

MAYA'S QUILT OF LIFE  
by Faith Ringgold ©1987

This painted story quilt is a tribute to the universal wisdom and strength of Maya Angelou, the phenomenal woman, writer, poet, thinker and human being. It was commissioned for Ms. Angelou's birthday April 9, 1987 by Oprah Winfrey who says of Ms. Angelou, "she is our mother, sister, friend and teacher."

The text of the quilt is excerpted from:

Just Give Me A Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Die © 1971

Gather Together In My Name © 1974

The Heart Of A Woman © 1981

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings © 1970

by Maya Angelou, reprinted by permission of Random House Inc., New York City.

Just Give Me A Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Die

Phenomenal Woman

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies

I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size

But when I start to tell them, They think I'm telling lies

I say It's in the reach of my arms, The span of my hips, The stride of my step,

The curl of my lips, I'm a woman Phenomenally, Phenomenally,

Phenomenal woman, That's me.

I walk into a room Just as cool as you please, And to a man,

The fellow blind or Fall down on your knees

Then they swarm around me, A horde of hungry bees,

Copy, Copy, Copy, It's the fire in my eyes, And the flash of my teeth,

The swing in my waist, And me in my feet,

I'm a woman Phenomenally, Phenomenally,

Phenomenal woman, That's me.

Men themselves have wondered What they see in me

They try so much, But they can't touch My inner mystery,

When I try to show them They say they still can't see

I say It's in the arch of my back, The swoop of my hips,

The rise of my breasts, The grace of my style,

I'm a woman Phenomenally, Phenomenally,

Phenomenal woman, That's me.

Now you understand Just why my head's not bowed,

I don't shout or jump about Or have to talk real loud,

When you see me passing I ought to make you proud,

I say It's in the click of my heels, The bend of my hair,

The palm of my hand, The need for my care,

Cause I'm a woman Phenomenally, Phenomenally,

Phenomenal woman, That's me.

Willie

Willie was a man without a name

Hardly any boy knew his name,

Copied and copied always came,

He said, "I keep on moving, Moving! Just the same."

So little, was the climate in his head

Impatient was the partner in his head,

He said, "I keep on following Where the leader lead."

I may cry and I will die,

But my spirit is the soul of every spirit

Watch for me and you will see

That I'm present in the song that children sing

People called him "Uncle" Ben and they said,

"You can't live through this weather play."

Then they waited to hear what he would say.

He said, "I'm living

In the games that children play.

You may enter my sleep people my dream,

Thirteen my early morning ease,

But I keep coming through my dream

Out as a summer breeze

Wait for me, watch for me

My spirit is the surge of open seas

Look for me, ask for me

I'm the rustle in the autumn leaves.



eva

ELEMENTARY VISUAL ARTS

Park City Education Foundation • Kimball Art Center

LESSON

6

## Black History Month Faith Ringgold

Paper Quilts

"When the sun rises  
I am the time,  
When the children sing  
I am the rhyme."

When I Think About Myself

When I think about myself,

I almost laugh myself to death,

My life has been one great big joke,

A dance that's walked

A song that's spoke,

I laugh so hard I almost choke

When I think about myself.

Sixty years in these folk world

The child I was for calls me girl

I say "yes ma'am" for workin's

SAME.

You proud to bend, the poor to break.

I laugh until my stomach ache,

When I think about myself.

My folks can make me spit my side,

I laughed so hard I nearly died,

The tales they tell, sound just like

lying.

"They grow the fruit, but eat the rind

I laugh until I start to crying,

When I think about myself.

Song For The Old Ones

My fathers sit on benches

Their flesh count every plank

The slats leave them a darkness

deep in their withered, planks.

They nod like broken candles

all waxed and burnt profound

They say "it's understanding

that makes the world go 'round."

There in these feared faces

I see the auction block

The chains and slavery's cuffs

The whip and lash and stick.

My fathers speak in voices

they share my fear and sound

They say "it's our submission

that makes the world go 'round."

They used the finest cunning

their naked with and wiles

the Lowly Uncle Tanning

and Aunt Jeannette's smiles

They've laughed to shield their crying

then shuffled through their desks

and stepped in jellied a country

to write the blues with screams

I understand their meaning

it could and did deride

from living on the edge of death

They kept my race alive.

Gather Together In My Name

"Baby, Mother Dear's going to tell

you something about life."

"People will take advantage of

you if you let them. Especially

these women. Everybody, no

father and his dog, thinks he can

walk a road in a colored woman's

behind. But you remember this

now. Your mother raised you.

You're full-grown, in-the-own

check it like they find it. If

you haven't been trained at home

to their liking, tell them to get



## LESSON OVERVIEW

Black History Month is a celebration of Black American achievements and an opportunity to honor the critical role of African Americans in US history. In line with this important month, the focus is on artist Faith Ringgold. Ringgold took the traditional craft of quilt making (which has its roots in the slave culture of the south - pre-civil war era) and re-interpreted its function to tell stories of her life and those of others in the black community. Students will learn about primary, secondary and complimentary colors to make a paper quilt collage in Ringgold's style.

### INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Learn about Black History Month.
- Learn about Faith Ringgold and her work.
- Learn about primary, secondary and complimentary colors.
- Create symbols to make a paper quilt.

### SUPPLIES

- Scissors.
- Pencils.
- Erasers.
- Glue.
- Multi-colored construction paper in primary, secondary and complimentary colors.
- 12" x 18" white paper.
- Images of Faith Ringgold's quilts.
- Samples of primary, secondary and complimentary colors.

### FAITH RINGGOLD



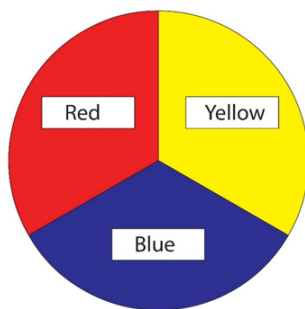
Faith Ringgold (October 8, 1930 - present) was born in Harlem, New York City. She is an American Multi-media artist, Social Activist, Author and Art Professor. Ringgold was born just after the Harlem Renaissance which was a cultural, social, and artistic explosion considered to be a rebirth of African American arts. Ringgold's early art and activism are inextricably intertwined. Her art confronted prejudice directly and made political statements, often using the shock value of racial slurs within her works to highlight the ethnic tension, political unrest, and the race riots of the 1960s. Her works provide crucial insight into perceptions of white culture by African Americans and vice versa. She combines her African heritage and artistic traditions with her artistic training to create paintings, multi-media soft sculptures, and "story quilts" that elevate the sewn arts to the status of fine art. Ringgold consciously chooses to lend a folk-art quality to techniques in her story quilts as a means of emphasizing their narrative importance over compositional style. She quilts her stories in order to be heard. All of her work is focused on storytelling of social issues of the African American society. Many of her quilts have inspired children's books that she later made such as *Tar Beach*, Ringgold's best known work. [Learn More](#)

# LESSON PLAN

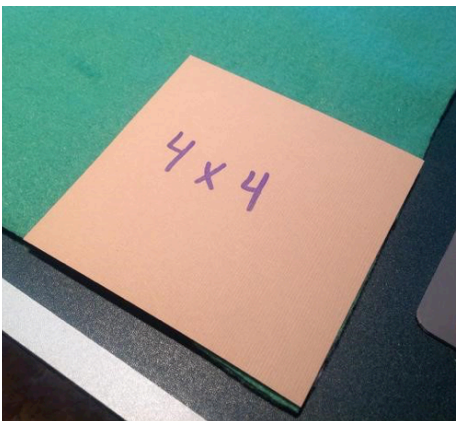
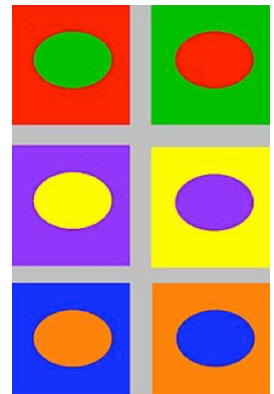
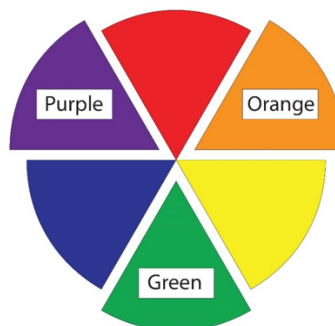
Before beginning the lesson, introduce or review primary, secondary and complimentary colors with the students. Then introduce the work of Faith Ringgold through image samples of her quilts. Highlight not only the story that may be told in the quilt but also the color themes within the quilts. Have students discuss what they see in Ringgold's quilts.

1. Introduce the lesson by explaining that students will be making their own quilt out of paper in pattern or collage format. They will be creating shapes, symbols etc. that can be used repeatedly in their quilt. Since it is the month of February, they may create symbols of love such as a heart if they so choose.
2. Students will each receive a piece of 12" x 18" blank white paper. This will be the base of their quilt. Students will then be given a variety of primary and secondary colored construction papers. These papers will be precut into 4" x 4" squares.
3. Students will cover the 12" x 18" paper with the 4" x 4" squares using a variety of colors to replicate a quilt.
4. Students will create symbols of love or other symbols and cut them out to place on each quilt tile. Die cut images could also be used to facilitate this process. Emphasize complimentary color schemes so that their symbols can be placed to illustrate this idea i.e. red symbol on blue paper.
5. The finished project will be a paper collage quilt with symbols of love or other themes represented.

Primary Colors



Secondary Colors





**KEY IDEAS THAT CONNECT TO VISUAL ARTS CORE CURRICULUM:**  
**Based on Utah State Visual Arts Core Curriculum Requirements**  
**(3rd Grade) Click on links to see more.**

[Standard 3.V.CR.1](#)

[Standard 3.V.P.3](#)

[Standard 3.V.CR.2](#)

[Standard 3.V.R.1](#)

[Standard 3.V.CR.3](#)

[Standard 3.V.R.2](#)

[Standard 3.V.CR.5](#)

[Standard 3.V.R. 3](#)

[Standard 3.V.P.1](#)

[Standard 3.V.C0.1](#)

[Standard 3.V.C0.2](#)



**ADDITIONAL REFERENCES**

**Click on links to learn more.**

- [http:// color-wheel-artist.com/primary-colors.html](http://color-wheel-artist.com/primary-colors.html)
- [http:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storytelling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storytelling)
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbol>
- [http:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collage)
- [https:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem Renaissance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem_Renaissance)

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