

## Quilting Stories- Putting all the little pieces together

I discovered that memory is like a quilt when I was recently compiling a book of family stories for a reunion. As a relentless note-taker, I guess I am like the compulsive scrap-collector who keeps boxes and baskets full of potential quilt pieces, stitching them together into a new-but-old pattern to preserve old truths but creating a whole new integral pattern in the process.

Surprisingly, in today's "new" and "hurry up" and "don't look back" world, the anachronistic quilting bee is making a comeback thanks to books like Patricia Polacco's **The Keeping Quilt** (\$16, Simon and Schuster) newly reissued in a 10th anniversary edition. Teachers and parents alike have enjoyed this story of how family history is preserved, scrap by scrap, through the women's work of quilting. This autobiographical story is about how a homemade quilt links four generations of the author's family. After you let this story into your life, you'll agree that a quilt is not just a blanket --it's a metaphor for family, and helps answer the eternal questions "Who am I?" and "Where do I fit in?".

I must admit I can barely thread a needle, but quilting with words is something we all can do. To tell the stories of ancestors long gone, of journeys almost forgotten, of celebrations continued is to make a warm quilt of words for your children. Some other books that help make the connection between quilts and stories include:

**The Patchwork Quilt** by Valerie Flourney, illustrated by Jerry

Pinkney, (\$15.99, Dutton) in which the passing of family time is embedded in the quilt

**The Log Cabin Quilt** illustrated by Ellen Howard, illustrated by Ronald Himler (\$15.95, Holiday House) tells of a hard winter without much comfort, and how a girl chinks the drafty cabin walls with quilt scraps

**Luka's Quilt** written and illustrated by Georgia Guback, (\$14, Greenwillow), is the only book I know of about the intricate art of Hawaiian quilting

**The Quilt Story** by Tony Johnston, illustrated by Tomie de Paola (\$5.99, Paperstar) that shares the warmth and fun of quilts and their stories across the years.

**Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt** by Deborah Hopkinson, illustrated by James Ransome (\$16, Knopf) in which an escaping slave leaves behind directions to freedom on the quilt she makes while serving in The Big House

**Selina and the Bear Paw Quilt**, by Barbara Classen Smucker, (\$16, Crown) with its tale of escape from war, and the actual quilting patterns that a family preserved in the storybook

**Eight Hands Round: A Patchwork Alphabet** by Ann Whitford Paul, illustrated by Jeanette Winter (\$5.95, HarperCollins) in which the ABCs are each names of quilt patterns

**The Canada Geese Quilt** by Natalie Kinsey Warnock, illustrated by

Leslie Bowman, (\$3.99, Yearling) in which a ten year old makes a quilt

**The Boy and the Quilt** by Cheryl Benner, illustrated by Shirley Kurtz (\$6.95, Good Books) about a boy making a quilt

**Sam Johnson and the Blue Ribbon Quilt** by Lisa Ernst Campbell (\$4.95 MulberryBooks) which is about a grownup man who wants to make quilts and win prizes for them

**The Josephina Story Quilt** by Eleanor Coerr, illustrated by Bruce Degen (\$3.75/\$14.95 Harper Collins) that's a westering tale told in quilt form.

For teachers, scout leaders and others who would like to carry the tradition on, there are some more titles you need to know about

**Quilt Block History of Pioneer Days with Projects Kids Can Make** (\$8.95, Millbrook) has ten simple activities, mainly paper based rather than fabric but with easy directions and handsome results in short amounts of time

**Quilting Activities Across the Curriculum: A Thematic unit filled with activities linked to math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science** and more by Wendy Buckberg, (\$10.95, Scholastic) is one of those "to die for" teaching guides from Scholastic that you could use for a whole year or a shorter unit if you must.

**Hands On Rocky Mountains Art Activities about Anasazi, American Indians, Settlers, Trappers and Cowboys** by Yvonne Merrill (\$20 from Kits Publishing, 2359 E Bryan Ave, Salt Lake City, UT 84108)

contains projects for authentic crafts, including a really handsome quilt (warning: this book is filled with wonderful activities that were developed for children's museum folks to use. You'll have trouble putting it down without trying them all)

Whether you choose to make quilts of cloth, quilts of words, or if you go into scrapbooking, quilts of pictures, the time and energy you invest are sure to be appreciated by youngsters who will be warmed by your efforts in years to come.

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[gwynnespencer@aol.com](mailto:gwynnespencer@aol.com)