
Masterpiece: *The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles, 1991* by Faith Ringgold

Keywords: Color, Shape, Repetition,
Story quilts
Grade: 1st Grade
Month: February
Activity: Class Sunflower Quilt



What is a Story Quilt? Quilts and other cloth-based narrative art are part of many cultures. Harriet Powers, born a slave in 1837, is credited with the beginning of story quilt-making in America. Made by hand -- often collaboratively -- using familiar materials such as scraps of

clothing, quilts are both personal and communal objects. Quilting continues to be largely a home-based form of women's artistic expression. Quilts can be works of art as well as stories through pictures. They also tell a story about their creators and about the historical and cultural context of their creation (quilting bees, historical and personal events) through the choices made in design, material, and content. 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 Faith paper & crayons to draw and bits of cloth, needle and thread to make little things. Her mother taught her to sew.
- 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.
- 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 she started out, there were hardly any galleries that would show the work of black women.

- She 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 of art at the University of California, San Diego.

Possible Questions:

- What type of things do you see in this painting?
- Who is in the painting? Prominent 19th and 20th century African American women (including Harriet Powers) who have set up their quilting bee in the country of the famous artist Vincent Van Gogh.
- Where is Arles? (France)
- How would you describe the lines, the shapes, the colors? Is there repetition?
- Do you like it?
- What would you title this artwork?
- Does it make you want to learn how to quilt?
- What is worth remembering about this painting?

Activity: Paper Story Quilt

Explain Activity: Students will choose a favorite memory of their own as the subject of their "quilt"; they will draw that image from their imagination and "piece" colored and decorated paper scraps around the edges.

Note to Bin Coordinator: You will need to cut the colored paper and wallpaper scraps into 2" x 2" squares. The white card stock will need to be cut to 8" x 8" .

Materials Needed:

1. Book: "*Tar Beach*" (Ringgold)
2. 8"x 8" white cardstock
3. 2" x 2" squares of scrapbooking paper and wallpaper scraps
4. Oil Pastels
5. Liquid Glue

Process:

1. Place in the center of each workstation, the squares of scrapbooking paper and wallpaper and glue.
2. Give each student a piece of the white cover stock and have them sign their name on the back of the board.
3. Have the students use the squares to create a 2" border around the outside of their board. Glue in place.
4. Next, ask the students to close their eyes and imagine their favorite dream, memory, event or family tradition and take a snapshot of that scene. Have them think of all the details pertaining to that scene...i.e. other people, animals, the environment, the colors, the shapes, time of day.
5. Have them draw a picture of that scene in the center of the board using the oil pastels, just like Faith Ringgold did with her quilts.
6. Finally, if time allows, have the students share their stories with the class or read *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold.

Photograph of Faith Ringgold and other quilts







