

# FLOWER GARDEN QUILTS

## Artist and Origin

Ruth Grant quilted the "Modernistic Flower" quilt (FIGURE 6), continuing a family tradition of quilt making. She got the ideas for this quilt from a weekly quilt column that appeared in the *Oregonian* newspaper. After she appliquéd the design she then embroidered details on the flowers.

The "French Bouquet" quilt (FIGURE 7) by Marjorie Grant Colpitts was made in the 1930s when Marjorie was a teacher in Coos Bay, Oregon. She met regularly with her friends – "Las Amigas" – to sew. At each session she would swap fabric and make a cotton block for this quilt. "Marjorie considered this quilt her masterpiece and keeps it with all the other quilts made through the generations of her family." (*Quilts of Alaska*, pg.55)



FIGURE 6: *Modernistic Flower*, 1933-1934 Ruth (Ingalls) Grant, Oregon, 73" x 83"

## Historical Context

In the 1930s a quilt pattern called Grandmother's Flower Garden became very popular. Many women got the pattern from their local newspapers, like the *Oregonian*.

## Design Elements

Flower Garden quilts are often appliquéd with the floral designs sewn onto the quilt cover before any of the quilting takes place. Typically the colors represent the colors of flowers and so they are bright and multi-colored.



FIGURE 7: *French Bouquet (detail)*, 1930-1940, Marjorie (Grant) Colpitts, Oregon, 87" x 98"



FIGURE 8: *Floral Album*, signed and dated, "Commenced Jan: 1879 Finished June 1879 by Mer," Miranda E. Ransberg, b. 1846 (?)

## Compare and Contrast

The "Floral Album" quilt (FIGURE 8) made by Miranda Ransburg in 1879 was appliquéd beautifully. The designs were hand sewn on top of the squares before the actual quilting was done. "The subject matter on the blocks are carefully recorded on a chart kept by descendants. Miranda seemed to take pleasure in the fruit of the earth and birds of the sky, as apple, peach, orange, and cherry trees are illustrated along with clover, oak leaves and a Christmas cactus.... Her pleasurable experiences with the natural world are revealed further by quilted hands picking fruit that birds might enjoy. With careful searching, stars and hearts can also be found." (*Quilts of Alaska*, pg. 97)

Compare the Ransburg quilt (FIGURE 8) with one of the Grant family quilts (FIGURE 6 OR 7) in terms of the designs they used and the overall look of the quilt.

Which gives you more information about the natural world?

Which design appeals to you the most? Why?

Baby quilts often had flower designs sewn on them. In the 1920s Florence Hammelbacher made many appliquéd quilts (FIGURE 9) for the babies she delivered as the midwife in Seldovia, on the Kenai Peninsula.

Florence was remarkable in that she learned how to be a midwife at the age of twelve, had three husbands and ten children in her lifetime, and she could speak and translate Russian and Native languages.

"She was a midwife who not only assisted in about 375 births while in Seldovia but also housed many women from neighboring villages while they awaited their deliveries, encouraging them to quilt or crochet to pass the time. ... Friends would pass on their fabric scraps to her for quilts. The batting was often wool and had to be ordered from the Neilson Sheep Ranch in Homer. She washed and carded the wool herself." (*Quilts of Alaska*, pg. 59-60)

Compare one of the Grant family quilts (FIGURE 6 OR 7) with the baby quilt sample made by Florence (FIGURE 9).

Why do you think the designs are so different?

What would make you think differently about the designs for a quilt if you were sewing one for a baby?



FIGURE 9: *Floral Appliqué quilt (detail)*, 1925-1940, Florence Hammelbacher, Seldovia, Alaska, 64" x 82"

# NATURE CAUGHT IN CLOTH (MAKING A SPECIES QUILT)

*What can you learn about the natural world from a quilt?*

Level: Middle School (grades 6-8)

## Summary

Using a flower garden quilt as a model, students individually create on paper a "species quilt", illustrating what is being studied in science. Individual quilts are presented publicly and the student explains orally the subject or theme of his/her quilt.

## Estimated Time

This unit could be a one-week unit (300 minutes) or longer, depending on teacher planning.

## Part 1

- Show students pictures/photos of the Flower Garden quilts in the *Quilts of Alaska* exhibit. Have them identify the flowers on one or more of the quilts.
- Discuss how the quilts reveal admiration for the natural world observed by the quiltmakers.
- Decide what area of science you will use to have students make "species quilts." Determine the "menu of choices" they have to select from, e.g.: plants, seafife, rocks, insects, etc.
- Tell the students what the final product must include. (See below)

## Part 2

- Select a species or category of animals, plants, fish, rocks, etc., that you are interested in and can observe, either in person or via the internet or in magazines and books.
- Make a list of at least 8 members of the species that you wish to research and illustrate. Have your teacher check your list before going to the next step.
- Sketch out the design for your species quilt on scrap paper, arranging where you want each of the members you have selected to go, and how big you want each of the squares or rectangles to be. (You could also choose other shapes for your quilt, like diamonds or triangles.)
- Each species shape (square, triangle etc.) must include:
  - A drawing of the member/item.
  - Labeling of the item. In smaller print somewhere on the shape, list two or three facts about the item.
- Research each item that will be included on your quilt, using books, magazines and the Internet. Write at least one paragraph about each. You will use that paragraph to select 2-3 facts that you will add to the final quilt/poster.

- After your teacher has checked your research, begin to do the final drawing of each item. Use heavy paper or posterboard.
- Make a border design or thick line around each shape as you work on your final quilt design.
- Use a magic marker or other thick pen to label each of the items. Be sure that the labels are legible and attractive.
- After drawing an item and its name on each shape, stand back and make sure that the items can be clearly seen. Ask a friend for feedback about where to put the factual information you will be adding.
- Using a pencil, add 2-3 facts about the item to each of the shapes. Step back again to see if the overall design looks attractive to you. If it does, do the final illustration of the facts, using heavy pen, magic marker, etc.
- Make sure your name or initials are on the quilt somewhere. (Look at the Flower Garden quilt examples and see how the quiltmakers signed their quilts.)
- Add a border around the whole quilt.

## Part 3

- Review the "Oral Presentation Scoring Guide" with the class before the final oral presentations. (See Assessments)

## Alaska Content Standards

In this activity students will focus on the following:  
SCIENCE

- A.14 Understand that the living environment consists of individuals, populations and communities.

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

- A.3 In speaking, demonstrate skills in volume, intonation and clarity.
- A.4 Write and speak well to inform, describe...and to clarify thinking in a variety of formats...
- A.6 ...use visual techniques to communicate ideas...
- C.1-4 Make choices about a project ...organize a project, select and use appropriate decision-making processes, and set high standards for project quality.
- D.3 Give credit and cite references as appropriate.

FINE ARTS

- B.4 Investigate the relationships among the arts and the individual...and the environment.
- C.3 Accept and offer constructive criticism
- C.5 Exhibit appropriate audience skills.
- D.6 Recognize that people connect many aspects of life through the arts.
- D.7 Make artistic choices in everyday living.

## Assessments

- Each student presents his/her species quilt in front of the class or some other audience, such as another class, a group of younger students, a gathering of parents and community members.
- Audience members use the suggested scoring guide or another one made by the teacher to evaluate the presentation for scientific knowledge, oral presentation skills and artistic criticism.
- Each student completes a written self reflection describing what he/she did well in the process, what he/she learned, what he/she would do differently if there was a chance to do it over again, and why his/her quilt could be called a work of art.

## Vocabulary

**Appliqué** – A needlework technique in which a piece of cloth is sewn onto a larger piece.

**Species** – (n.) a basic biological classification, consisting of a number of highly similar plants or animals.

(Also, specific science vocabulary words you are using in class.)

## Materials

- Science textbooks
- Science resource books/Internet resources
- Heavy paper, such as poster paper, for illustrations on individual quilts.
- Scissors, one per student
- Colored pencils, markers and/or crayons
- Select appropriate books about quilts to read or display in the classroom.

*Optional:* Use fabric or wallpaper samples for the background area of each shape or to use as a border around the whole quilt.

We highly recommend *Quilts of Alaska: A Textile Album of the Last Frontier* for schools and teachers who plan to use the exhibit or materials from the exhibit in their classrooms. The catalog is extravagantly illustrated with full color pictures of selected quilts and historic photographs. Five chapters provide detailed information about quilting as it applies to Alaska. A full index, appendix, bibliography and endnotes make it a valuable resource for reference and teaching. Ordering information: The Store at the Alaska State Museum, 395 Whittier St., Juneau, Alaska 99801. \$21.95 + \$7 (postage /handling) per book.

Hall, June, Guest Curator. *Quilts of Alaska: A Textile Album of the Last Frontier*. Gastineau Channel Historical Society, 2001 ISBN: 0-9704815-0-0.

# Oral Presentation Scoring Guide: Grades 3-12

**SCORING:** Speakers may receive any score from 1 to 5 in each of the six dimensions when the speech shows characteristics from more than one column. For example: A speaker's ideas and content may "show clear purpose" (5), but have "skimpy supporting details" (3); thus the rating would be a 4 for ideas and content. (Sitka School District: Oral Checklist, 11/25/96)

DIMENSION \ SCORE	1	3	5
IDEAS/CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Purpose unclear</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Central idea lacking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Little/no knowledge of topic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Details missing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Purpose reasonably clear</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ideas could be more insightful</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of topic limited</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Skimpy supporting details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clear purpose</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ideas conveyed in original, insightful manner</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Knows topic well</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Effective amount of detail</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Holds readers' attention</li> </ul>
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Little sense of direction or sequence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Details, events do not relate to topic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No clear beginning or ending</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No transitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ideas/details in sequence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Details missing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Weak start or finish</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Some transitions missing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Details fit, sequence effective</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Details enhance listeners' interest</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strong intro/satisfying conclusion</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Transitions work well</li> </ul>
RAPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Little effort to deal w/topic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tone inappropriate for both audience interest and/or level of knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tries to deal honestly with topic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Style/tone may or may not be appropriate to audience interest and/or level of knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Honest, sincere, cares for topic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Style and tone capitalize on audience interest and level of knowledge</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Speaks directly to listener</li> </ul>
LANGUAGE SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Limited vocabulary</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete thoughts make it hard to understand and follow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Adequate, but ordinary vocabulary</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Awkward wording occasionally make understanding unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accurate, interesting vocabulary appropriate to topic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wording is full, rich, enhances understanding</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Eloquent, smooth, natural sentence structure</li> </ul>
PHYSICAL DELIVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Delivery distracting, posture and movement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Minimal or absent eye contact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Some nervous gestures, stiff, tense or too relaxed</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sporadic eye contact or with only one person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed posture, confident</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintains eye contact w/audience</li> </ul>
VOCAL DELIVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enunciation, volume or pacing a problem</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficult to hear or understand</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Monotone</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Frequent pauses</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficult to follow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Generally uses appropriate enunciation, volume, pacing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes difficult to understand</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ordinary inflection</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Random pauses</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Some gap fillers (um, er, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enunciates clearly, effective volume, pacing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Easily understood</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inflection conveys emotion and enhances meaning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pauses to collect thoughts or build suspense</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Easy to follow</li> </ul>
VISUALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Visual aid is present</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not show careful preparation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> May be unrelated to topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Visual aid adds meaning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Preparation is adequate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Visual aid is somewhat related to presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Visual aid enhances speech</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Carefully prepared</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Interesting, appropriate to topic</li> </ul>