

## Activity 14: Quilting

**Meets EALR:** Social Studies, History

History 4.2.2	Understands how contributions made by various cultural groups have shaped the history of the community and the world.
CBA	Meeting Needs and Wants

**Objective:** Learn about Beryl Baxter, Issaquah's matriarch, renowned in the community for her quilting. Find out how girls in the past learned math and geometry through quilting and needlepoint. Make a class quilt from fabric or construction paper, each quilt block piece depicting a different aspect of Issaquah history.

**Materials:** article on Beryl Baxter, "*Issaquah's famous quilter once cut wood for a living*"; article on girls, geometry and quilting, "*Virtuous Habits of Perseverance*" (this article can be found in the back of the binder in sheet protectors); quilt pattern coloring sheets, quilt sample

### Procedure:

1. Share highlights from the article about Beryl Baxter with the class. If students are not familiar with quilts (piecing together material to make a blanket), define the term. Share the quilt sample from the kit. Ask students why they think people used different kinds of materials to make a quilt (for fun, attractiveness, practical reasons – pieces were left over from worn out clothes or previous blankets, couldn't always afford that much new material).
2. Explain that girls in the past often learned geometry, the study of shapes, and math by sewing. Hold up the article about girls and math showing the students the quilt samples and the diary sketches. Ask students what shapes they see in the quilts and the sketches (square, rectangles, circles, triangles, stars, hexagons, etc. Ask why they think the article is about girls, why not boys (traditionally in America, girls did the sewing). Is that true today (no, anyone can sew, although more women continue to sew than men).
3. Draw freehand a simple checkerboard square pattern on the board. Make it a sloppy, quick drawing. Ask the class if it looks like a good quilt pattern. Ask them how they think the pattern could be improved (measuring, taking your time). Ask students if they were going to make a quilt, why it would be important to know how to measure (get the quilt to fit the bed, make the pieces the same lengths or it would look messy, cut the right number of pieces).

4. Discuss how it was considered a great skill to have neat, even lines and shapes that matched perfectly. Discuss other skills that girls were expected to learn by sewing, beyond mathematics, such as perseverance, attention to detail, self-discipline, etc. Teachers may want to select portions of the “Virtuous Habits of Perseverance” article to read to the class.
5. Show students the quilt pattern coloring sheets. Have students identify shapes they see and count the number of times a shape or pattern repeats.
6. Let students select their own quilt pattern to color. Encourage them to experiment with different colors to see what different materials would look like in a quilt that had such a pattern.
7. Explain that the class is going to make a quilt together. This quilt is going to be made out of shapes (probably squares). The shapes must be measured to ensure that it fits together and has a uniform look when complete. This quilt is going to have pictures instead of designs.
8. Make a class quilt on fabric or paper. Each student creates a block that represents a specific part of Issaquah’s history. Teachers might want to help inspire ideas for quilt square pictures using the timeline, photos, or artifacts from the kit. Make sure there is a wide variety of Issaquah history represented (so the quilt for example does not have 8 logging scenes and 10 coalmining scenes).
9. When finished, display the class quilt in the hallway, office or library.

**Extensions:**

1. Have students actually measure squares or shapes to fit a specific area, as one would to make a quilt.
2. Use tanagram pieces from a math curriculum to let students experiment with shapes and designs. Let students trace and color their patterns onto grid paper.
3. Using grid paper, let students create their own quilt patterns.