

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

WORD CONNECTIONS

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.

Quilting

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.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

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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

Metaphor: you = river current
you = caravan master

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

25 your michigan spring faded curtain pieces
my 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

30 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

35 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

40 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
45 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

55 knotted with love
the quilts sing on



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?

LITERARY TERMS

Images help create pictures or ideas in the reader’s mind. Most images appeal to the sense of sight.

Connotation is the emotional feeling attached to a word. A connotation may be positive, negative, or neutral.

Denotation is the literal meaning of a word.

Diction is the writer’s choice of words.

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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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 × 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.