

A Stitch in West Virginia Time

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Big Ideas: Time, Change and Continuity.

Essential Question: How does quilting tell the story of West Virginia's past?

Social Studies Standards

SS.2.WV.4 examine the cultural life of West Virginians through storytelling and various art forms (e.g., songs, instruments, artwork, photographs, etc.)

Learning Plan: Day 1

Use laptop and Elmo to [display](#) the quilts from the 2019 Quilts and Wall Hangings Juried Exhibit at the West Virginia State Museum. Ask students to discuss what they know about quilts and/or what the purpose of quilts are. Students will likely say the purpose of a quilt is to keep someone warm. They may also add that some quilts are made for beauty purposes. Next, display several different maps and ask students to share what they know about maps (legend, compass rose, etc.) Next, give students two minutes to discuss with their neighbor what these two seemingly unrelated things (quilts and maps) may have in common with each other. Set the timer and when 2 minutes have passed, have pairs of students offer their ideas as you record them on chart paper. Leave paper displayed throughout these studies. Without giving anything away, tell students you are going to read a book to them that may shed some light on how these two unrelated things have in common. Read *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*, by Deborah Hopkinson, aloud to students. Once you have finished the book, ask students if they can now tell you how quilts and maps are related in regard to the lessons we will be covering the next few days. Offer any prompting as necessary to lead students down the right path. Record responses to be revisited tomorrow.

Learning Plan: Day 2

Begin class by telling all students who have brown eyes to come to the front of the room and stand with me. Tell the class that I was thinking about the kids this morning and I realized that I really like brown eyes...I mean my eyes are brown and I am pretty sure that brown eyes signify intelligence, kindness and superiority. Tell the class that because of this everyone who is standing up front with me will get extra recess today, they can line up first when we go to lunch, and they don't need extra academic help so I have decided that the students who do not have brown eyes

will do all of the homework for the brown eyed students. Take note of the reaction of the brown eyed students as well as the other students.

After a few moments, tell students that you were just doing an experiment to see how the brown eyed students would react, when in fact, it is the students with blue and green eyes that you have decided to give special privileges too today...I mean, my son's eyes are green and I couldn't stand the thought of him having to do someone else's homework, so all of the brown eyed students must sit down and in reality, they are the ones who will now be doing the extra homework, getting in the back of the lunch line, and will not get extra recess. Gauge the reaction of both sides again. Have all of the students sit back down.

Ask them what they thought about being told they were not as smart as the others based on their eye color. Ask them if they had any choice in the color of their eyes. Ask them if the color of their eyes affects their intelligence. Draw the correlation between the color of their eyes and the color of the skin of slaves and how the color of neither the skin or eyes is a basis for discrimination. Reread *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* to students asking them to put themselves in Clara's place by drawing from the way they felt when they were singled out because of the color of their eyes alone. Next, hone in on The Underground Railroad and its importance in bringing freedom to many slaves during that time. Review the concept of Clara sewing a map into the quilt she was making based on what she overheard others speaking about to determine the lay of the land so slaves could find the Underground Railroad. Tell student that tomorrow we are going to design our own quilt squares on paper and we will then compile them into a large 2nd grade class quilt to be displayed in the hallway.

Notes to the Instructor

The idea of the brown-eyes vs. green/blue-eyes experiment came about through an actual teacher named Jane Elliot who, in 1970, performed a remarkable experiment on her students. This video can be viewed on YouTube if you follow the link "[Brown eyes and blue eyes Racism experiment](#)". This teacher separated the students by eye color but actually went through an entire day's proceedings with the students segregated that way. It was remarkable to watch the students begin to really think of themselves as superior. The next day, this teacher switched roles and went through an entire day with the students who were marked as outcasts the day before in the superior role. The most remarkable thing to me was that on the second day the students who were so upset from being mistreated the day before were very quick to take on the superior role and treat the others badly. If you choose to do this experiment, you will most likely witness (as I do each year when I perform it) something very similar but, thankfully, on a much smaller scale since we do not actually go through with the preferential or maltreatment due to the eye color.

Assessment

Quilt square completion

Art-Inclusion Activities

Go to [Quilt Trail of Pocahontas County](#) and explore each of the squares and the history behind each one, as well as, its significance regarding Pocahontas County, WV. Have students choose one and recreate it using either construction paper or by painting with paper (tissue paper glued onto the pattern previously drawn on construction paper).

Materials and Other Resources

Laptop

8 X 8 squares of construction paper

Yarn

Scissors

Crayons

Pencils

Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt by Deborah Hopkinson

Chart Paper