**American Quilts and Geometry**

**Essential Question** How does an artist use geometry and symmetry when making a quilt?

**Grade** 2nd

**Time** 60 minutes

**Art Concepts** Quilt, sewing, pattern, repetition, geometric shapes, rectangles, squares, triangles, diamonds, symmetry

**Materials** Drawing or copy paper, crayons or markers, pencil, colored construction paper, wrapping paper, newspaper, brown-paper grocery bag or piece of cardboard, white glue, scissors

**Artwork in Focus** [*Memorial quilt*, 1850 by Emily Snyder](https://collections.lacma.org/node/170328)

**Talking about Art** Click the link above to look at *Memorial Quilt*. Do you know what it is made of?

It is made of pieces of fabric that are **sewn** together. This is a **quilt.** It’s a kind of blanket made of pieces of fabric sewn together and sandwiched around cotton batting for warmth. Quilts are usually used as bed covers, but they can have other meanings too. Quilts can preserve memories of special events or family stories, and they can be cherished as well as examples of sewing skills and techniques.

There is a long history of quilt-making in the United States. European settlers brought the art of quilting with them in the 1700s. White settlers, Native Americans, and enslaved Africans all engaged in quilting.

Quilts are usually made up of squares (called blocks) that contain more shapes inside of them, such as **rectangles**, **squares**, and **triangles**. We see some of these shapes in Emily Snyder’s *Memorial Quilt.* What shapes do you recognize? Can you find any repeating shapes and colors? What is it called when something repeats? A **pattern**!

Quilts have different designs, depending on where they were made and during which time period. This quilt is composed of squares that have **diamonds** inside of them. Often quilts are made of old scraps of fabric, so sometimes the patterns repeat, but sometimes they don’t. This quilt has a **symmetrical** design, which means that what is on one side is also on the other.

In the 1800s, making a quilt was seen as women’s work, often created together by a few female members of a family. This type of quilt is pieced together, which means that the pieces are sewn together. The center design with the flower is appliquéd—that is, it is sewn on top of the quilt. It is called a Memorial Quilt, because it memorializes people who have died.

**Making Art** Today we are first going to make a drawing of our quilt, and then we will create a paper quilt (that resembles the *Memorial* quilt) out of papers found in your home. Your quilt will have just four squares. We will collage the found papers, which means you will glue the papers together.

1. First, you’ll come up with your design idea. This will be like your first draft.
2. Using either markers or crayons, pick out four colors to make a quilt block. Put these off to the side.
3. With your pencil, draw a square on the white paper. Inside the square, create a design using squares, diamonds, triangles, and/or rectangles.
4. Using your crayons or markers, color in your quilt block design. Make sure to use all four of your colors! This is your design and you will copy it using papers from your home!
5. Glue your colored design to a piece of recycled cardboard or a paper bag.
6. You need to gather at least four different types of papers or patterns. You can use newspaper, wrapping paper, magazine images, aluminum foil, corrugated cardboard, construction paper (plain or with patterns drawn on top), Kraft paper.
7. Cut your four chosen papers into shapes to glue on top of your drawn quilt block design.
8. Glue the papers down to cover up your drawn design.

**Reflection** Do you think that a quilt can be a piece of art? Do you think that an artwork can be part of your everyday life?

Does your quilt block have symmetry? If so, point to it!

Do you have something in your family that is handmade and special to you? What is it?

**Curriculum Connections** Writing and Literature Connections

Read *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco and afterward, write a paragraph about your own family traditions.

Read *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold and discuss the difference between Ringgold’s story quilt and the pieced *Early American Quilt*. Draw your own idea for a story quilt.

California Arts Standards for Public Schools—Visual Arts

2.VA:Cr1.2: Make art or design with various art materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity. 2.VA:Cr2.1: Experiment with various materials and tools to explore personal interests in a work of art or design.

2.VA:Cn10: Create works of art about events at home, in school, or in community life.

Common Core State Standards Math

[2.G.A.1](http://www.corestandards.org/Math/Content/2/G/A/1/): Recognize and draw shapes having specified attributes, such as a given number of angles or a given number of equal faces. Identify triangles, quadrilaterals, pentagons, hexagons, and cubes.

[K.G.A.2](http://www.corestandards.org/Math/Content/K/G/A/2/): Correctly name shapes regardless of their orientations or overall size.

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