

STAR QUILTS

GRADE LEVEL 7-12

INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL

Time to complete: 60-90 minutes

National Content Standards

Family and Consumer Sciences Standards: 6.2.1, 6.2.2, 6.2.3, 6.2.4, 6.2.5, 16.3.1, 16.3.3, 16.3.4, 16.4.1, 16.4.5

Indian Education for All Standards: 2, 3, 6

Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain how the art of star quilting began in the Native American culture
- Describe the importance of star quilts in the Native American culture
- Recognize the star quilt design

Introduction

Studying the history of Native American Star Quilts gives students the opportunity to learn more about the Native American culture. Star quilts play an important role in many aspects of the Plains Indians lives and are embedded in the culture of Montana tribes.

The Plains Indians reside in the northeastern part of the United States. Montana has many Plains tribes. These include the Assiniboine, Sioux, Gros Ventre, Chippewa-Cree, Blackfeet, Kootenai, Salish, Pend d'Oreille, Crow, and Northern Cheyenne. The Assiniboine and Sioux tribes live on the Fort Peck reservation, the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine tribes live on the Fort Belknap reservation, the Chippewa-Cree tribe lives on the Rocky Boy's reservation, the Blackfeet tribe lives on the Blackfeet reservation, the Kootenai, Salish, and Pend d'Oreille tribes live on the Flathead reservation, the Crow tribe lives on the Crow reservation, and the Northern Cheyenne tribe lives on the Northern Cheyenne reservation.

During the early 1800's, Plains Indians painted geometrical designs, like diamonds and circles, onto buffalo hides. Buffalo hides were then used to make tepees, clothing, bedding, and robes. When the buffalo became extinct in the late 1800's, hides were no longer available for these uses. The tribes turned to the missionaries, fur traders, and explorers to obtain other supplies. The missionaries began to teach Native American women how to quilt. The quilts replaced the buffalo hides for the use of bedding. Soon, the Indian women began to incorporate the geometric designs, once painted on buffalo hides, into the quilts.

The morning star symbol (shown in Figure 1) became the dominate quilt design among Plains Indians. It has special meaning, because it represents a new day and new beginnings. The morning star design is now known as the Star Quilt and is made up of many small diamonds.



Figure 1: Morning Star Symbol
Source: Termin, 1997

The number four is a sacred number for Native Americans. It represents the directions of the four winds, the four powers of the universe, or the four seasons. The number 4 is represented in the morning star by the four directions of the star points. Also, four colors are often used in making the star quilts.

The Plains Indians have made quilting their own cultural art form. Star quilts have become an integral part of the Plains Indians culture, and in a way, are the modern equivalent to painted buffalo hides.

Star quilts are a major part of the traditional Native American gift-giving. A giveaway is a ceremony that literally means to give away. It is seen as hospitality Indian style. Star Quilts are presented at naming ceremonies, memorial services, births, deaths, graduations, weddings, powwows, and even basketball games. When a quilt is given away the maker of the quilt is giving part of themselves to another person and spreading a sense of love and friendship. Giving away a star quilt also honors the recipient and brings them joy. Today, star quilts are also used as ceremonial objects. They can be displayed as a flag or banner, carried during parades, and worn at dancing ceremonies. In addition, powwows and summer celebrations include displays of star quilts.

Survival and necessity played a part in the development of quilting among Native Americans. The Plains Indians had to find something to replace the function of buffalo hides as bedding since buffalo hides were no longer available.

In this lesson, students will learn the history of Native American Star Quilts. They will also have a chance to explore Star Quilts in an interactive activity.

Body

1. Before class begins, compile images of various star quilts from the Internet, from books, or from other resources.
2. Make a power point presentation out of these images.
 - a. Place each image on a power point slide.
 - b. Use “Custom Animation” under the “Slide Show” tab to automatically time the images to transition from slide to slide. The timing between slides can be 3-5 seconds.
 - c. Under the “Slide Show” tab, choose “Set Up Show” and mark the “Loop Continuously Until ‘Esc’” box.
3. Before class begins on the day of the lesson, start the power point of star quilt images.
4. Let the power point presentation run through each image as the students walk into the classroom. If desired, play Native American music in the background.
5. Once students are seated in the classroom, let them watch the images of star quilts for a minute.

6. Explain to students that the quilt design shown is the “Star Quilt,” a Native American quilting tradition.
7. Tell students that they will be learning about the history of star quilts in class today.
8. Present the “Star Quilts: A History of the Plains Indians Quilting Traditions” power point presentation.
 - a. Slide 1: Title Slide
 - b. Slide 2: Plains Indians
 - i. Make sure students understand that the Plains Indians reside in the Northwestern United States
 - ii. Explain that the tribes in Montana are Plains Indians tribes
 - iii. Use the map to explain which tribes reside on each reservation in Montana
 1. Fort Peck Reservation- Assiniboine and Sioux
 2. Fort Belknap Reservation- Assiniboine and Gros Ventre
 3. Rocky Boy’s Reservation- Chippewa-Cree
 4. Blackfeet Reservation- Blackfeet
 5. Flathead Reservation- Kootenai, Salish, and Pend d’Oreille
 6. Crow Reservation- Crow
 7. Northern Cheyenne Reservation- Northern Cheyenne
 - c. Slide 3: Early 1800’s
 - i. Explain that the Plains Indians in the early 1800’s relied on the buffalo for survival. They used the buffalo for food, clothing, and shelter.
 - ii. Explain that they led a nomadic lifestyle, which means that they moved from place to place
 - iii. Ask students why they think the Plains Indians led a nomadic lifestyle.
 1. They had to move to follow the buffalo herds.
 - iv. Explain that the Plains Indians painted geometrical designs on buffalo hides
 1. The hides were then used to make teepees, bedding, clothing
 - d. Slide 4: Late 1800’s
 - i. Explain that the buffalo went extinct in the late 1800’s, which took away the Plains Indians main way of survival
 - ii. Buffalo hides were no longer available to make clothing, bedding and teepees, so the Plains Indians had to find other means of survival.
 - iii. They turned to the missionaries, fur traders, and explorers to obtain supplies to make clothing and other necessities.
 - iv. The missionaries taught Indian women how to make quilts.
 - e. Slide 5: The Beginnings of the Star Quilt
 - i. Ask students why they think the Indian women needed to learn how to quilt.
 1. They needed to know how to make alternative forms of bedding, since the buffalo hides were no longer available for that use.
 - ii. Explain to students that the Plains Indians began to incorporated the same symbols seen on the painted buffalo hides into the quilts.
 - f. Slide 6: Morning Star
 - i. Point to the morning star symbol at the bottom of the slide.
 - ii. Explain that this design became the dominant quilt design for Plains Indians.
 - iii. It represents a new day and new beginnings.
 - g. Slide 7: The Star Quilt

- i. The morning star symbol is now known as the star quilt and was shown in the images at the beginning of class.
 - ii. Explain to students that the Star Quilt design is made up of many small diamonds
- h. Slide 8: Star Quilt Construction
 - i. This picture shows how the star quilt is constructed of many diamonds sewn together.
 - ii. Explain to students that the diamonds can be many different colors to create different patterns.
- i. Slide 9: The Number 4
 - i. The number 4 is sacred to Native Americans. It represents the directions of the four winds, the four powers of the universe, and the four seasons.
 - ii. The number 4 is shown in the morning star design by the four directions that the star points
 - iii. It is common for 4 colors to be used in star quilts but not always.
- j. Slide 10: Making Quilting Their Own
 - i. Explain that Plains Indians have made quilting their own art form, and it has become an important part of their culture.
 - ii. It is known as the modern equivalent of the buffalo hides
- k. Slide 11: Giveaway Ceremonies
 - i. Star quilts are given to others by Native American at many different events. These are known as giveaway ceremonies.
- l. Slide 12: Symbolic Meaning of Giveaways
 - i. The person that made the quilt or the quilter is spreading love and friendship by giving their quilt to someone else. They are also giving part of themselves to another person.
 - ii. Giving away a star quilt honors the recipient and brings them great joy.
- m. Slide 13: What do Star Quilts teach us about Native Americans?
 - i. Ask students what they believe they learned about Native Americans from learning about Star Quilts.
 - ii. Explain to students that learning about Star Quilts teaches us about the history and culture of Native Americans.

Assessment

Have students complete the Star Quilt Word Search.

Conclusion

Depending on the class grade level and skills, pick an activity to follow this lesson from the following:

1. Create a "Bulletin Board Quilt." See instructions below.
2. Create a "Crayon Pillow or Quilt." See instructions below.
3. Invite a guest quilter to demonstrate making a Star Quilt block.
4. Invite a guest quilter to present a trunk show to the students. This trunk show should focus on star quilts, but can also include other kinds of quilts the quilter has completed.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR BULLETIN BOARD QUILT

After the power point presentation about the history of the star quilt, students will each make their own quilt block. The following is a material list for this activity.

1. 8 1/2 x 8 1/2 inch squares of white card stock paper, one piece per student
2. Variety of colorful crayons, colored pencils, or markers
3. Various notions: ccrap pieces of lace, ribbon, ric-rac, buttons and fabric (optional)

Ask students to design their own star quilt design on the paper using colored pencils, crayons or markers. Students can also use various notions to decorate their block. Make sure that they follow the design of the morning star symbol.

The teacher can also utilize the star quilt handout provided with this lesson. In this case, print out 1 handout for every student onto cardstock paper. Use a paper cutter to make each block an 8 1/2 by 8 1/2 inch square.

While students are making their blocks, cut up 1 1/2 inch wide strips of construction paper or prepare these strips ahead of time. These strips will be used as the sashing for the paper quilt. The strips will be placed in horizontal and vertical rows on the bulletin board, in order to frame the students finished quilt blocks.

When all the blocks are complete, arrange them inside the framework on the bulletin board for a finished project.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CRAYON PILLOW OR QUILT

After competing the power point presentation about star quilts, ask students to color their own quilt block on a piece of fabric.

Materials needed for this project include;

1. Prewashed 100% cotton or muslin fabric cut into 10 1/2 inch squares
2. Crayons
3. Freezer Paper-10 1/2 inch squares
4. Permanent Black Marker or Black Pigma Pen
5. Rulers
6. Ironing Board and Iron

Begin by ironing the 10 1/2 inch squares of fabric onto the 10 1/2 inch squares of freezer paper. Direct each student to draw their own morning star pattern onto the squares with the black permanent marker or pigma pen.

After the initial drawing is complete, students use the crayons to color the design. Instruct students to press down firmly in order to get a dark color, because the darker the color is the better the finished product will be. Once students are finished coloring their block, ask them to bring it to the ironing board.

Cover the ironing board with a few sheets of newspaper and set it to medium or wool safe temperature. Put the colored block face up and cover it with a paper towel. Press the iron down to set the design and remove the excess wax. If the design doesn't appear to be dark enough, color it again and repeat the previous step. Let the block cool and then peel off the freezer paper. Finally, have students make an individual pillow out of each block or combine the blocks to make a class quilt.

Materials

Note to Teacher: Materials will vary depending upon which activity is completed

Power Point presentation
 Projector and Computer
 Word Search handout
 Cardstock

Star Quilt Handout

Colored pencils, crayons and/or markers

Prewashed 100% cotton or muslin fabric

Freezer Paper

Permanent Black Marker or Black Pigma Pen

Rulers

Ironing Board and Iron

Additional fabric to complete the pillow or quilt

Resources

Bol, M. (1998). *Stars above earth below*. Niwot, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers.

Bryan, W. (1996). *Montana's Indians: yesterday and today*. Helena, MT: American & World Geographic Publishing.

Holstein, J. (1973). *The pieced quilt*. New York, NY: Galahad Books.

MacDowell, M. & Dewhurst, C. (1997). *To honor and comfort native quilting traditions*. Sante Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press.

Parker, L. (1997). *Montana star quilts*. Helena, MT: Montana Star Quilts Inc.

STAR QUILT WORD SEARCH

Directions: Answer the questions on the following page in the space provided. Find the answer to the questions in the word search below.

B D S B M M X E J Q V M K N L Z S B D N
L A E C A I S G N I D D E W G R H I T O
A E I I E S A Z V I H Q K Y E I A B C I
C H N R C S K H E Y O J S D E M Y H R T
K T O C G I J E A E Q B A L O B I C R A
F A M L N O Y X T V X R I N A P E U H U
E L E E C N K J A B T P D N P R X I S D
E F R S A A G S S R A S L E I B E N E A
T U E F J R B B U R V L W O E S O N T R
H Q C O B I A F U P W A L D R E S M U G
S Z G L V E K O V L C O D G N E S A F F
I Z N K S S F E V R G I W N A K R N M H
L O I N O I D U E N N P E W C M A S E C
A L M Q O J J E L G O Y Y X O H E W V Y
S G A E O M A I J B E C R O W P U S H A
R E N S G V A S P H B U F F A L O E P W
Z P V E J N W D C R A T S G N I N R O M
C G Q T E M Z N I A E S G P S H T R I B
N U D T Z M R V E C I B K Z T O R Z R H
G R O S V E N T R E E R C S N M H M H G
B O K E H M E M O R I A L S E R V I C E
K A S T U E P L J K M J E P D O D D P S
S T R Z Q P I Y J C A L H J L Q O D N M
Z O N Z S R E T H U Y R T Q W V Y L I Z

N X P I D F L S M Z B K C K B P B X S N

1. Who taught Indian women how to quilt?
2. What symbol is the dominant quilting design among Plains Indians?
3. What animal provided food, clothing, and shelter for the Plains Indians?
4. What is the Plains Indians sacred number?
5. What type of lifestyle did Plains Indians lead?
6. What are two geometric designs Plains Indians painted on buffalo hides?
7. What are two events where you may see star quilts given away?
8. What were quilts first used for in the Indian culture?
9. Which two groups of people provided the Plains Indians with supplies?
10. What are the names of two Montana Indian Tribes?

STAR QUILT WORD SEARCH ANSWER KEY

B D S B + M + E + + + + + + + S + D N
 L A E C A I S G N I D D E W + R + I + O
 A E I I + S + + + I + + + + E + A + C I
 C H N R + S K + + + O + S D + M + H + T
 K T O C + I + E + E + B A L O + I + + A
 F A M L + O + + T + X R I N A P + + + U
 E L E E + N + + + B T P D N P R + + + D
 E F R S + A + + + R A S L E I B E + + A
 T + E + + R + + U R + L W O E S + N + R
 H + C + + I + F U + W A L D R E S + U G
 S + G + + E + O + + C O D G N E + A + F
 I + N + + S F + + R + I W N A + R + + +
 L + I N + + + + E + N + E W + M + S + +
 A + M + O + + E + G + Y + + O + E + + +
 S + A + + M + I + + E C R O W P + S + +
 + + N + + + A + + H B U F F A L O + + +
 + + + + + N + D C R A T S G N I N R O M
 + + + + E + + N I + + + + + S H T R I B
 + + + T + + R + + C + + + + + + + + +
 G R O S V E N T R E + + + + + + + + + +
 + O + + H M E M O R I A L S E R V I C E
 K + + T + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +
 + + R + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +
 + O + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +
 N + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

(Over,Down,Direction)

ASSINIBOINE(18,11,NW)
 BASKETBALLGAMES(4,1,SE)
 BEDDING(16,8,SW)
 BIRTHS(20,18,W)
 BLACKFEET(1,1,S)
 BUFFALO(11,16,E)
 CHIPPEWACREE(19,3,SW)
 CIRCLES(4,2,S)
 CROW(12,15,E)

DIAMONDS(19,1,SW)
 EXPLORERS(10,5,SE)
 FLATHEAD(2,8,N)
 FOUR(7,12,NE)
 FUNERALS(20,11,NW)
 FURTRADERS(8,10,NE)
 GRADUATION(20,10,N)
 GROSVENTRE(1,20,E)
 KOOTENAI(1,22,NE)
 MEMORIALSERVICE(6,21,E)

MISSIONARIES(6,1,S)
 MORNINGSTAR(20,17,W)
 NAMINGCEREMONIES(3,16,N)
 NOMADIC(4,13,SE)
 NORTHERNCHEYENNE(1,25,NE)
 POWWOW(16,15,NW)
 SALISH(1,15,N)
 WEDDINGS(14,2,W)

1. Who taught Indian women how to quilt? **Missionaries**
2. What symbol is the dominant quilting design among Plains Indians? **Morning star**
3. What animal provided food, clothing, and shelter for the Plains Indians? **Buffalo**
4. What is the Plains Indians sacred number? **Four**
5. What type of lifestyle did Plains Indians lead? **Nomadic**
6. What are two geometric designs Plains Indians painted on buffalo hides? **Diamonds and Circles**
7. What are two events where you may see star quilts given away? **Memorial services, graduations, weddings, funerals, births, powwows, basketball games, or naming ceremonies**
8. What were quilts first used for in the Indian culture? **Bedding**
9. Which two groups of people provided the Plains Indians with supplies? **Explorers and fur traders**
10. What are the names of two Montana Indian Tribes? **Assiniboine, Sioux, Gros Ventre, Blackfeet, Northern Cheyenne, Pend d'Oreille, Crow, Chippewa-Cree, Salish, and Kootenai**

