ACTIVITY 1.2 Class Culture Quilt

Materials:

- Pictures of quilts or an actual quilt
- 8x8" pieces of paper
- Drawing materials

Purpose:

- To examine culture as a thematic concept
- To participate in a classroom culture of sharing and learning
- To analyze a poem and generate a response to literature

Steps:

1 Have students complete the word web **graphic organizer** around *Quilting*. Then ask them to list images, artifacts, objects, memories, and experiences from their childhoods and explain why they are significant. Ask volunteers to share items from their list, if they feel comfortable doing so. Ask them to explain why the items are significant.

2 After several students contribute to the discussion, stop and ask students to make a generalization about the things that are significant to them as individuals and as a group.



Class Culture Quilt

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Word Map, Graphic Organizer, Close Reading, Rereading, Brainstorming, Metacognitive Markers, Think-Pair-Share

WORD

Artifact contains the roots -art- and -fac-, from the Latin words ars, which means "to join or fit," and facere, which means "to make or do." These roots also appear in artisan, article, factory, manufacturing, and benefactor. Add circles to create a word web around the word *Quilting*. Write words or phrases that you associate with quilting. Draw lines to connect the new circles to the one shown below.



Brainstorm a list of images, artifacts, objects, memories, and experiences from your childhood that reveal who you are as a person.

	Image, Artifact, Object, Memory, and/or Experience	Explanation of Significance to You
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
5.		
7.		
8.		

<u>MY MOTHER</u> Pieced Quilts

by Teresa Paloma Acosta

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1949 in McGregor, Texas, poet Teresa Paloma Acosta grew up listening to family stories about working in and living near cotton fields. She came from a family of hardworking men and women. The women were known particularly for their sewing skills. Paloma Acosta combines her love for her Mexican heritage and her family's quilting and storytelling abilities in her poem "My Mother Pieced Quilts."

they were just meant as covers in winters as weapons against pounding january winds

but it was just that every morning I awoke to these october ripened canvases passed my hand across their cloth faces and began to wonder how you pieced all these together these strips of gentle communion cotton and flannel nightgowns wedding organdies dime store velvets

how you shaped patterns square and oblong and round positioned balanced then cemented them with your thread a steel needle a thimble how the thread darted in and out

galloping along the frayed edges, tucking them in as you did us at night oh how you stretched and turned and rearranged

My Notes Quilts are compared to can-5 vases, faces, communion, drawing boards, mosaics bridges on which to "paint" personal history. Note how "you" is repeated until the final "oh mother." 10 15 20 Unit 1 • Voices of Modern Culture 7

ACTIVITY 1.2

ACTIVITY 1.2 Continued

Steps:

3 Explain that in Acosta's poem, "My Mother Pieced Quilts," the speaker uses images of quilts and quilting to show connections both to her mother and to her heritage as a Mexican American.

4 Activate prior knowledge

of quilting by asking students what they know about quilts and the process of quilting. Use a visual prompt (such as pictures of a quilt or an actual quilt) to advance the discussion. Share with students that quilts originally were simply necessary objects, but over time they have become cherished cultural objects. Today, quilting is considered an important form of artistic expression.

TEACHER TO This activity concludes with students creating a class quilt that symbolically represents various cultures. Call out the visual prompts during the lesson for students to use for inspiration later when they create their own quilt squares.

5 Read aloud Acosta's poem and ask students to use **metacognitive markers:** an asterisk (*) to signal striking or interesting images (and sketch them in the margin); a question mark (?) to signal a line that is puzzling or to note a question in the margin; and an exclamation point (!) to indicate a personal connection to the poem. Students should **pair-share** responses.

6 Ask students to review the lines they marked with an asterisk (*) and **freewrite** for 3-5 minutes about the imagery in the lines. Have students form small groups, read the poem aloud again, and share comments, explaining why certain images or lines are appealing.

ACTIVITY 1.2

Continued

Steps:

7 Lead students through a text-based discussion, using these questions as oral prompts: Why is this memory significant to the speaker? How does the poet use imagery to convey the significance of the memory?



Class Culture Quilt

My Notes	25	your michigan spring faded curtain pieces my father's santa fe work shirt the summer denims, the tweeds of fall
	30 35	in the evening you sat at your canvas —our cracked linoleum floor the drawing board me lounging on your arm and you staking out the plan: whether to put the lilac purple of easter against the red plaid of winter-going- into-spring whether to mix a yellow with blue and white and paint the corpus christi noon when my father held your hand whether to shape a five-point star from the somber black silk you wore to grandmother's funeral
Metaphor: you = river current you = caravan master	40	you were the river current carrying the roaring notes forming them into pictures of a little boy reclining a swallow flying you were the caravan master at the reins driving your thread needle artillery across the mosaic cloth bridges delivering yourself in separate testimonies
	45	oh mother you plunged me sobbing and laughing into our past into the river crossing at five into the spinach fields into the plainview cotton rows into tuberculosis wards
	50	into braids and muslin dresses sewn hard and taut to withstand the thrashings of twenty-five years stretched out they lay armed/ready/shouting/celebrating
The quilts come to symbolize or represent the family his- tory or family culture.	55	knotted with love the quilts sing on
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ACTIVITY 1.2

LITERARY TERMS

or ideas in the reader's

to the sense of sight.

Connotation is the

neutral.

of words.

mind. Most images appeal

emotional feeling attached

to a word. A connotation may be positive, negative, or

Denotation is the literal

Diction is the writer's choice

meaning of a word.

Images help create pictures

ACTIVITY 1.2 Continued

Steps:

8 Ask students to revisit the text and lead them through a discussion on the relationship between diction and imagery, using the questions on the student page. You may also want to discuss the poem's distinctive

syntax, or order of words, as well as its use of **anaphora**, which is the repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginnings of two or more clauses, lines, or sentences.

9 Students' choices of images will vary, but they should be able to explain the appeal of each image. For example, the image of the quilts singing might suggest a choir of family voices. Students should understand that the topic of the poem is a quilt, the purpose is to express the poet's feelings, and the occasion is to celebrate. As a result, the writer selects vivid, joyful words. Students should also understand that *knotted* has a neutral connotation here and *sing* has a positive one.

 In preparation for creating a Class Quilt, ask students to
brainstorm a list of significant experiences and to sketch key images from childhood that might symbolize who they are as a person.

1 Provide students with one 8 x 8 inch paper square on which they may design a quilt piece. Ask students to select one of the images and symbols they brainstormed that captures the essence of their character and render it artistically on the paper.

2 Students will assemble their images and symbols into a large class quilt. Use a large piece of colored butcher paper as the backdrop for the class quilt with five squares across the top patterning the rows vertically.

Display the quilt in a common area of the classroom or the school. Displaying the quilt will generate a sense of community, allowing students to see how the fabrics of their lives have common threads.

Imagery and Diction

Novelist Robert Newton Peck once said, "A good author makes a camera out of a pen." An author creates imagery through his or her **diction**. Imagery is language that appeals to the senses. Writers use it to describe an experience and evoke a feeling.

- 1. Review Acosta's poem and identify two **images**. Explain why the images appeal to you.
- 2. Next, consider the topic, purpose, and occasion of Acosta's poem. How might they shape her diction or choice of words?
- 3. The power of a sentence or a line of poetry to produce a reaction in the reader lies mainly in the **connotations** (the suggested meaning) of words. Consider the final image in the poem, "knotted with love the quilts sing on." What are the denotations of the words *knotted* and *sing*? What are their connotations? Discuss the connotations of the words *knotted* and *sing*.
- 4. Consider what would happen if the author's *diction* were different. For example, suppose instead of "knotted," she had used "entangled," "mixed up," or "tied together." How might a different word or phrase affect the reader's perception of the final line in the poem?

WORD CONNECTIONS

In this poem, the patches of the quilt represent pieces of the author's life. The patch-quilt analogy has also been used to describe the make-up of the U.S. population. Explain the meaning of this analogy.

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Ask students to write a brief description of their quilt squares that explains their significance. The descriptions can serve as talking points as students present their quilt squares to the class.

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