

*THE QUILTING CONNECTION....a
teaching unit on slavery, the
Underground Railroad and quilting.*

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This is a combination reading, language arts and social studies unit created for middle school self-contained DH students in grades 6-8.

Designed as a five day lesson, standards in this unit will address curriculum links that give students an opportunity to (1) read for interest and knowledge, (2) choose important facts to support opinions, (3) write short reports on subject areas, (4) create a self-designed quilt with visual representations and (5) present work and findings orally.

During this lesson, students will visit various web sites for research, read selected books or listen to selected readings, participate in oral discussions on the topic areas, write mini-reports and finally--- as a culminating experience--- create a quilt block(s) to illustrate their research.

This unit will offer both teacher and student the opportunity to see how quilting is one of the connecting aspects that joined the Black Atlantic worlds.

This hands-on approach will make learning fun and meaningful to DH students who often need “time-on-task” controlled by doing experiences.

DAILY LESSON ONE

The goal of the opening lesson will be for students to become familiar with the history of quilts and their history in the African-American culture.

Student learning activities will consist of listening skills, reading and working on the web sites.

The opening goal will be accomplished with a reading by the teacher from “The Afro-American Tradition in Decorating Arts” (page 44) and visits to various web sites to view quilts and their patterns.

This beginning presentation will familiarize the students with web sites and books that will be available for this unit.

(Web site data, bibliography and other information will be listed at the end of the unit plans.)

DAILY LESSON TWO

Students will understand the necessity of the Underground Railroad and how quilting played a part in passing along information to escaping slaves about timelines, safe houses and routes to the North.

Learning activities will have students actually drawing routes North on maps they will create. Additionally, they will become familiar with the quilt patterns that were used as secret codes on the quilts.

To facilitate these activities, students will hear a teacher-told capsule of “Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad.” They will also be able to read the book on their own so they can make short written comments about the patterns they see and what additional information could be gleaned from the book. These mini-reports will be revised and corrected and then pasted on white construction paper to mount on the student-made map of escape routes.

DAILY LESSON THREE

The goal on this day will be to read more from literature and web sites about the subject and then participate in class discussions on the pros and cons of quilts as story tellers and maps.

Students will view the PBS video “Hidden in Plain View” to see how the designs were used to give clues to Underground Railroad stops, routes and other information. This will also be a teacher reminder day to tell students to continue to keep a journal and fact book to refer to in the future for discussion questions.

DAILY LESSON FOUR

Students will begin to design a personal quilt block of their choice to illustrate a “code” reference or to simply tell something about a story of their own.

Students at this point will begin to identify the role quilts played in slavery and the Underground Railroad and hopefully will appreciate the various uses of quilts and be able to orally discuss the subject.

The quilt designs will be sketched on plain paper and refined before drawing them in final form. This activity will take as much time as the teacher is willing to allow and put up with as this is a very noisy and active project. Good Luck!

DAILY LESSON FIVE

The goal will be to continue work on the design of the student quilt block and to plan on the colors that will be added.

As the squares are completed, students will use them as a visual device while giving an oral presentation about the square's meaning and background. This activity can take more than a day and will be completed only after all squares have been shown and introduced.

Finally, all the squares will be pasted together to form a large simulated quilt.

CRITERIA

Points

	Falls Far Short	Partially Covers	Fulfills	Goes Beyond	
Quilt Pattern	Pattern does not follow code patterns	Pattern is not clear due to color arrangement	Pattern of design is obvious	Pattern is obvious and colors are pleasing	
Neatness of quilt square	Cutting and assembly is sloppy and careless	Some pieces carelessly cut, arrangement is inaccurate	Pieces neatly cut and assembled	Pattern is neat well designed, attractive	
Presentation content	Quilt code information not all there. Poorly presented.	Information not clear and code not explained.	Code and information clear and logically presented.	Interesting presentation with code reasons well explained.	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Hidden in Plain View” by Jacqueline Tobin and Raymond Dobard

“The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts” by John Vlach

“Harriet Powers’ Bible Quilts” by Regina Perry

“Stitching Stars: The Story Quilts of Harriet Powers” by Mary Lyons

“Flew Over” by Mary Ringgold

WEB SITES

[http:// www.albany.edu/ltl/etap687/etap687u/mary b/ lesson.htm](http://www.albany.edu/ltl/etap687/etap687u/mary_b/lesson.htm)

[http:// www.womenfolk.com/history of quilts/lafam.htm](http://www.womenfolk.com/history_of_quilts/lafam.htm)

[http:// www.quiltethnic.com/lesson plans.htm](http://www.quiltethnic.com/lesson_plans.htm)

MATERIALS

Paper and pencils

Construction paper (white and colors)

Glue and rulers

Books on quilting

Map of Eastern United States

Video on “Hidden in Plain View”

Actual quilt examples

