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.

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<th>Image, Artifact, Object, Memory, and/or Experience</th>
<th>Explanation of Significance to You</th>
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by Teresa Paloma Acosta

Quilts are compared to canvases, faces, communion, drawing boards, mosaics, bridges on which to "paint" personal history. Note how "you" is repeated until the final "oh mother."

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

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?

My Notes

ACTIVITY 1.2

Class Culture Quilt

your michigan spring faded curtain pieces
your father’s santa fe work shirt
the summer denims, the tweeds of fall

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:

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

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

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

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

knotted with love

the quilts sing on

The quilts come to symbolize
or represent the family history or family culture.

Metaphor: you = river current
you = caravan master

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8  SpringBoard® English Textual Power™ Level 5
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?

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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.