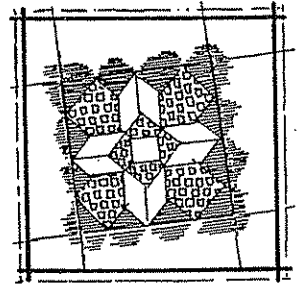


LESSON 1

TOPIC

What Is a Quilt?



TIME

30 minutes

MATERIALS FROM TRUNK

Quilt (full-size)
What's in the Middle?
Quilt Blocks (in manual)
Quilted Square
Denim Comforter

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

Video - "Quilt Diaries"
Video - "Quilts in Women's Lives"

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Students will be able to distinguish the three layers of a quilt.
- 2) Students will be able to compare a quilt and a comforter.
- 3) Students will be able to form a hypothesis as to why quilts are made.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Since the arrival of the earliest colonists, quilts have been made in the United States. Their construction, two layers of fabric with a soft, fluffy material in between for warmth, has remained the same over the generations although the specific materials have changed. The filler

material, known as batting, was originally hand-carded wool or cotton fibers. With the advent of the Industrial Age, machine-manufactured cotton battings became the preferred batting. In 1846, Stearns and Foster's sold the first commercial batting, Mountain Mist. Wool battings continued to be used but primarily with comforters (three-layer bedcovers that are tied instead of quilted).

Although introduced in the 1950s, polyester batting did not receive widespread usage until after 1960. This type of batting provides higher loft than wool and does not need to be as closely quilted as cotton batting which separates and mats down with washing. Quiltmakers have also used whatever materials were readily available as batting. Blankets, old quilts, and even skirts have found their way between the layers of a quilt.

Quilts were traditionally made for bedcoverings. While many are still used and appreciated for the warmth they provide, others are being hung on the wall as art. The 1971 landmark exhibit, "Abstract Design in American Quilts," at the Whitney Museum in New York City is often credited as the catalyst for changing popular opinion about quilts as an art form. Quiltmakers and fiber artists are now intentionally making quilts in a variety of sizes, shapes, colors, and textures to be displayed on walls and exhibited in art galleries.

For additional information, see "An Overview of American Quiltmaking" in the back of this manual.

VOCABULARY

Backing	The back layer of the quilt, often of plain fabric.
Batting	A layer of soft, fluffy filler used between the top and the backing of a quilt. The batting provides warmth.
Block	The basic unit of a quilt top. Blocks, often pieced squares, are stitched together to form the quilt top's design.
Comforter	A three-layered bedcovering, like a quilt, but the layers are joined by tying them together using yarn or heavy string.
Cotton	The fiber of the cotton plant which is woven into cloth or used in quilt battings.
Fabric	The same as cloth. Cotton, wool, silk, and polyester are four types of fabric used in quiltmaking. (See Material)
Material	The woven cloth used in making a quilt. (See Fabric)
Polyester	A fabric made from man-made materials.

Quilting	The process of stitching through the three layers (top, batting, and backing) of a quilt to hold them together.
Wool	The fiber making up the coat of a sheep which is woven into cloth or used in quilt batting.

ACTIVITIES

- 1) Begin by sharing the full-size *quilt* from the trunk. Let students handle it, sit on it, or wrap up in it.
- 2) Point out the basic features of the quilt.
 - a) The quilt is made of many fabrics. If you look closely, the quilt is made up of units called blocks. Show the students the quilt blocks from the manual and explain that the block is the basic unit in making a quilt top. In other words, several quilt blocks are sewn together to make a quilt top. Ask students what shapes and how many make up one block. Now ask the students if they can point out the basic block in the full-size *quilt* (sometimes this takes a great deal of imagination even for an adult).
 - b) Ask the students to identify the three layers of a quilt. A quilt has a top, batting, and a back.
 - c) The middle layer, or batting, is usually made up of a soft, fluffy material. Ask the students if they can figure out why a batting is used. Batting is used to add warmth to the quilt. Show the students *what's in the middle?* Allow the students to touch the different types of batting. Can the students think of other things that might be used in the middle of a quilt? *Note: the full-size quilt contains a polyester batting.*
 - d) Show the students the *quilted square*. Point out how the quilting stitches make a design. Ask the students to point out the quilting stitches on the full-size quilt. Explain that quilting is used to hold the three layers together. Quilting stitches can follow the design of the quilt top or they can create their own design. Share the *denim comforter* with the students; ask them to identify the difference between the quilt and the comforter. They should be able to identify that the comforter is tied instead of quilted. Make sure all students are aware of this difference.
- 3) Discuss who makes quilts and why.
 - a) Women have traditionally been the quiltmakers, although men have also made quilts and still do.
 - b) People make quilts for many reasons. Some reasons that people make quilts include enjoyment, necessity, creative expression, to honor a special occasion or relationship, or

as a family tradition. Ask the students if they can think of why someone would make a quilt. You might want to divide the class into small groups and ask each group to make a list.

4) Discuss how quilts are used today.

a) Ask the students to give you examples of how they have seen quilts used. Answers should include such things as on the bed or as a wall hanging.

ASSESSMENT

Levels of Achievement

For Objective 1

- a) Students correctly recognize one layer.
- b) Students correctly recognize two layers.
- c) Students correctly recognize three layers.

For Objective 2

- a) Students recognize that quilts and comforters are different, but do not know the correct reason.
- b) Students recognize that comforters have ties whereas quilts do not.

For Objective 3

- a) Students give one reason why quilts are made.
- b) Students give two or three reasons why quilts are made.
- c) Students give more than three reasons why quilts are made.

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1) QUILT SHARING:

Many families have quilts; students may want to bring one from home to share with the class. If you decide to do this activity, we have included a sample letter you might want to use to tell the parents of this activity. Ask parents to provide the students with the answers to specific questions (included in the letter) about the quilt. The parents may want to send a photograph of the quiltmaker. Have the students share their quilts and their stories with the class.

2) LEARN ABOUT BATTING:

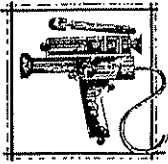
It is possible to determine the filler material of a finished quilt by using the following clues. It is possible to use the quilts that the students bring from home for this activity.

a) Hold the quilt up to a light source. If you see small, dark spots, it is probably a cotton batt. What you are seeing are parts of the cotton boll which were not completely removed from the batt when the cotton was cleaned and processed. These small flecks are not cotton seeds. Cotton seeds are about the size of your fingertip; a whole seed is rarely found in a quilt batting.

b) Rub the quilt between your finger and thumb. If it feels slick and smooth, it is probably polyester batting. Also, if the quilt was made after 1960, the batting is very likely polyester since it quickly replaced cotton as the preferred batting material.

c) Find an existing hole in the quilt. (DO NOT MAKE A HOLE IN THE QUILT OR MAKE AN EXISTING HOLE LARGER.) You may be able to see a blanket or even another quilt in the middle.

d) Wool batting feels and looks surprisingly like cotton batting. There is no quick clue for identifying wool batting.



3) VIDEO -- "Quilt Diaries" (10 minutes):

This video is aimed at an adult audience but can be understood and enjoyed by older students. The video explores quilts as cultural markers. Ways in which quilts are used to mark important passages in people's lives and important relationships are discussed. The video focuses on interviews with Mary Madden, who developed a special exhibit at the Kansas Museum of History on this theme, and Sadie Waller, a quiltmaker from Seneca.

4) VIDEO -- "Quilts in Women's Lives" (30 minutes):

This video, which is divided into six portraits, is intended for an adult audience. However, the video can be used with a student audience with careful planning. The final segment plays best with a younger audience (grades 4-6). The video explores the question of why women quilt and looks at the important part quilting plays in the lives of these women.

[SAMPLE LETTER]

Dear Parents:

We are planning a unit on quilts and Kansas history. So many families have saved quilts made by family or friends that we thought we'd ask the students to bring them to share with the class.

If you have an old quilt--or a new quilt (we know that Kansans still make many quilts) that you can send with your student on _____, we would like to see it. Since we want to discuss quilts as a part of Kansas history, we'd also like to know a little history about your quilt. Can you help your student answer the questions about the quilt?

We are interested in seeing fancy quilts and plain quilts, worn quilts and quilts in perfect shape. We'll only have time to see one quilt from each family (we know some families have several) so if you have more than one perhaps you and your student can pick the one with the most interesting story.

We'll take good care of your quilt and we'll use it to give us links to Kansas and family histories.

To keep the quilt safe and clean, you may want to have your child transport it in a large plastic trash bag.

Thank you for your assistance with our special unit on quilts.

Sincerely,

Questionnaire

1. Who made the quilt? What was her/his name and how is she/he related to the student?
2. Where was the quilt made?
3. If it wasn't made in Kansas, how did it get here and when did it come?
4. Was it made for a special occasion? Explain.
5. Where did the maker get the fabrics for the quilt?
6. Is there a name for the pattern?
7. Are there any special stories that the family tells about this quilt? Explain.
8. Do you have a photograph of the quiltmaker? If so, you can bring it to class to share when telling about the quilt.