

14335149 Black History DIY Quilt Bulletin Board Set

1) Share the following information with students before starting the craft:

Freedom quilts and the Underground Railroad background information:

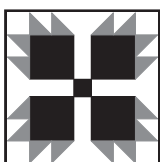
Before 1860, America captured about four million Black people from Africa and brought them to America to be sold as slaves to large plantation owners from the south. From the beginning, slaves tried to escape. Trying to escape, or helping someone else escape, was dangerous and could result in being severely punished or even death. The name of the secret route those trying to escape took to gain their freedom was called the Underground Railroad.

The route consisted of several safe hiding places called “stations,” and the people helping the escaped slaves were known as “railroad workers” and “station masters.”

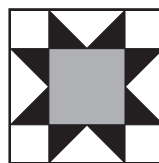
Those that worked and traveled on the Railroad used codes to direct others which safe routes to take. Because it was illegal in slave-holding states to teach slaves to read, slaves could not communicate with each other in writing. Slaves of all backgrounds shared a verbal history of storytelling along with a knowledge of sewing and African art; they were able to communicate with stitches, patterns, designs, colors, and fabrics in a quilt. The patterns told slaves how to get ready to escape and the route to take to freedom. When the quilts were finished, they were hung out the windows of slave cabins to be “aired” out and were secret maps for those slaves brave enough to make the dangerous journey to the north toward freedom.

2) Share with your class the different quilt pattern designs and what they mean.

There were originally 12 blocks used in a freedom quilt. Here are 6 of those blocks.



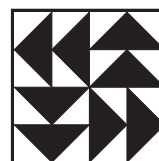
Bear's Paw – This block helped slaves follow the path of bears or other animals to find food and water. It also was used to help identify landmarks on the edge of plantations.



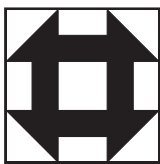
North Star – This block reminded slaves to look to the sky and follow the North Star to Canada.



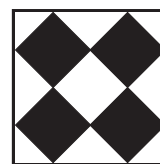
Drunkard's Path – This block warned slaves to move in a staggered pattern or double back to get away from any slave hunters that might be following them.



Flying Geese – This block instructed the slaves to follow the migrating geese north towards Canada and freedom.

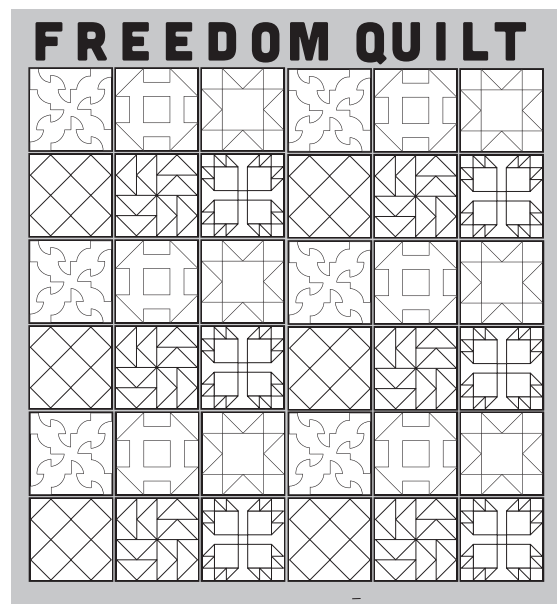


Monkey Wrench – This block told slaves to gather any tools and items they might need along the route. Items included compasses to help with navigation, tools for building shelters, or weapons to defend themselves.



Crossroads – This block told slaves to continue to the crossroads in “Cleveland, Ohio.” From there, slaves would board a boat to Canada and freedom.

Example of assembled set:



3) Students pick their quilt block and write their name and a short description of what freedom means to them on the back of the quilt, and color the front of the quilt block in vibrant colors. Once they are done, put the quilt on a bulletin board or wall to display your class's Freedom Quilt.

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