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# Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt: The Real Story

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Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt: The Real Story

Dr. Kay Weller – UNI

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|--|--|--------------|
| Grade Level (Req.): 3rd-5th grade  | Content Area (Req.): Human Geography, American History, English  | Unit (Opt.): |
| Connections to Other Disciplines (Opt.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>   |  |              |
| Time Frame (Req.): Varies depending on how long it takes to read the book and how long the teacher gives the students to create the booklet.   | Goal (Req.): To understand how people in history used various materials to portray a message.                          |              |
|  | Objective (Req.): Students will generate a freedom quilt booklet.  |              |
| Materials Needed (Req.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction paper or felt pieces, large sheet of felt, or squares of felt</li> <li>• White paper</li> <li>• Markers or crayons</li> <li>• Books: “Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt” by Deborah Hopkinson (ISBN #: 0-679-82311-5) and “Hidden in Plain View” by Jacqueline L. Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard, Ph.D. (ISBN #: 0-385-49137-9)</li> <li>• Clothes to dress up as a slave</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>   | New Vocabulary (Opt.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul> |              |
| Anticipatory Set/Introduction [Inquiry Question is required] (Req.): What are freedom quilts?  |  |              |
| Instructional Sequence/Procedure (Req.): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell the story of how slaves used quilts as maps pointing out the significance of each quilt block. I take the name of a woman I know who was once a slave. You could do the same thing. I use the name of Williana Hickman because she lived near my hometown.</li> <li>2. I tell a little of the story and stop between quilt blocks and have students draw a picture of one of the quilt blocks to go in their freedom quilt books.</li> <li>3. While they are drawing I find that noise is reduced when I read part of the story of “Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt” aloud.</li> <li>4. I try to break up the activity by telling the story and showing the quilt blocks and then reading while they do the artwork. It seems to work well.</li> <li>5. Quilt patterns and messages conveyed (see attached).</li> <li>6. Extending the lesson: Have students design a quilt that could be used to go from school to their house or perhaps from their home to church or some other landmark in their community. This page could be added to their booklet. It will give students the opportunity to develop skills in drawing mental maps. Or have students generate a real quilt of their own or write a story using secret codes. Instructions for creating a quilt are attached below. Other extensions are also attached below.</li> </ol> |  |              |

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Formative Evaluation (Req.): Class participation

Assessment (Req.): The freedom quilt booklet. The detail and degree of artwork required may depend upon the grade level of the students.

Iowa Core Curriculum Standards Used (Req.):

- Geography, grade 3-5: Understand the use of geographic tools to locate and analyze information about people, places, and environments.
- Geography, grade 3-5: Understand how human factors and the distribution of resources affect the development society and the movement of populations.
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Common Core Curriculum Standards Used (Opt.):

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NGS Standards Used (Req.):

- How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective
- How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context
- The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface
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| <p>Five Themes of Geography Used (Req.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Place</li> <li>• Human-Environmental Interaction</li> <li>• Movement</li> <li>• Region</li> </ul> | <p>School District Standards and Benchmarks (Opt.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul> |
| <p>21<sup>st</sup> Century Universal Constructs (Opt.):</p>   |   |
| <p>Other Disciplinary Standards (Opt.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>   |   |
| <p>Other Essential Information (Opt.):</p>  |   |
| <p>Other Resources (Opt.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>   |   |

## Quilt patterns and messages conveyed:

You can see a larger image of the squares by clicking on them.

1. Monkey wrench-tools you would need, knife, food, memory, etc.



2. Wagon wheel-take only as much as you can take in a small wagon or in a sack.



3. Bear's paw-follow the bear or deer tracks so that you would find water and to cross the mountains.



4. Crossroads-Cincinnati was the place to get on the other side of the Ohio River to safety. From there you could continue north to Canada.



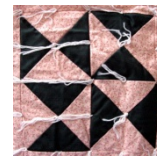
5. Log cabin meant there was a small log cabin by the cemetery where it was safe to go for the runaway.



6. Shoofly was the message that someone would be there to help the runaway.



7. Bow tie pattern meant that once the shoofly meets you there they would give you new clothes. Slaves generally had so few clothes that they were more ragged than those living in Cincinnati and they needed to blend in better because they could be turned over to the authorities.



8. Flying geese-runaways should not leave before the geese are going south so that it is warmer where they are headed and not so likely to get caught in bad weather.



9. Drunkard's path pattern was a warning to travel in a zig zag pattern because it is more difficult for you to be caught.



10. Evening star pattern was a message to travel at night and to follow the North Star.

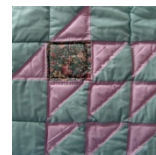
Source: *Hidden in Plain View*



11. Tumbling Blocks meant packing up and moving on.



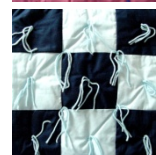
12. Basket design meant it was a safe house.



13. Sailboat



14. Nine Patch



**Creating a quilt:** Two options for this activity.

1. Purchase felt squares and yarn at your local crafts store and have each student make a quilt block copying a pattern of their choice. Use glue to fasten the pieces to the quilt/felt block. Use the yarn to tie the quilt, making certain students create a grid. To make the quilt more authentic you could use 2 squares so that when the quilt is tied it is heavier. Using a permanent marker label the back of the square with the name of the quilt pattern and what significance it had for the slaves.

2. Purchase a large piece of felt and let each student glue his or her favorite quilt pattern to it. This type of quilt is called a sampler quilt. To make the quilt even more authentic you should arrange the quilt patterns in the specified order so that it specifically gives directions. You may need to assign certain people certain patterns to assure that all patterns are completed. After gluing the quilt patterns in place let the students tie the quilt. Be sure that they pay attention to the grid that is forming and understand the significance of it. I suggest having students be sure they make 5 knots in each stitch because that was the way quilts were tied by the slaves.

## Extending the Lesson

**Objectives:**

1. The student will complete a map that simulates how difficult it is to escape without getting caught on the Underground Railroad.
2. The student will participate in an Underground Railroad escape simulation.
3. The student will write a 1 page reflection paper about their experience as a runaway.
4. The student will write a fictional diary of a runaway slave.

**Mapping procedures:**

1. Generate a sketch map of your school and playground/campus.
2. Decide on two points (A & B) that will be the point of departure and point of destination in an escape that simulates the route fugitives traveled on the Underground Railroad.
3. Have students draw how they would get to point A to point B in the school without going straight so that they would not get caught trying to escape.
4. Share their route map with the rest of the class.

**Simulation Procedures:**

1. Prearrange for certain classrooms to be "safe houses."
2. Make certain there is a symbol on the outside of each "safe house" for identification.
3. Symbols to use may include any of the following: gourds hung beside the door, light on in the window, basket turned upside down beside the door, quilt hung in windowsill.
4. Send students out to reach a point of destination by using "safe houses" as a place of refuge along the way.
5. Have some teachers/adults act as people searching for runaways.
6. Reward students who complete the task with something fun.
7. Students should write a 1 page reflection paper about their experience.

**Diary Procedures:**

1. Have the student complete a diary of a runaway over a period of a month or more.
2. Let Cincinnati be the destination of the runaway.
3. Have students research routes followed by runaways on the Underground Railroad.
4. Make the entries geographic by telling what they saw and where they saw it.
5. Illustrate the diary with maps and other things that were significant.