products for department stores, was established. The Bee provided women with an income and a sense of independence during the tumultuous **Civil Rights** era. In the mid-1990s, while researching African American folk art in the South, art collector William Arnett became interested in the history of quilting. After seeing a photograph of Gee's Bend quiltmaker Annie Mae Young standing with one of her quilts, he visited her and the other accomplished quiltmakers in the community. Working together, they organized the acclaimed exhibition *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* in 2002. The overwhelming positive response to the show led to a renaissance of quilting in the area. Since the 2002 exhibition, younger artists have been inspired to pick up needle and thread and older quiltmakers who had abandoned the practice took it up again. The current exhibition, *Gee's Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt*, showcases much of this new work.

WILLIE “MA WILLIE” ABRAMS

American, 1879–1987

Roman Stripes Variation Quilt

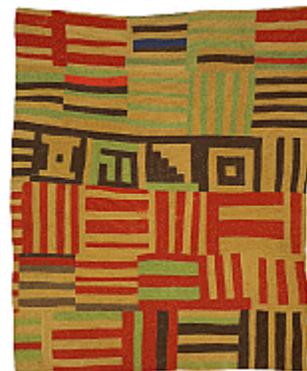
c. 1975

Corduroy

85 1/2 x 70 1/2 inches (217.2 x 179.1 cm)

Collection of the Tinwood Alliance

Photo by Stephen Pitkin, Pitkin Studio, Rockford, Illinois



I believe she was quiet not because she didn't have anything to say, but because she came from a world where you did not speak until you were spoken to. I think this is also how she was able to create many beautiful quilts . . . because in her moments of quietness she would think of things to do and visualize it and just make it.

– Louise Williams, speaking about her grandmother, Willie Abrams



ABOUT THIS ARTIST

Willie “Ma Willie” Abrams lived in Rehoboth, Alabama, a settlement north of Gee’s Bend. She helped operate the **Freedom Quilting Bee** with her daughter, Estelle Witherspoon, who served as its head manager for over two decades. Abrams is remembered as a quiet person and gifted quiltmaker who often shared pattern blocks and designs with others. Scholars have noted that the quiltmakers of Rehoboth have a unique style, characterized by daring color combinations and innovative compositions. This distinctive style might result in part from Rehoboth’s geographical distance from the heart of Gee’s Bend.

ABOUT THIS QUILT

In 1972, the Freedom Quilting Bee received a contract with Sears Roebuck and Company to make corduroy pillow shams. The abundance of leftover fabric from that project inspired many local quiltmakers to incorporate it into their designs. Although difficult to work with due to its rigidity, corduroy was well suited for minimal yet bold designs. This quilt, made from Sears corduroy, has a warm feeling due to the gold, red, and brown colors, accented by avocado green. The design is dominated by a variation of the **Roman Stripes** pattern, made of rows of horizontal strips. However, Abrams rotated the rows throughout the design and manipulated the size of each **block**. One row of blocks near the middle of the quilt features a sampling of other quilt patterns including **Bricklayer**, **Log Cabin**, and **Housetop**.

LET’S LOOK!

What shapes and patterns are in this quilt?

This quilt is made of corduroy. How do you think it would feel to sleep under it?

How are the blocks different from each other? How are they similar?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

Elementary and Middle School – Poetry of Design

As a class, brainstorm words that can be used to describe the textures, colors, shapes, and patterns in Abrams's quilt. You can view the quilt together as a class by projecting the image in the PowerPoint presentation (on the CD-ROM included with this resource guide). Using the long list of words, have students create poems that capture the feeling of the quilt.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Middle and High School – The Freedom Quilting Bee and the Civil Rights Movement

Abrams helped to manage the **Freedom Quilting Bee**, a sewing cooperative established in 1966, which employed women in the Gee's Bend and Rehoboth areas. They produced quilts and other sewn pieces that were sold in department stores. Have students research the history of the Freedom Quilting Bee and its relationship to the **Civil Rights Movement** (see Nancy Callahan's book on the subject, listed in "Additional Resources for Study" on page 30).

MATH/ART

Elementary School – How Many Ways?

Ask students to put three rows of three dots on a piece of paper. Have them connect the dots with straight lines in any way they like (just as long as the large square is enclosed). Compare and contrast the solutions, then ask students to work on several more designs. How many ways are there to divide up the square using the dots? What happens if you add more dots to each row?

Elementary School – 100 Dots

Give students sheets of paper with 10 rows of 10 dots (100 dots total). Have students connect the dots with straight lines to make a symmetrical design (they don't have to use every dot). Invite students to color in the entire design. Compare and contrast the resulting compositions.

Elementary School – Variations on Quilt Patterns

Have students look at some of the different quilt patterns (see "Basic Building Blocks of Quilts" on page 36). Then ask students to choose one that they'd like to reinterpret and have them design a quilt with nine **blocks** (three rows of three blocks), with each block featuring a variation of the quilt pattern they chose. Discuss how students altered the original pattern in their designs.

LOUISIANA P. BENDOLPH

American, born 1960

Housetop Variation Quilt

2003

Cotton and cotton blends

97 1/2 x 66 3/4 inches (247.7 x 169.5 cm)

Collection of the Tinwood Alliance

Photo by Stephen Pitkin, Pitkin Studio, Rockford, Illinois



We came from cotton fields, we came through hard times, and we look back and see what all these people before us have done. They brought us here, and to say thank you is not enough.

– Louisiana P. Bendolph



ABOUT THIS ARTIST

Until she was sixteen, Louisiana Bendolph worked in the fields from sunup to sundown every day of the week except Sunday, when she went to church with her family. She and her husband Albert (whose mother is Mary Lee Bendolph) moved from Gee's Bend to Mobile, Alabama, in 1980, though she considers Gee's Bend her home. She made quilts intermittently throughout her life, at times using patterns from books. However, she had not quilted for many years when she went to the 2002 opening of *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The exhibition inspired her to return to quilting. She said, "When I was coming back from Houston . . . I started having visions of quilts . . . So I got a pencil and a piece of paper and drew them out. Finally I decided that I would get some fabric and make a quilt . . . The images wouldn't go away . . . And I've kept on doing it because those images won't leave me alone."

ABOUT THIS QUILT

In this quilt, solid blocks of color alternate with blocks of intersecting lines that recall maps, mazes, or grids. The quilt as a whole looks like an aerial view of land, roads, and fields. When Bendolph pieces her quilt tops together, she often reworks their design by cutting them apart and rearranging them in new ways. She describes most of her designs as based on the **Housetop** pattern but as she works on them they become "un-Housetop." The connection to her ancestors through quilting is important to her, and today her daughter and granddaughter design quilt patterns on the computer.

LET'S LOOK!

If this quilt were a map or an aerial view, what kind of place could it be?

What colors did the artist use? What do these colors remind you of?

Bendolph says she bases many of her designs on the **Housetop** pattern. How does this quilt remind you of that pattern (see illustration on page 36)?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

High School – Are Quilts Art?

Can utilitarian quilts be considered art? Discuss arguments for and against the idea that quilts should be exhibited in an art museum. Read art critics' opinions as well, such as the differing responses that critics Michael Kimmelman and Brooks Barnes had to *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* exhibition (listed in "Additional Resources for Study" on page 30).

SOCIAL STUDIES

Middle and High School – The Gee's Bend Quilters Collective

The successful exhibitions of quilts from Gee's Bend have created a renaissance in quiltmaking and an increased demand for work done by these quiltmakers. Fifty local women created the Gee's Bend Quilters Collective in 2003 to sell their quilts. When a quilt is sold, part of the income goes directly to the quiltmaker and the rest is distributed among the members of the collective. Learn about how the collective works and how it might serve as an example for other communities on the website quiltsofgeesbend.com.

MATH

Elementary School – Patterns and Pattern Breaks

Using quilting tiles (available through the ETA/Cuisenaire website; see "Additional Resources for Study" on page 30) or shapes cut out of construction paper (one-inch squares and triangles cut from one-inch squares), have students create a clear pattern within a **nine-patch** block (three rows of three squares). Then, have students exchange patterns with a partner. The partner must change one or two pieces to break the overall pattern and create visual interest. What changed? How does the pattern break affect the design?

ART

Elementary and Middle School – Digital Quilt Designs

Louisiana Bendolph's daughter and granddaughter create quilt designs on the computer. Using Adobe Photoshop or another graphics editing program, have students make quilt designs digitally and use them as inspiration in a quilt project.

Middle and High School – Aerial Views

Bendolph's quilt recalls an aerial view of a landscape, including plots of land, roads, and other geographic elements. Have students create designs based on aerial views of their neighborhood, town, or city.

MARY LEE BENDOLPH

American, born 1935

Blocks, Strips, Strings, and Half-Squares Quilt

2005

Cotton

84 x 81 inches (213.4 x 205.7 cm)

Collection of the Tinwood Alliance

Photo by Stephen Pitkin, Pitkin Studio, Rockford, Illinois



*I can walk outside and look around in the yard and see ideas
all around the front and back of my house.*

– Mary Lee Bendolph



ABOUT THIS ARTIST

The seventh of sixteen children, Mary Lee Bendolph has spent her entire life in Gee's Bend. She learned how to quilt from her mother, Aolar. Bendolph gave birth to her first child at age fourteen, which prevented her from attending school beyond sixth grade. She married Rubin Bendolph in 1955 and their family grew to include eight children. Over the years, she has worked in a variety of textile-related jobs, mostly making army uniforms. Since retiring in 1992, Bendolph has found more time to quilt. She gathers design ideas by looking at the world around her. Anything—from people's clothes at church, to her barn, to quilts hanging on clotheslines in front yards, to how the land looks when she's high above it in an airplane—can inspire her. For her materials, she prefers fabric cut from used clothing because it avoids wastefulness and because she appreciates the “love and spirit” in old cloth.

ABOUT THIS QUILT

Radiating energy and a lively rhythm, this quilt is made of stacked blocks of **pieced** fabric, each presenting a different design variation. The pattern changes are sometimes referred to as **syncopation**, a term also used to describe a rhythmic shift in music when a weak beat is stressed. This quilt includes **strings**, or wedge-shaped pieces, that are commonly used by quilters in Gee's Bend, in addition to **strips** (long rectangles) and triangles, which come together in various ways. Its overall **asymmetry** defies predictability, encouraging our eyes to jump to different areas of the quilt.

LET'S LOOK!

If this quilt could make noise, what would it be?

Describe some of the patterns in this quilt.

How are the patterns different from each other?
How are they similar?

Where have you seen similar patterns in the world around you?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

High School – “Crossing Over”

Read and discuss J. R. Moehringer’s Pulitzer Prize–winning story about Mary Lee Bendolph, Gee’s Bend, and the reopening of the ferry service on the website pulitzer.org/year/2000/feature-writing/works.

ART

Elementary and Middle School – Yard Art Show

Mary Lee Bendolph has talked about being inspired by neighbors’ and friends’ quilts that were displayed in their front yards. She says:

We just walked out together, and the peoples have the quilts on the line. They have them hanging out . . . And all the quilts they made, they had them hanging out on the wire fence, just like an art show. They be looking so beautiful. I asked them about how they made them, you know, what was the name of the quilt. They’d tell us. They named their own quilts and they’ll tell you about it. And it would be so pretty.

Stage a “yard art show” of your own in a hallway, school yard, or other common area, and have students respond to each others’ designs.

Middle and High School – Photography

After discussing the places where Bendolph finds inspiration for patterns, have students find and photograph patterns—both symmetrical and asymmetrical—in their neighborhood. Encourage students to look everywhere, as patterns emerge in everything from a stone wall, to the bark of a tree, to links on a fence. Print the photographs (if possible) or create designs based on these patterns.

MUSIC

Elementary and Middle School – Music

Many quiltmakers, including Bendolph, speak about the connection between music and quilting. Nettie Young explained:

We do lots of singing when we making a quilt, and it could have music and a song to it, because that’s the way we make the quilt. Mostly singing . . . Sewing, singing, sewing and singing. It’s in that quilt because that’s what I do when I quilt.

Ask students to discuss what kinds of music each quilt reminds them of. The quilts can be viewed together as a class by projecting the image in the PowerPoint presentation (on the CD-ROM included with this resource guide). Then, play songs from different African American musical genres (such as ragtime, jazz, blues, or spirituals) and have students respond visually. For ideas, consult Toyomi Igus’s and Michele Wood’s book *I See the Rhythm*, or listen to recordings of songs recorded in Gee’s Bend in 1948 on the website arts.state.al.us/actc/music/index-music.html.

LORETTA P. BENNETT

American, born 1960

Two-Sided Geometric Quilt

2003

Corduroy and velveteen

69 1/2 x 59 inches (176.5 x 149.9 cm)

Collection of the Tinwood Alliance

Photo by Stephen Pitkin, Pitkin Studio, Rockford, Illinois



Front of the quilt



Back of the quilt



I came to realize that my mother, her mother, my aunts, and all the others from Gee's Bend had sewn the foundation, and all I had to do now was thread my own needle and piece a quilt together.

– Loretta P. Bennett



ABOUT THIS ARTIST

Loretta P. Bennett is the great-great-granddaughter of Dinah Miller, a woman who was brought to Alabama from Africa as a slave in 1859. As a child, Bennett picked cotton and other crops. She attended school in Gee's Bend until seventh grade, when she was bussed to high schools that were a two-hour drive away. Bennett was introduced to sewing around age five by her mother, Qunnie, who worked at the **Freedom Quilting Bee**, a sewing cooperative established in 1966 in the nearby neighborhood of Rehoboth. She married Lovett Bennett in 1979. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and for the next twenty years they lived in numerous places including Germany and Texas. However, she always returned to Gee's Bend to reconnect with family and quilt with her mother. The 2002 exhibition of quilts from Gee's Bend inspired her to reinvigorate her own work.

ABOUT THIS QUILT

Bennett often sketches her ideas for quilts and colors them before beginning to piece fabric together. While many quilts are made up of numerous **blocks**, Bennett is known for enlarging one block to the size of the quilt. She prefers to use fabric from thrift stores due to the range of colors and quality of older materials. In speaking about this quilt she said, "The triangle I put in there to make the quilt stand out, I wanted it to be like a window into my background and my childhood and where I came from. That quilt honors my mother, Qunnie, and Arlonzia." She decided to use hot pink fabric because it was her mother's favorite color and used the leftover pieces to make the back, which offers a simple, yet complementary, design.

LET'S LOOK!

What do you notice first?

Where does your eye travel next? What drew your eye there?

What do you think this quilt could represent about the artist's childhood?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

Elementary and Middle School – Family Traditions

Quilting is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation in Loretta Bennett's family. Have a class discussion about traditions. What traditions do the students have in their families? Do they do anything special on particular holidays, or did a relative teach them to do something like bake, paint, or play a sport or musical instrument? Have students write about a family tradition that has passed from one generation to the next. Ask them to include details such as when the tradition began, how it feels to be a part of that tradition, and what makes the tradition special.

You may also want to listen to an interview with quiltmaker Lucy Mingo and her daughter, Polly Raymond, to learn about their family tradition of quilting. The interview can be found on the website arts.state.al.us/actc/1/radioseries.html.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Elementary, Middle, and High School – Oral History

After discussing Loretta Bennett's quilt and how she took inspiration from her ancestors for its design, begin a discussion about family and community history. What questions do the students have about their own family or community history? Have students conduct oral history interviews with a family or community member. Questions to ask during the interview could be brainstormed by the class or taken from those developed by NPR for their StoryCorps project, which can be found on the website storycorps.net/record-your-story/question-generator/list. You could also record these stories for StoryCorps.

MATH

Elementary and Middle School – Enlarging Images

Bennett is known for enlarging one quilt block to the size of the entire quilt. Have students find an image from a magazine, newspaper, or art reproduction and draw a grid of one-inch squares on it. Next, have them draw a larger square on a blank sheet of paper, perhaps a two-, three-, or four-inch square. They can then choose an interesting square from their gridded image to reproduce in this larger square. A discussion of ratio and proportion can follow.

ART

Elementary, Middle, and High School – Visualizing History

After conducting an interview with a family or community member, have students draw, paint, or collage a visual interpretation of their family or community history. It can be abstract, like Bennett's quilt, or include representational elements.

LUCY MINGO

American, born 1931

Blocks and Strips Work-Clothes Quilt

1959

Cotton and denim

78 3/4 x 69 1/4 inches (200 x 175.9 cm)

Collection of the Tinwood Alliance

Photo by Stephen Pitkin, Pitkin Studio, Rockford, Illinois



You know, we had hard times. We worked in the fields, we picked cotton, and sometimes we had it and sometimes we didn't. And so you look at your quilt and you say, "This is some of the old clothes that I wore in the fields. I wore them out, but they're still doing good."

– Lucy Mingo



ABOUT THIS ARTIST

Born in Rehoboth, a settlement just north of Gee's Bend, Lucy Mingo grew up picking crops, cooking for her family, and walking four miles to and from school each day. Her father worked as a longshoreman in Mobile. Mingo married her husband, David, in 1949, and together they raised ten children. In 1965, she joined Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on a march to Selma and also bravely registered to vote in Camden, Alabama, with other residents of Gee's Bend. In 2006, Mingo and her daughter, Polly Raymond, received a Folk Arts Apprenticeship grant, given by the Alabama State Council on the Arts, which matches master artists with apprentices. The grant covered the costs of Mingo teaching her daughter how to quilt.

ABOUT THIS QUILT

This is a **work-clothes quilt**, also known as a "britches quilt," which is typically made from reused denim overalls, trousers (britches), and cotton and flannel shirts. Looking closely at this quilt, we can identify seams, pockets, and various shades of blue where knees have left their mark. The light blues and grays testify to a life of physical labor. The soft hues also recall the environment in which the clothes were worn: clouded skies, dusty roads, and fields of crops. In this way, work-clothes quilts can be viewed as portraits of the people who wore the clothes as well as of the time and place in which they lived. They not only provide warmth, but also hold the memory of long days in the fields. The transformation of worn-out work clothes into objects of comfort and protection speaks to the strength of the human spirit to overcome hardship.

LET'S LOOK!

What moods or feelings do these colors remind you of?

Where might you see colors like the ones in this quilt?

Why might someone make a quilt out of used clothes?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

Elementary School – Objects Telling Stories

How do quilts tell stories? Lucy Mingo has said about quilts:

It looks like they have songs to them. You could tell stories about this piece, you could tell stories about that piece . . . They have songs to them.

Discuss what you think Mingo means by her statement. What kinds of stories and songs does this quilt convey? Ask students to think of an object at home that holds special memories for them or tells an interesting story. Have them bring their object in, write its story, and share with the class. The objects and stories could also be displayed together.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Elementary, Middle, and High School – The Civil Rights Movement

Lucy Mingo joined Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on a march to Selma, Alabama, where she and other **Civil Rights** activists protested discrimination against African Americans. Ask students to research Dr. King, his speeches, and the marches and demonstrations he organized. What were the strategies, objectives, and outcomes? How did the involvement of people like Lucy Mingo help to bring about social change?

Middle and High School – The Great Depression

Lucy Mingo was born in 1931, at the beginning of the **Great Depression**. This was a time of hardship in Gee's Bend due to the plummeting value of cotton. Have students learn about this time period in history and its impact on rural areas such as Gee's Bend. Incorporate primary documents by having students visit the Library of Congress website to study photographs of Gee's Bend taken by U.S. government photographers working for the **Farm Security Administration**: memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html; enter "Gee's Bend" in the search box. What can we learn from about life in Gee's Bend from these photographs? Why would the government have wanted to photograph Gee's Bend and other poor areas?

ART

Elementary and Middle School – Patchwork Quilts Using Recycled Materials

Have students bring in scraps of cloth from home, such as old shirts, jeans, ties, or other fabric. Cut squares out of the usable parts, and have students sew or collage together simple **four-patch** or **nine-patch** designs.

LORETTA PETTWAY

American, born 1942

Bricklayer–Sampler Variation Quilt

1958

Cotton and corduroy

82 x 78 inches (208.3 x 198.1 cm)

Collection of the Tinwood Alliance

Photo by Stephen Pitkin, Pitkin Studio, Rockford, Illinois



I always did like a “Bricklayer.” It made me think about what I always wanted.

Always did want a brick house.

– Loretta Pettway



ABOUT THIS ARTIST

Loretta Pettway has overcome many obstacles in her life. As a child she suffered emotional pain when her mother abandoned her family. Pettway also faced physical hardship, walking for miles each day and working in the fields. She endured a thirty-year marriage to an abusive husband, with whom she had seven children. Like Loretta P. Bennett, she is a descendent of Dinah Miller (Pettway is Dinah’s great-granddaughter). She **pieced** her first quilt together when she was only eleven years old, learning skills from her grandmother, stepmother, and other female relatives. Many of them preferred the **Bricklayer** pattern. Pettway did not always enjoy sewing, as it was a chore added to her heavy workload; now, her attitude has changed. Given all the adversity that she has faced, Pettway’s brilliantly designed quilts reflect her personality and strength.

ABOUT THIS QUILT

One of Pettway’s earliest quilts, this work is made of twenty **blocks**, each one presenting a different variation of the Bricklayer pattern. Her later quilts often focus on this pattern but usually feature one large Bricklayer block instead of many. Her husband, Walter, worked at the Henry Brick Company in Selma, and Pettway remembers being inspired by two picture boards of bricks that he brought home. Each block in this quilt can be interpreted as representing stacks of bricks, or perhaps four sides of a house reaching a single peak. If the blocks represent houses, perhaps the quilt as a whole depicts a neighborhood. Pettway used a variety of solid colored and patterned fabrics so that different shapes and patterns appear to emerge and recede throughout the quilt.

LET’S LOOK!

How are the blocks similar?
How are they different?

What shapes and patterns are created in each block?

Discuss Pettway’s quote on this page. How are the shapes and patterns in this quilt similar to a brick house?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

Elementary School – Architecture

How are houses and quilts similar? Brainstorm some ideas together as a class. (For example, both houses and quilts protect people from the cold, contain memories, and include geometric shapes.) How else are they similar?

SOCIAL STUDIES

Middle and High School – Slavery’s Legacy in Gee’s Bend

Loretta Pettway and Loretta P. Bennett are both descendants of Dinah Miller, who was brought to Alabama from Africa as a slave. Have students investigate slavery in Gee’s Bend by listening to interviews from 1941 with former enslaved people on the Library of Congress website: memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/index.html; type “Gee’s Bend” in the search box. Discuss the interviews as primary source documents. What can we learn from them? What issues might have affected what the interviewees did or did not say?

MATH/ART

Elementary School – Symmetry

The **Bricklayer** pattern has **reflective symmetry** (also called bilateral or mirror symmetry), which means that the size, shape, and arrangement of parts of the left and right sides, or the top and bottom of a composition or object are the same in relation to an imaginary center dividing line. Discuss reflective symmetry and find other objects that have reflective symmetry (such as a butterfly).

Middle and High School – Architecture

Many quiltmakers get pattern ideas from the buildings that they see in their everyday lives. The names of some of the quilt patterns also refer to buildings, such as **Log Cabin**, **Bricklayer**, and **Housetop**. What are the different ways that we can represent buildings in a 2-D format? Have each student draw the **plan** of the school building (the floor plan or footprint), the **elevation** of the building (what it looks like from the front), and a **section** of the building (imagine you made a vertical slice into one side and expose the inside). How do the drawings differ? What information do you get from each?

Have students choose a building in the community (their house, the school, or another neighborhood building) and create a geometric design based on its plan, elevation, or section. Alternatively, make a visual map of the neighborhood or town. For more information on introducing architecture to students, see the Architecture in Education website: aiaphila.org/aie.

AFRICAN AMERICAN QUILTS IN THE PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART'S PERMANENT COLLECTION

INTRODUCTION

The Philadelphia Museum of Art's textile collection includes examples by many leading African American quiltmakers. A number of these quilts are on view in the current exhibition:

QUILT STORIES: THE ELLA KING TORREY COLLECTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN QUILTS AND OTHER RECENT QUILT ACQUISITIONS

This exhibition is on view at the Museum's Perelman Building from now through February 2009.

Quilt Stories includes thirteen African American quilts collected by Ella King Torrey (1957–2003), an innovative and dynamic arts leader in Philadelphia and San Francisco, who had a long-standing interest in popular culture and folk art. While a graduate student at the University of Mississippi she became especially interested in African American quilting. Her research and fieldwork included extensive interviews of two of the quiltmakers included in the exhibition: Sarah Mary Taylor and Pearlie Posey. *Quilt Stories* also features other recent Museum quilt acquisitions, such as an early twentieth-century Amish quilt made in Arthur, Illinois, with a distinctive alternating fan pattern, and an 1846 album quilt made by the Ladies of the Third Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. The album quilt was given to Mrs. Mary Brainerd, the wife of the church's pastor, as a measure of solace because their daughter had succumbed to scarlet fever.

Three of the quilts in this guide are on view in the *Quilt Stories* exhibition—those by Sarah Mary Taylor, Pearlie Posey, and the unknown quiltmaker from Gee's Bend.

UNKNOWN QUILTMAKER

"Triangles in Squares" Quilt

Gee's Bend, Alabama

1970s

Cotton and polyester; running stitch

76 3/8 x 76 1/2 inches (194 x 194.3 cm)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Ella King Torrey Collection of African American Quilts, 2006-163-4



ABOUT THIS QUILT

It is not known who made this quilt, but we do know it was made in Gee's Bend. Its back is made of red and blue corduroy remnants from pillow shams made by women at the **Freedom Quilting Bee** for Sears Roebuck and Company, the same fabric that Willie Abrams used in her quilt (see page 5). Some of the oldest surviving quilts in Gee's Bend, from the 1920s and 1930s, feature triangle patterns. Similar patterns are also found in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Euro-American **patchwork quilts**, as well as in textiles and other surface adornments from West and Central African groups. Although the exact origin of triangle-based patterns in Gee's Bend is unknown, quiltmakers today agree that similar patterns have been passed down for generations.

This quilt is made up of three rows of three **blocks**, each featuring fifty triangles. The design is a variation of a quilt pattern known as **Birds in Flight** or Birds in the Air. The intricate pattern, consisting of many small pieces, would have required a skilled and patient hand. Following the direction of the triangles, our eyes bounce around from one corner of the quilt to another, never finding a place to rest. Similarly, migrating birds fly tirelessly to their new home, pausing briefly before moving on again. Could each triangle symbolize a single bird, and each block a group traveling together? Or perhaps each small triangle could represent a flock of birds, as the shape itself mimics the arrangement of birds in flight. What do you think?

LET'S LOOK!

How do you think this pattern relates to the pattern name, "Birds in Flight?"

What shapes and patterns are formed by the triangles?

How are the blocks similar?
How are they different?

Do you think that the artist wants us to look at the quilt as a whole, or just one part?
How do you know?

How is this quilt's design different than the other quilts you've seen that were made in Gee's Bend?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

Elementary, Middle, and High School – Diamante Poems

Taking inspiration from the shapes and patterns in this quilt, have students create diamond-shaped poems using the diamante poem format (see worksheet on page 37). Discuss how patterns in language can respond to patterns in quilts.

High School – Gee’s Bend Performed at the Arden Theater

The play *Gee’s Bend*, written by Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder, will be performed at the Arden Theater in Philadelphia from October 9–December 7, 2008. The play follows two Gee’s Bend women who face segregation, family struggles, and the turmoil of the **Civil Rights Movement**. Quilting provides comfort and context to their lives. *Gee’s Bend* is a deeply personal story of family, self-discovery, and artistic expression.

MATH

Elementary School – Exploring Four-Patch Patterns

Using either quilting tiles (one-inch squares and triangles that have two one-inch sides; available through ETA/Cuisenaire; their website is listed on page 32) or paper shapes with the same dimensions, have students explore the variations of **four-patch** designs. Each pair of students starts with twenty squares and twenty triangles (ten each of two different colors). Have them experiment with ways to arrange the pieces in a two-by-two square, making at least three different patterns. Groups then choose one design to share with the class. Which designs are the same configuration of squares and triangles? Remove duplicates and see how many different arrangements were found. Compare the designs and the shapes created. You can also try three-by-three squares, allowing for more design possibilities. Similar explorations can be pursued with sets of pattern blocks, which include additional shapes such as hexagons and diamonds.

ART

Elementary, Middle, or High School – Capturing Flight in Art

How have other artists represented flight or movement? For example, compare and contrast this quilt and Constantin Brancusi’s *Bird in Space*. What is each artist capturing about birds and flight? Find *Bird in Space* and other examples on ARTStor (artstor.org) and discuss similarities and differences. Have students create a work of art that captures their idea of flying.

PEARLIE POSEY

American, 1894–1984

“Animals” Quilt

1980–83

Cotton; running stitch

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

Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Ella King Torrey Collection of African American Quilts, 2006-163-7



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.

– Pearl Posey



ABOUT THIS ARTIST

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.

ABOUT THIS QUILT

Although Posey made **pieced quilts** for many years, she was inspired by her daughter, Sarah Mary Taylor (see page 25), 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.

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?

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 by projecting the image in the PowerPoint presentation (on the CD-ROM included with this resource guide). 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.

FAITH RINGGOLD

American, born 1930

"Tar Beach 2" Quilt

1990

Silk

66 x 67 inches (167.6 x 170.2 cm)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with funds contributed by

W. B. Dixon Stroud, 1992-100-1



I think most people understand quilts and not a lot of people understand paintings. But yet they're looking at one. When they're looking at my work, they're looking at a painting and they're able to accept it better because it is also a quilt.

– Faith Ringgold



ABOUT THIS ARTIST

Born in Harlem (a neighborhood in New York City) in 1930, Faith Ringgold grew up in the wake of the **Harlem Renaissance**. As a girl, she was often bedridden with asthma and spent time drawing while she rested. She taught art in city public schools from 1955–73, pursuing a career as a painter simultaneously. She had her first solo show in 1967, which featured paintings that dealt with **Civil Rights** and other political issues. In the 1970s, she began to create sculptures made of cloth in collaboration with her mother, Willi Posey Jones, who was a successful fashion designer. Soon Ringgold developed the idea for “story quilts,” **pieced quilts** with narratives written and illustrated on their surfaces. She has also written and illustrated eleven children’s books, which have received numerous awards.

ABOUT THIS QUILT

When she was growing up, Ringgold and her family often spent summer evenings on the roof of their apartment building. This childhood memory served as the impetus for a series of story quilts, the first made in 1988, and her book *Tar Beach*, which was published in 1991. *Tar Beach 2* features images of Cassie, the protagonist in the story, on her building’s roof with her family and neighbors. In the story, she dreams of flying, a symbol of freedom and power. Here, she soars over the George Washington Bridge. Ringgold used a **quilting** pattern of eight triangles within a square, derived from a traditional design of the Kuba peoples of Africa. She made this quilt using the **screenprinting** process at The Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia. It is one of an edition of twenty-four.

LET’S LOOK!

Can you find Cassie in a red dress? How many times do you see her? Where?

Where is this story taking place? How do you know?

How is this different from other quilts you’ve seen?
How is it similar?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

Elementary School – Flying

Have the students imagine that they can fly above their neighborhood, town, or city. Ask them where they would go, what they would see, and what it would feel like. Have them write a story about their adventures as they soared above it all.

Elementary School – Tar Beach

Read and discuss *Tar Beach*. How does this quilt relate to the story? Compare and contrast the images in the book to those in this quilt. How does this quilt add to the story? View the quilt together as a class by projecting the image in the PowerPoint presentation (on the CD-ROM included with this resource guide).

Middle School – Childhood Memories as Inspiration

Ringgold used her memory of going to the roof of her building as inspiration for her story. What special memories do the students have from childhood of a special place or family tradition? Have them write a short story about this memory.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Middle and High School – American Labor Unions

In the story, Cassie's father is prevented from joining the union because he is African American. Research the history of African Americans and labor unions. When were the unions in your area integrated? What were the reasons given why African Americans could not join? Who were some of the leaders who helped change the situation? What problems still exist?

ART

Elementary School – Illustrating a Story with One Image

After reading a story, have each student make one illustration to summarize the story. Ask them what they will include and what they will leave out. Have them decide how to convey the plot of the story through one image.

Middle and High School – Fabric Art

Ringgold transformed her art by using fabric to make sculptures and creating **pieced** cloth borders around her painted canvases and quilting the entire work. Have the students experiment with using fabric to make works of art such as sculptures, collages, and paintings.

SARAH MARY TAYLOR

American, 1916–2000

“Hands” Quilt

1980

Pieces and appliquéd cotton and synthetic solid and printed plain weave, twill flannel, knit, dotted swiss, and damask

83 1/4 x 78 inches (211.5 x 198.1 cm)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Ella King Torrey Collection of African American Quilts, 2006-163-11



Every time I piece one I tries to make something different from what I made.

I don't want what I been piecing; let me find something different.

– Sarah Mary Taylor



ABOUT THIS ARTIST

Known for her use of vibrant colors and bold designs, Sarah Mary Taylor inherited a love of quilting from both her mother, Pearlie Posey (see page 21), and her aunt, Pecolia Warner. Her mother taught her how to quilt at a young age, but Taylor didn't make a quilt of her own until she was married and left her mother's house. She was married five times, but never had children. She lived on plantations throughout the Mississippi Delta, working as a cook, a field hand, and a housekeeper. For many years, Taylor made **pieced quilts** out of the skirts of long dresses, but began making **appliqué quilts** in 1980 after her aunt Pecolia received attention for her work from a professor at the University of Mississippi. Taylor soon gained recognition for her appliqué quilts as well.

ABOUT THIS QUILT

To create her quilts, Taylor drew shapes on paper and cut out templates for the appliqué pieces. She gathered design ideas from images she saw in magazines, newspapers, catalogues, and from objects she encountered in her everyday life. She added the appliqué shapes onto squares of fabric and combined them together with vertical **strips**. She arranged the **blocks** in a way that was visually striking to her, often resulting in energetic compositions. Taylor's **appliqué quilts** were typically not used and instead were sold, given away to friends, or stored. A version of this "Hands" quilt was commissioned for the film adaptation of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*.

LET'S LOOK!

Describe some of the color combinations in this quilt. Are any two blocks the same?

Why might the artist have paired certain colors together?

Why might she have chosen the image of hands to repeat?

What kind of mood do the hands create?

What could the hands represent?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

Elementary School – Expression in Hands

How do hands express emotion? Discuss what emotions are expressed in the outstretched hands in this quilt. What other emotions can we express with our hands? Have a brainstorming session and write about what each hand gesture can communicate. As an extension, have students design quilt blocks with their own hand gestures and combine them together in a class quilt.

High School – The Color Purple

A version of this quilt was commissioned for the film adaptation of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*. Have the class read the novel and discuss what sewing and quilts symbolize in the story.

MATH

Elementary School – Variations

After discussing the different color combinations of hands and background colors, explore similar permutations using colored paper squares and circles. Give each student two squares of different colors and two circles of different colors. How many different design variations can you make (four)? Then try with additional squares and circles. How can you prove that you've found all of the possible variations?

ART

Elementary School – Color Combinations

While looking at the quilt, discuss which hands stand out. What color combinations make the hands pop out the most? Why could this be? Discuss ideas such as **complementary colors**, **value**, and **contrast**. Using a wide range of colored paper, have the students create collages in which they produce vibrant color combinations that make different shapes stand out.

SELECTED CHRONOLOGY

Gee's Bend	United States History
	1808 The direct importation of slaves from Africa to the United States is banned, although it continues illegally for decades.
1816 Joseph Gee purchases land and establishes a cotton plantation in Gee's Bend.	1819 Alabama becomes a state.
1824 Joseph Gee dies and his heirs contest the inheritance of his plantation.	
1845 Mark Pettway buys the plantation from the Gee family and brings 100 of his slaves from North Carolina to Gee's Bend.	1831 Nat Turner leads a slave revolt in Virginia.
1859 Dinah Miller, Gee's Bend's earliest identified quiltmaker, was brought to Alabama on an outlaw slave ship from Africa.	1861-65 The Civil War
1861 Mark Pettway dies.	1863 President Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring all slaves in rebellious areas to be free.
	1870 The Fifteenth Amendment, guaranteeing all citizens the right to vote, is ratified.
1880 Gee's Bend becomes the property of Mark Pettway's son, John Henry.	1875 Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which bans discrimination in places of public accommodation.
1895 John Henry sells approximately 4,000 acres of the old Pettway plantation to the Dew family.	1896 The Supreme Court rules in <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> that "separate but equal" facilities for blacks and whites is constitutional.
1900 Adrian Van de Graff buys the entire property from the Dews. After his death, his son inherits the land. He later sells it to the Roosevelt Administration.	1909 The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is formed.

Gee's Bend	United States History
	1914–18 World War I
Late 1920s The price of cotton plummets. Merchants in Camden advance credit to Gee's Bend farmers, many of whom fall into debt.	1929 The stock market crashes and the Great Depression begins. 1920–30s The Harlem Renaissance
1932 Collectors foreclose on Gee's Bend debtors, seizing everything they own. Many residents of Gee's Bend face near-starvation.	1933 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issues New Deal reforms in order to relieve the economic strife caused by the Great Depression.
1934–35 The Federal Emergency Relief Administration provides some relief to Gee's Bend residents by giving them seeds, fertilizer, farming tools, livestock, and loans.	1939–45 World War II
1937 and 1939 U.S. photographers Arthur Rothstein and Marion Post are sent by the Farm Security Administration to Gee's Bend to photograph the community.	
1937–40 Approximately 100 Roosevelt Project Houses are built in Gee's Bend. Other buildings constructed include a school, store, cotton gin, mill, and a clinic.	
1941 Robert Sonkin documents traditional spirituals, sermons, and singing groups in Gee's Bend for the Library of Congress.	
1945 The federal government offers Gee's Bend residents loans to buy farmland.	
1962 A dam and lock are constructed on the Alabama River, just south of Gee's Bend, flooding much of Gee's Bend's best farming land.	1955 Activist Rosa Parks is arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, when she refuses to give her seat on the bus to a white man. 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr., gives his "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, D.C. to 200,000 activists who participated in the historic March on Washington.

Gee's Bend	United States History
<p>1965 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., visits Gee's Bend and preaches at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. Many residents march with him to Selma and register to vote in nearby Camden. Many of these people lose their jobs after marching or registering to vote.</p> <p>Ferry service from Gee's Bend to Camden is terminated.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">1964</p> <p>President Lyndon Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlaws discrimination in housing, employment, and education.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">The U.S. begins to bomb Vietnam.</p>
<p>1966 The Freedom Quilting Bee is established in Rehoboth (just north of Gee's Bend).</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">1968</p> <p>Martin Luther King, Jr., is assassinated. Mules from Gee's Bend pull his casket through Atlanta.</p>
<p>Mid-1970s Water and telephone service is established throughout Gee's Bend.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">1973</p> <p>The United States withdraws troops from Vietnam.</p>
<p>2002 <i>The Quilts of Gee's Bend</i> exhibition opens at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and then travels to the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Eleven more museums sign on to host the show.</p>	
<p>2003 Fifty local women found the Gee's Bend Quilters Collective.</p>	
<p>2006 Ferry service from Gee's Bend to Camden reopens.</p> <p>The U.S. Postal Service issues ten postage stamps commemorating Gee's Bend quilts.</p> <p><i>Gee's Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt</i> is organized.</p>	

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR STUDY

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Arnett, Paul, Joanne Cubbs, and Eugene W. Metcalf, Jr., eds. *Gee's Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt*. Atlanta: Tinwood Books, 2006.

Barnes, Brooks. "Museums Cozy Up to Quilts." *Wall Street Journal*, August 23, 2002, sec. W. 12.

Beardsley, John and William Arnett, Paul Arnett, Jane Livingston. *Gee's Bend: The Women and Their Quilts*. Atlanta: Tinwood Books in association with The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2002.

Beardsley, John and William Arnett, Paul Arnett, Jane Livingston, Alvia Wardlaw. *The Quilts of Gee's Bend*. Atlanta: Tinwood Books in association with The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2002.

Benberry, Cuesta. *Always There: The African-American Presence in American Quilts*. Louisville, Kentucky: The Kentucky Quilt Project, Inc., 1992.

Brackman, Barbara. *Encyclopedia of Pieced Quilt Patterns*. Paducah, Kentucky: American Quilter's Society, 1993.

Callahan, Nancy. *The Freedom Quilting Bee: Folk Art and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama*. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1987.

Kimmelman, Michael. "Jazzy Geometry, Cool Quilters," *New York Times*, November 29, 2002, sec. B, 31.

LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

Flournoy, Valerie. *The Patchwork Quilt*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1985.

Igus, Toyomi and Michele Wood. *I See the Rhythm*. San Francisco, California: Children's Book Press, 1998.

Mckissack, Patricia. *Stitchin' and Pullin': A Gee's Bend Quilt*. New York: Random House, 2008. (to be released October 28, 2008)

Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991.

Walker, Alice. *Everyday Use*. In *In Love & Trouble*. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, Inc., 1967.

WEB

Gee's Bend

- The Library of Congress' American Memory website has photographs of Gee's Bend from the 1930s (search for "Gee's Bend"):
memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html
- A lesson plan based on the photographs of Gee's Bend from the 1930s:
memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/98/grand/geesbend.html
- "Voices from the Days of Slavery" has recordings and transcripts of interviews with former slaves from 1941 (do a search for "Gee's Bend"):
memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/index.html
- Quilters Collective History:
quiltsofgeesbend.com
- Four 1948 recordings of gospel music from Gee's Bend:
arts.state.al.us/actc/music/index-music.html
- Interview with Lucy Mingo and her daughter Polly Raymond (scroll to find):
arts.state.al.us/actc/1/radioseries.html
- J. R. Moehringer's Pulitzer Prize-winning story "Crossing Over:"
pulitzer.org/works/2000,Feature+Writing
- Michael Kimmelman's review of the 2002 exhibition *The Quilts of Gee's Bend*:
query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9900E6DF1238F93AA15752C1A9649C8B63
- *Gee's Bend* play at the Arden Theater (October 9–December 7, 2008):
ardentheatre.org/2009/geesbend.html

Stories

- StoryCorps (National Public Radio) project; resource for conducting interviews:
storycorps.net
- Share the story of your quilt on the Philadelphia Museum of Art's website:
philamuseum.org/exhibitions/311.html?page=5

Quilts

- Leigh Fellner refutes claims about the quilt codes that some believe to have been used on the Underground Railroad:
ugrrquilt.hartcottagequilts.com

- A website dedicated to the PBS film *The Art of Quilting* has teacher resources, lesson plans, and interviews. PBS also produced two other films, *A Century of Quilts* and *America Quilts*, and there are links to those programs on the website:
pbs.org/americaquilts
- ETA/Cuisenaire sells Quilting Tiles:
etacuisenaire.com
- The Illinois State Museum’s “Keeping Us in Stitches: Quilts & Quilters” is a list of quilt-based activities, lesson plans, and interactive online exercises for students:
museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/ks_actres.html
- Faith Ringgold’s website:
faithringgold.com

Images

- ARTstor is a database of high quality art images. You can search without a membership and can download images with a membership, which can be obtained for free by registering at the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s Wachovia Education Resource Center, located in the Perelman Building (philamuseum.org/education/33-530-416.html).
artstor.org

VIDEO

Carey, Celia. *The Quiltmakers of Gee’s Bend*. Alabama Public Television in association with Hunter Films, 2004. DVD.

VOCABULARY

Appliqué quilt — A quilt with a top made of cut-out pieces of fabric that have been sewn on top of background fabrics. “Appliqué” is the French word for “applied.”

Asymmetry — A lack of exact repetition between the opposite sides of a form.

Back — The underside of a quilt.

Batting — The soft middle layer of a quilt that is between the top and the back. It is usually made of cotton and provides warmth.

Birds in Flight pattern — See “Basic Building Blocks of Quilts” on page 36.

Block — A rectangular or square section of a quilt.

Bricklayer pattern — See “Basic Building Blocks of Quilts” on page 36.

Civil Rights Movement — A movement that aimed to abolish racial discrimination against African Americans. It occurred from 1955–68.

Complementary colors — Pairs of contrasting colors: red and green, yellow and violet, blue and orange.

Contrast — A design principle that involves the use of opposite effects or shapes near each other to add tension or drama to a work of art.

Elevation — A drawing of the outside walls of a building (the front, back, and each of the sides).

Farm Security Administration (FSA), Office of War Information — A program created as part of the New Deal whose goal was to combat rural poverty. The FSA was first created as the Resettlement Administration. Its photography program (1935–44) documented the challenges of rural poverty.

Four-patch pattern — A square quilt block made of two rows of two squares; see “Basic Building Blocks of Quilts” on page 36.

Freedom Quilting Bee — A sewing cooperative established in Rehoboth (just north of Gee’s Bend) in 1966 that employed women from the local area who produced quilts and other sewn products for department stores in the North.

Great Depression — An era in U.S. history defined by an economic downturn, which is often associated with the stock market crash on October 29, 1929.

Harlem Renaissance — A movement, centered in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City, in which artists, philosophers, and other intellectuals found new ways to explore the experiences of African Americans. The movement, which lasted from the 1920–30s, produced a wealth of literature, drama, music, visual art, dance, as well as new ideas in sociology, historiography, and philosophy.

Housetop pattern — See “Basic Building Blocks of Quilts” on page 36.

Log Cabin pattern — See “Basic Building Blocks of Quilts” on page 36.

New Deal — The name that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave to the programs he initiated from 1933–38. These programs aimed to relieve poverty, help the economy recover, and reform the financial system during the Great Depression in the United States.

Nine-patch pattern — A square quilt block made of three rows of three squares; see “Basic Building Blocks of Quilts” on page 36.

Pieced quilt; Patchwork quilt — A quilt whose top is made from bits of fabric stitched together to form patterns and borders often with a geometric motif.

Piecing — The process of stitching together separate pieces of fabric to create a larger cloth, such as a quilt top.

Plan — A view of a room or building that is seen as if the roof has been removed and someone is above the building looking straight down onto the rooms (also called a floor plan).

Quilting — The sewing that holds the top layer, the middle filling layer (batting), and the bottom layer (back). It makes the quilt more durable and also traps air between the layers of cloth, which provides insulation and warmth.

Reflective symmetry (also called bilateral or mirror symmetry) — When the size, shape, and arrangement of parts of the left and right sides or the top and bottom of a composition or object are the same in relation to an imaginary center dividing line.

Roman Stripes pattern — See “Basic Building Blocks of Quilts” on page 36.

Screenprinting — A process that uses a fine cloth mesh stretched over a frame, with parts of the mesh sealed, to create an image (often using stencils). Ink is pushed through the unsealed areas onto paper or fabric underneath, creating a screenprinted image.

Section — A view of the interior of a room or building that is seen as if the building has been cut in half and someone is looking straight into the interior.

Strings — A term used among Gee's Bend quiltmakers to describe wedge-shaped pieces of fabric.

Strip quilt — A type of pieced quilt made by sewing long rectangular pieces of cloth together to make a quilt top.

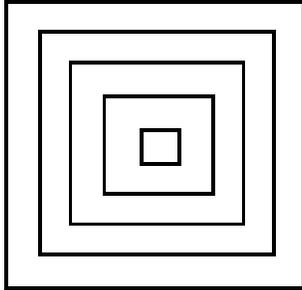
Syncopation — A temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the weak beat; in quilting, a break in pattern.

Top — The side of the quilt that is presented outward.

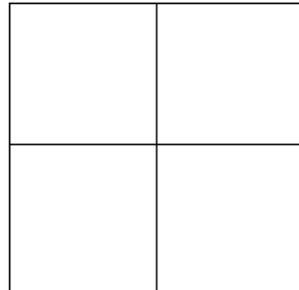
Work-clothes quilt — A quilt made of reused work clothes such as denim pants and overalls, and cotton or flannel shirts.

Value — Degree of lightness on a scale of grays from black to white.

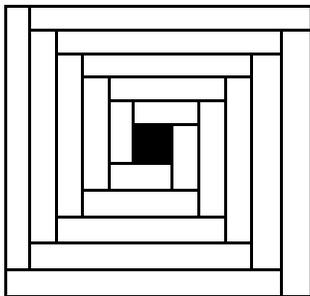
BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS OF QUILTS



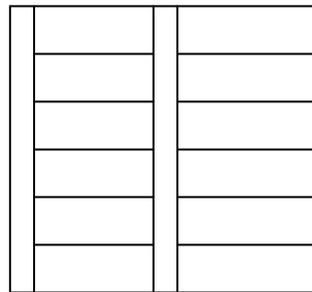
Housetop — also called
Pig in a Pen, Hog Pen, or
Chicken Coop



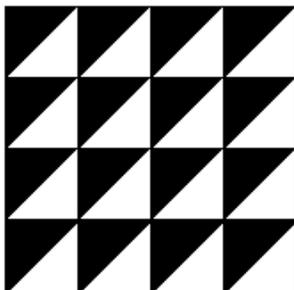
Four-Patch



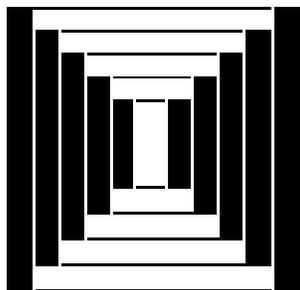
Log Cabin



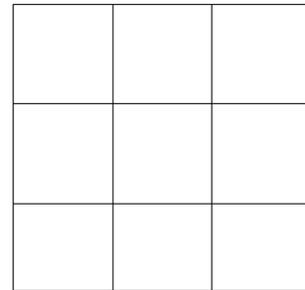
Roman Stripes



Birds in Flight
(many variations)



Bricklayer — also known
as Courthouse Steps



Nine-Patch

(This activity is related to the quilt made by an unknown quiltmaker from Gee's Bend; see Language Arts/English Connection, page 20)

Diamante poem format:

Line 1: one word (subject/noun) that is contrasting to line 7

Line 2: two words (adjectives) that describe line 1

Line 3: three words (action verbs) that relate to line 1

Line 4: four words (nouns), first 2 words relate to line 1, last 2 words relate to line 7

Line 5: three words (action verbs) that relate to line 7

Line 6: two words (adjectives) that describe line 7

Line 7: one word (subject/noun) that is contrasting to line 1