

KITTY JOHNSON

Quilting with Language

Activity 1: Making a Class Memory Quilt or a Family Memory Quilt

(45–60 minutes)

Purpose

Students will discuss quilts and other methods of saving memories and will create symbols for some of their own memories. They will practice prepositions of location and verbs of placement to arrange the symbols.

Materials

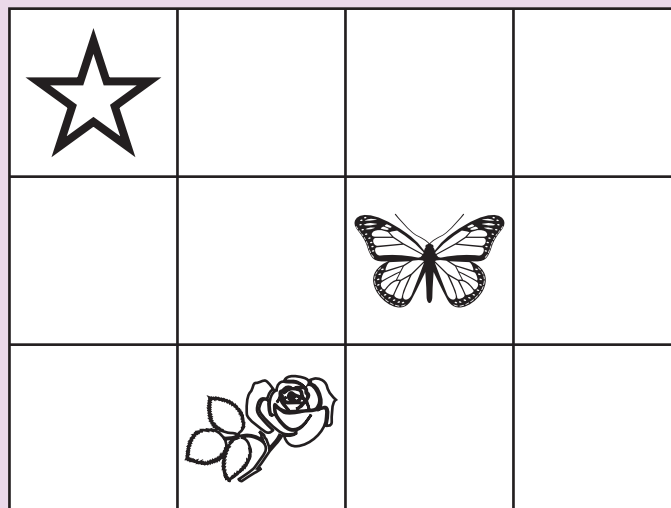
- Paper
- Pencils, markers, or crayons
- Tape or glue

Activating Background Knowledge

1. Ask the students: *Can anyone describe a quilt?*
2. Draw a grid on the board. You can start with four squares across and three squares down.
3. Tell the students:

A quilt is a type of blanket with many squares of fabric stitched together. Some of the squares are different colors, and some have patterns in various colors and shapes. Many American quilts consist of traditional squares with images of things such as flowers, butterflies, or stars.

4. Draw a flower in one square of the grid, a butterfly in another square, a star in another square.



5. Ask the students:
 - *What could a butterfly represent? What about stars? Flowers?*
 - *What are some other designs that could be used on the squares of quilts?*
6. If students have examples, invite one or two of them to draw their items in the squares of the grid.
7. Ask the students:
 - *A quilt can be one way to keep a record of memories. What are some other ways? (Examples: photo albums, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, diaries) Does your family have objects that help to tell your family history? Describe the objects.*
 - *What ideas or traditions are represented in your family's records?*
 - *Does your family have any quilts?*
 - *What ideas or traditions could family quilts represent?*
8. If students can't answer immediately, give them some examples of ideas, traditions, and events and write them on the board or add drawings to the grid. Some examples could be food (including family recipes), weddings, birthdays, etc.
9. Tell the students:

Quilts can be a type of visual record not only of a family but also of a culture.
10. To begin talking about traditions, first talk about family origins. Ask the students:
 - *What are some folktales of our/your culture(s)?*
 - *Did your parents or grandparents come from another culture, country, city, village? If yes, what experiences and ideas did they bring with them?*
 - *What were some of the beliefs, values, and traditions of your ancestors?*

Examples: working hard, celebrating certain holidays, traveling according to the seasons, naming a baby seven days after its birth, serving tea to guests, playing the lute, etc.
11. Write some of the students' answers into one column of a two-column chart. (See example on next page.)
12. Tell the students: *These beliefs, values and ideas, as well as specific events and people, can be represented visually by symbols. What symbols and designs could you use to represent some of these beliefs and values, or events and people?*
13. Write their answers in the second column accordingly.

Belief, idea, value, event, or person	Possible symbols
Marriage and Family	Wedding Bands
Birth of a Baby	Baby Crib
Journey	Horse, car
Gardening	Flower
Reading, education	Book

14. Go back to the grid and review the squares. Ask about the butterfly, the star, the flower, and any other symbols you've drawn in the squares of the grid. Ask the students if they'd like to add any more symbols or designs to the grid. (If you fill all the squares of the grid, add more squares and make the grid bigger!)

Introducing the Topic

1. Tell the students that now they will begin thinking about making their own symbols. Ask them to individually write ten things they think are important enough for people to record as memories on a quilt. These can be personal memories or more general ideas that might apply to other people. Tell students to imagine someone one hundred years in the future looking at this quilt and being able to understand something about the school, family, or culture of the people who made it.
2. Explain the difference between a decorative quilt, a memory quilt, and a memorial quilt:
 - *A decorative quilt has squares that have no particular meaning.*
 - *A memory quilt is a form of visual record keeping. It can tell a story or history of an individual, a family, or a culture, for example. (This is what we'll be doing during the main activity.)*
 - *A memorial quilt serves to memorialize a person or persons who have died. The AIDS quilt in the USA is an example of a memorial quilt.*
3. Have students work in pairs or small groups and ask each other:
 - *How do quilts help people remember their family heritage?*
 - *How would your quilt blocks be different from your own grandmother's?*

- *If you were to make one square for a family heritage quilt, what would you put on your square? Make a sketch. Tell the rest of the group why you made this choice.*

Making the Class Memory Quilt

1. Tell students that they will make a class heritage quilt together. Ask them what squares they would include on a class quilt for this class.
2. Tell the students to each create a symbol and/or design to represent himself or herself, and, using paper and colors, to make one square for the quilt using the symbol they designed. All the squares should be the same size. (If there isn't time to make the squares in class, assign them as homework. Or if you have an art teacher in your school, perhaps you could arrange to have the students make their squares in art class.)
3. Once students have completed their squares (either in class or as homework) have them work together to find the best arrangement for all the squares in the quilt.
4. Encourage the use of language during this collaborative activity by pre-teaching or reviewing the following words.

above, under, below
 corner, edge
 next to, to the right of, to the left of
 column, row
 top, bottom
 between
 sideways, upside down, right side up

Some example sentences:

I think the _____ would look nice next to the _____.

Let's put the _____ in the top right corner.

I'd like to see how it looks if the _____ is between the _____ and the _____.

What would it look like if we put this square sideways instead of right side up?

Which colors look best next to this one?

Let's move this one to the second row.

5. When the class agrees on the arrangement, tape all the squares together.
6. Ask the students to describe why and how they came up with the designs.

Variation: Making Individual Family Memory Quilts

This project is similar to the class memory quilt, but instead of working together on a class quilt, each student makes an individual quilt. Begin the activity by activating background knowledge and introducing the topic. Then follow the steps below.

1. Tell the students that they are going to make family memory “quilts.” Different people in their families will be represented on different squares of the quilt.
2. Begin by talking about names. Ask the students:
 - *What does your name mean?*
 - *Do you have a nickname? If yes, explain what your nickname means or how you got it.*
 - *Do any other people in your family or any famous people have the same name as you? What do the names of some other family members mean? Do they have nicknames?*
3. Tell the students the first step of the planning process will be to make a list of the names of as many people in their family as they can think of, including themselves. Tell them to add interesting information about themselves and their family members next to their names. The information can include aspects of their appearance, occupations, hobbies, and special accomplishments. For example:

Mother—Anna: nickname “Tiny” (because she’s short), likes gardening, rides bus every day

Father—Ted: grocer, has a mustache, rides a bicycle

Grandma Fern—plays the guitar, a fern is a type of plant

Uncle Herman—nickname Specs (wears glasses [spectacles])

Aunt Jeannette—nickname “Red” (has red hair), was an army nurse, talks a lot

Sister—Ellen: plays soccer, loves to wear her blue scarf

Brother—Peter: loves math class and playing video games

Grandpa Johnson—farmer

Grandma Johnson—writes poetry
4. Tell the students to create designs that can be symbols for the family members on their lists. Using the example above, a guitar could represent the grandmother, a flower could be a symbol for the mother (she likes gardening), and a soccer ball could stand for the sister.
5. Have students draw grids with enough squares for the number of family members they want to include. After they have drawn their quilt grids, students will draw the symbols that represent their family members in the squares of their grids. Alternatively, students could draw the symbols on separate pieces of paper (all the same size), so that each family member has a separate “block” or “patch,” and then arrange the squares and tape them together to make a family memory paper quilt.
6. Ask the students to present their quilts and describe why and how they came up with their designs.

Activity 2: Story Block Quilt

Small Group Activity for Practicing Oral Skills

(45–60 minutes)

A *quilt block* is a square or other regularly repeated shape of patchwork or appliqué that is pieced together to make a quilt top. In this activity, students will use blocks of cut-out pictures (or words) to make quilt-like grids and will then use the grids as outlines to tell stories.

Purpose

Students will work together in teams and organize pictures to create and tell original stories.

Materials

- Pre-made grids or paper and markers or pencils to make grids
- Pre-cut pictures from your picture file or magazines and newspapers with many pictures in them
- Scissors

Preparing the Story Blocks

1. Divide the class into an even number of teams (two or four teams, rather than three, for example). Each team should have three to six students.
2. Each team makes a grid large enough so that each student in the team has at least one block in which to place a picture. For example, if six students are in a team, their grid can be 3x2 or 4x3: each student will have one or two blocks. If five students are on the team, their grid can be 5x2 (each student has two blocks) or 4x3 (three students have two blocks each and two students have three blocks each).
3. Students cut enough pictures out of magazines and newspapers so each team will have one picture for each square on the grid. Each picture is now a block for the story block quilt. Students can choose the pictures randomly and make a story to match the pictures, or they can have a story in mind and look for appropriate pictures to tell that story.
4. Teams design their quilts, with one “block” on each square of the grid.
5. Teams work together to create a story using the pictures. Each block should have its own sentence, or group of sentences, or section of the story.
6. Students can rearrange the blocks so they can be used in the story in some sort of logical, visual order.

Rehearsing the Stories

1. Teams practice their stories. Each student must tell about at least one block of the quilt.
2. Combine teams so there are two teams in each new storytelling group.

This is something like pair work, but in this case, the pairs are teams rather than individuals.

3. Within each new group, name one team “A” and the other team “B.”
4. The A teams present their story block quilts to the B teams. (Just as in pair work, the A team in group 1, for example, presents to the B team in group 1, at the same time that the A team in group 2 is presenting to the B team in group 2 in another corner of the room). During these presentations, each student actively tells about one block or piece of the story.
5. The B teams give feedback to the A teams. The feedback should be constructive; that is, the B team should tell the A team what they liked about the story and give ideas on how it might be better or more interesting. If there is something the B team didn’t understand, they should ask the A team to clarify.
6. The B teams then present their story block quilts to the A teams, and the A teams give constructive feedback.

Performing the Stories

Teams incorporate the feedback they got and then present their story block quilts to different teams or to the entire class.

Variation

Follow the above instructions, but substitute vocabulary words for the cut-out pictures. First define a set of vocabulary: for example, words from a recent lesson, words about a particular topic, any words you think need reviewing. You or the students can write individual words on index cards or small pieces of paper that will fit inside the gridlines. These become the blocks of the quilt.

1. Students each choose one or more blocks (word cards) depending on the number of squares in the grid.
2. Students place their blocks (word cards) on the squares of the grid. Each square of the grid should have one block (word card) on it.
3. Teams replace some (or all) of the words with symbols or pictures that remind them of the words. Students can draw the symbols on the reverse sides of the word cards. The story block quilt will now show some blocks that are words and some blocks that are pictures.
4. Continue preparing, rehearsing, polishing, and performing the stories as described above.

Activity 3: Patchwork Story

Small Group Writing Activity

(30–45 minutes)

A *patchwork quilt* is one made of various patches, some of different designs, colors, shapes, and sizes. Often different people contribute different patches. Likewise, different people can contribute different “patches” to a story.

Purpose

Students will work together to write and edit a collaborative story.

Materials

- Pre-made grids or paper for each student
 - Pens or pencils
1. Divide the class into small groups. For this activity to work best, students working together should sit in a circle.
 2. Give each student a pre-made grid or have students make their own. The grid should contain at least six squares, and the squares should be large enough for students to write one sentence in each square.
 3. Tell the students they are going to write collaborative patchwork stories. They will each begin their own story, but they will also contribute sentences to all of the stories in their group.
 4. Instruct the students to each write one sentence in the top left square of their grids. This will become the first sentence of a story. Some examples of beginnings of a first sentence are: “One day....” Or “Once there was a....” (See sample patchwork story grid below.) All students write their own first sentence at the same time.
 5. When the students have finished writing the first sentence in the first block of their grids, tell them to pass their grids to the right.
 6. Ask students to silently read the first sentence of the story they just received. If there is anything about the sentence they don’t understand, they should ask the person who passed them the grid to clarify.
 7. Tell the students to then add a second sentence to the story, using the square to the right. For clarity, students should number this square #2.
 8. Ask students to again pass their grids to their right, read ALL previous sentences and make sure they understand them, and then continue the story by adding another sentence to it.
 9. Tell the students they should continue passing, reading, clarifying, and writing one sentence at a time until the grid is filled or until you tell them their time is up.
 10. Tell students to find the grids they started with (the ones they wrote the first sentences for) and individually read them aloud to the rest of the members in their groups.

11. Have groups decide which of their stories they like best. Then have groups work together to edit that story for grammar, punctuation, logic, and clarity.
12. Have groups share their favorite stories with other groups, either by reading aloud or acting out the stories.

1 <i>Once there was. . . .</i>	2 <i>One day. . . .</i>	3 <i>Then. . . .</i>
4 	5 	6 <i>The end</i>

Activity 4: Quilt Dicto-Comp (20–30 minutes)

Use the paragraphs below as a dicto-comp activity. This activity is called dicto-comp because it's partially a dictation and partially composition. Instead of students writing down every single word you read aloud, they only write down key words and then later reconstruct the paragraph, using

appropriate grammar and vocabulary. **The reconstruction does not have to be exactly the same as the original.** However, it should contain complete sentences, be logical, and capture the gist of the original.

The word *quilt* has come to describe far more than stitched pieces of fabric. Civil rights activist Jesse Jackson found it the perfect way to describe American society when he said: “America is not like a blanket—one piece of unbroken cloth, the same color, the same texture, the same size. America is more like a quilt—many patches, many pieces, many colors, many sizes, all woven and held together by a common thread.”

Quilt making involves many different techniques. When a quilt maker sews together small pieces of fabric to make a larger piece, it is known as patchwork or piecing. When these larger pieces are squares or other regularly repeated shapes of patchwork or appliqué, they are called blocks. Sometimes, as with so-called crazy quilts, the colors, shapes and fabrics are random. Other types of quilts, such as album quilts, feature blocks appliquéd with elaborate floral, animal, and patriotic designs.

Quilts can be the work of one person or many. When many people—usually women—gather to make a quilt together, it is called a quilting bee.

Purpose

Students will be able to use both their listening and thinking skills to reconstruct a version of the dictated paragraphs.

Materials

- Paper
- Pencils or pens

Instructions

1. Explain to the students what a dicto-comp activity is and how it is different from a dictation or a composition. Tell them to take out paper and pencils and remind them to listen for and write down the key words.

2. Read the text (in the box above) aloud at your normal speaking rate. Do not stop, and do not repeat any words. Students write down any key words they can.
3. Ask students to take a moment to look at what they've written, think about the context of those words, and think about what they should listen for during the second reading.
4. When the students are ready to listen again, read the text a second time, again at a normal speaking rate. Again, do not stop and do not repeat any words.
5. Give students time to write, either individually or in pairs or small groups, a text with as close to the same meaning as the original as they can. Remember, it does not have to be exactly the same as the original!
6. After the students have written their compositions, read the original text once more at a normal rate of speed.
7. Students can compare their texts with the original as well as with other students' work.
8. After students compare their paragraphs, ask them to discuss (in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class) the following questions:
 - Why do you think Jesse Jackson used the quilt as a metaphor for America?
 - What other ideas can quilts be a metaphor for?

KITTY JOHNSON is a Regional English Language Officer. Before joining the State Department, she taught English and worked as a teacher trainer in Azerbaijan, Ukraine, China, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Austria, and the United States.