

Resilience, resistance and improvisation!!!

Thea Storz



Irene Williams Quilt: HOusetop VARIATION 1975

<http://www.soulsgrowndeep.org/artist/irene-williams>

Group Concept:

Be resilient, practice resistance, strive for freedom!

During the Civil Rights Movement, African-Americans were able to maintain their humanity when faced with adversity, trauma, tragedy, and grief. They were resilient and resisted oppression. Their perseverance inspires us to strive for freedom.

Essential Questions

- *How did violence in the south affect black communities?
- *How did the non-violent movement impact both black and white communities?
- *What were some of the ways that African-Americans displayed resilience?

Subject: Art- grades 7 & 8

NARRATIVE:

Gee's Bend is a rural town located in Alabama's Black Belt. Officially named Boykin, the community has nurtured a unique quilting tradition. "Bend" refers to the crook of the Alabama River which both isolates and cradles residents on a beautiful "river island". Geography influences artmaking, and the women of Gee's Bend have made striking abstractions that also serve a utilitarian purpose. Located southwest of Selma, Gee's Bend was also the home of some fierce foot soldiers of the voting rights movement.

In this lesson, students will examine connections between creative expression and political action. The African American women of Gee's Bend lived in the Jim Crow

south: they struggled with highly restrictive societal oppression. Yet they enjoyed artistic freedom. Did their ability to improvise help quilters to be resilient? Did artistic freedom lead to political action? Is the act of making art inherently subversive?

Guiding Questions:

- What kind of social and economic hardship did African Americans who were living in the Jim Crow south face?
- What impact did historical and geographic context have on the artistic expression of women living in Gee's Bend?
- What is improvisation? In art, music, life
- Does creative action pave the way for political action?

Learning Objectives:

TSWBAT

*Respond to and evaluate works of art

*Create paper quilts using collage.

*Identify connections between artmaking and historical events.

Class periods: 3

Standards

ART & COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

VA.CR.AM.1

I can document and justify the planning and development of an artwork from the inception of the idea to completion.

VA:Cr2.1.7a

Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and approaches in creating works of art or design

VA:Re.7.1.8a

Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others.

Preparation:

General Discussion of the Jim Crow south and the struggle for civil rights.
Introduction to quilting: a quilt is like a sandwich. Look at actual quilts and their construction. Using bread, peanut butter, and fluff make quilt sandwiches.

Activities:

- *Students do computer research and exploration on voter registration in the Jim Crow south.

- *Students will read about and view quilts from Gee's Bend.

- *Students respond in writing to quilts, as well as expressing ideas about the voting rights movement.

- *Students will use collage to make a paper "quilt". They can use maps, political brochures and stickers, magazines, assorted paper.

Assessment:

Students will write 2 sentences of reflection on a large, collective exit ticket.

1. Students reflect upon and use art vocabulary to write about their artistic decisions in terms of ideas and how their ideas reflect or reinforce the collaboratively chosen theme or idea. How did I do?

2. Students interpret artworks by analyzing how subject matter, visual elements, formal composition, media, and relevant contextual information interact to convey meaning. What's my favorite Alabama quilt and why?

3. Exit ticket and student art will be displayed in the hall.

Extensions:

- *Students read **Characteristics of Negro Expression** by Zora Neale Hurston. Then reflect: Do quilts follow any of these characteristics.

- * Examine visual symbols. Look at graphics of the movement: black panther, sncc political primers

- *Look at 12 bar blues. Listen to some music. Examine connections between visual rhythm and auditory rhythm. Compare musical blues with work clothes quilts,

- *arrange,sew, and quilt a nine patch block using fabric, batting, and thread.

Websites:

<http://www.quiltsofgeesbend.com>

https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/jimcrow/tools_voting.html

<http://www.soulsgrowndeep.org>

<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.31901>

<http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/counties/wilcox/wilcox.htm>
<https://archives.alabama.gov/teacher/rights/rights5.html>

Materials and media:

Fabric, sewing supplies, paper, political stickers, glue, markers, mixed media supplies- markers, paints, etc.

Alabama highway map (provided by alabama.travel

WORKSHEET to be placed in google classroom:

Stitching the Resistance (attached)

Alabama voter registration map 1962

(attached or at the Alabama archives link above)

Thea Storz

Brighton Elementary School

Island Pond, VT

Thea.storz@ncsuvt.org