

# QUILTING BY REBECCA HINSON

(HISTORY/NONFICTION)

## Questions for *Quilting* by Rebecca Hinson

### LEVEL 1: What does it say?

#### General Understanding

- Quote accurately from the text to explain the roles quilting played in American life.

#### Key Details

- What special life events were commemorated in quilts?
- Interpret the meaning of several block quilt patterns.
- Traditional quilting brought by immigrants to the American colonies consisted of sewing together three pieces of fabric (a top, an inner lining, and a backing.) How was the Star of Bethlehem quilt different?

### LEVEL 2: How does it work?

#### Vocabulary

- Determine the meaning of quilting, migrated, block quilt, sewn, incorporate, commemorate, mourning, hand-made, bazaars, abolition, Underground Railroad, astronomical, bedding, raffle, Union, Confederate, socialize, temperance, reform, drunkard, Amish, fan, heroines, geese, log cabin, overlap, motif, themes, patchwork, haphazard, and empowered.

#### Structure

- *Quilting* addresses fabric quilt blocks which create a pattern. *Backstrap Weaving*, by the same author, addresses the process of creating a patterned weaving. How does the author structure each book in regards to the physical process, interpretation of each design, and the impact these traditions have on the lives of the artists?

#### Author's Craft

- Analyze *Quilting* and *Quilting in America*, below, noting important similarities and differences in the points of view they represent.

*Quilting in America:*

During the early years of American colonization, most Colonial women were busy spinning, weaving, and sewing the clothes for their family, so had little time for artistic quilting. Commercial blankets or woven coverlets were more likely to be used, but during difficult times, when money was scarce or imported textiles limited, many Colonial women had to become creative in their use of materials on hand to keep their families warm during the cold seasons.

Those early settlers could not afford to simply discard things when they wore out; necessity required they carefully use their resources. Therefore, when blankets became worn, they were patched, combined with other blankets, or used as filler between other blankets. These were not carefully constructed heirlooms, rather they were functional items for the sole purpose of keeping people warm. Only in later years, when fabrics were being manufactured in America and were more affordable, freeing women from the work of making their own yarns and fabrics, did the more artistic type of quilting become more widespread.

In the 100 years between 1750 and 1850 thousands of quilts were pieced and patched, and many of them are preserved. Many of these quilts were so elaborate that years were spent making and quilting them. It is no wonder they are cherished as precious heirlooms and occupy honored places in homes and museums. Those early quilts provide a glimpse into the history of quilting as well as the history of the United States.

### LEVEL 3: What does it mean?

#### Author's Purpose

- Explain how the author uses reasons and evidence to support her belief that quilting gave women a voice at a time in history when they had no voice.

#### Intertextual Connections

- In *The American Quilt*, Roderick Kiracofe states that "The history of quilts is embedded in our culture, and conversely, the history of our culture is stitched into our quilts. Understanding one sheds light on the other." Draw on information from *Quilting* and the following links to agree or refute Kiracofe's statement.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JvsKwCWfk&list=PLkXJUfSo8p-PA\\_myWI1WSuXYmGAIQv7qF](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JvsKwCWfk&list=PLkXJUfSo8p-PA_myWI1WSuXYmGAIQv7qF)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEfZx4nwsRE&index=2&list=PLkXJUfSo8p-PA\\_myWI1WSuXYmGAIQv7qF](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEfZx4nwsRE&index=2&list=PLkXJUfSo8p-PA_myWI1WSuXYmGAIQv7qF)

### LEVEL 4: What does it inspire you to do?

## Opinion with Evidence or Argument

- Integrate information from *Quilting, The American Quilt* (below), *World Quilts* and links (above), in order to write or speak about the friendship quilts knowledgeably.

### *The American Quilt:*

Made to commemorate a special event, such as a marriage, birth, leaving a community, or even death, a friendship quilt combined the love of family and friends with the love of beautiful fabrics.

The quilts first appeared in the 1840s during a time of extreme sentimentality, brought about in part by the great religious awakening that swept the country. The migration of population to the West had much to do with the popularity of the friendship quilt; it is no accident that its greatest vogue was in the 1840s and 1850s. As family and friends were uprooted and separated from one another, a great many women carried quilts composed of blocks with precious messages from those left behind. . . . Because these quilts were intended to keep memories alive, a mixture of old and new fabrics was often used; "Quilts make you think a little of the person who made it or whose dresses were in there. . . . A friendship quilt is one in which the blocks are all the same design. . . . A friendship/album quilt is one in which all the blocks are different; some are pieced, some are appliquéd, and the quilt is also signed, although not necessarily in every block. Friendship/album quilts are also referred to as presentation quilts, bride's quilts, and occasionally, freedom quilts, depending on what inspired the particular quilt.

### *World Quilts:*

Such quilts have long tied community members together, sometimes to mark the occasion of a marriage or when a friend moved away. Quilts often relocated with their owners, moving west away from the East Coast in the 19th century, or circulating among rural mid-western Amish communities, whose members tended to migrate frequently in the 20th century. Friendship quilts also served as a way of commemorating a shared experience, such as classmates graduating from school, or Amish and Mennonites who served together as conscientious objectors to war.

The initial fad—centered in the East Coast, particularly in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New Jersey—began in the early 1840s and had fallen out of favor by the mid-1850s in this region, although it lasted longer in areas further north, west, and south of the metropolitan mid-Atlantic. The trend had a resurgence in the 1880s and 1890s, although not within the East Coast cities of its origin.

In late 19th- and early 20th-century incarnations of friendship quilts, embroidery rather than ink was the method of choice for signing one's name. Eventually, makers began using blocks pre-stamped with embroidery designs, to which they added their names, and in some communities, including the Old Order Amish and Mennonites, even mailing addresses. During the late 20th-century's quilt revival, a variety of quilt forms found their way into friendship quilts, as the symbolism of the social network stitched together was more important than a specific trend or fad.

**Sources**

Roderick Kiracofe, *The American Quilt*

Robert Shaw, *American Quilts: The Democratic Art*

Rebecca Hinson, *Backstrap Weaving*

<http://www.quilting-in-america.com/History-of-Quilts.html>

<http://worldquilts.quiltstudy.org/americanstory/engagement/friendship>

Youtube