Integrated Art Lesson Title: Black History Month: Stitching In History
Friday, February 24, 2017 9:30 – 10:15am

Description and Overall Focus: The purpose of this lesson is to teach students how to create a colorful collage inspired by American literary and visual artists: Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Faith Ringgold, and Kara Walker.

Length of Lesson 45 minutes

Grade Range Elementary School, all grades

Objective(s) This lesson will teach students how to integrate different art forms based on cultural experiences in order to realize a colorful and meaningful multi-layered work of art that underscores the ideas of freedom and equality.

Materials: PLEASE NOTE - Some materials must be acquired prior to this lesson

Teacher Supplies:
Excerpts of poetry or quotes (preferably from the literary artists mentioned above)
Photos of art, magazine cut outs, inspirational images MLK and Freedom Dove Templates (1 per 4-5 students)

Student Supplies:
Large (11” x 17”) heavy white paper – 1 sheet per student
Colored construction paper – various colors, many sheets
Black construction paper – 1 or 2 sheets per student
Pencils & erasers – 1 per student
Scissors
Crayons, colored pencils and/or markers
Black markers (Sharpie type)

Introductory activity Students will begin by discussing Black History Month and how art (of all forms) is an effective way to identify important historical, social, and cultural ideas and events.

Core activity Students will begin by planning and designing
colorful “quilt” blocks and shapes, followed by incorporating excerpts of poetry, and ending with an overlay of silhouettes.

**Closure activity**

Students will complete their creations by making sure that the components are fully incorporated. Several students may share their work.

**Assessment**

Students will have realized the value of the individual voice as it relates to the universal concepts of freedom and equality through artistic expression.

**Teacher follow-up idea**

The classroom teacher can use the books and websites below to present more information surrounding visual art and poetry.

**Student follow-up idea**

Students can continue to create progressively more sophisticated contextual works of art (cultural, historical, social and political).

**Book/Web references**

www.faithringgold.com  
www.walkerart.org  
www.poets.org  
www.scholastic.com  
The Dream Keeper & Other Poems by Langston Hughes  
Cassie’s Word Quilt &  
Aunt Harriet’s Underground Railroad in the Sky both by Faith Ringgold

Art and Culture Center/Hollywood  
www.artandculturecenter.org  
Lesson plan prepared by Traci Petersen, MFA

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**Integrated Quilt example:**

![Integrated Quilt example](image-url)
Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. He graduated from Morehouse College in 1948 and was ordained as a Baptist minister. While studying theology at Crozer Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, King attended a lecture on Mahatma Gandhi’s nonviolent struggle for freedom for the people of India. Gandhi’s teachings had a profound effect on the young Baptist minister. Upon graduation, King received a scholarship to pursue a doctoral degree at Boston University. There he met Coretta Scott, who was studying voice at the Boston Conservatory of Music. The two were married in 1953. They had four children.

King’s involvement in nonviolent protest began in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, where he led a successful boycott of the city’s buses. Over the next 13 years, he promoted nonviolence as a means for African Americans to achieve their civil rights, and was jailed several times. King also helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957.

Internationally, he was viewed as an eloquent and forceful proponent of nonviolence. Among other prizes and awards given to him, King was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Four years later, at the age of 39, he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Today, King’s birthday, January 15, is celebrated as a national holiday.
Langston Hughes wrote from 1926 to 1967. In that time he authored more than 60 books, including poems, novels, short stories, plays, children’s poetry, musicals, operas, and autobiographies. He was the first African American to support himself as a writer, and he wrote from his own experience.

Hughes moved many times as a child, due to his parents’ divorce and his mother’s search for work. He lived with his grandmother much of the time, which influenced his writing to a great degree. He was an excellent student and wrote his first poem in the eighth grade.

Hughes also moved around a lot as an adult, including making trips to Mexico, Europe, and Africa. By 1924, he had settled in Harlem, New York, and was an important figure during the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance was an African-American cultural movement that focused on literature, music, theater, art, and politics. One of his favorite pastimes was to sit in clubs and listen to the blues as he wrote his poetry.

Dr. Maya Angelou (1928-2010) was raised in St. Louis, and Stamps, Arkansas. Over her 50-year career, she published essays, poetry, and she was credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows. Maya Angelou is best known for her series of seven autobiographies. The first which focuses on her life up to the age of 17, is titled, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1969).

With over fifty honorary doctorate degrees, Angelou became a celebrated author, filmmaker, educator, actress, and civil rights activist.

In 1993, Angelou recited "On the Pulse of Morning" at President Bill Clinton’s inauguration, making her the first poet to make an inaugural recitation since Robert Frost at President John F. Kennedy’s inauguration in 1961. Dr. Angelou was awarded the Presidential Medal of Arts in 2000. President Barack Obama presented her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country’s highest civilian honor, in 2010.

“Hold fast to dreams, For if dreams die Life is a broken-winged bird, That cannot fly.”
~ Langston Hughes
Faith Ringgold:
I became an artist for the same reason I became a writer - I wanted to tell my story. I was born in Harlem in 1930. I was the youngest of three children. My childhood was the most wonderful period of my life, until now. Because I was sick with asthma when I was growing up, I was forced to spend a lot of time at home. This was not a hardship, however. Instead, it gave me time alone with my mother, who was a fashion designer at the time. She taught me how to sew (just like her grandmother had taught her) and how to be creative with art and fabrics. My mother also took me to museums and to see great performers. She put me in touch with the best of everything.

When my mother died in 1981, I started making quilts as a tribute to her. I was also trying to get my autobiography published, but no one wanted to print my story. In 1983, I began writing stories on my quilts, as an alternative. That way, when my quilts were hung up to look at, or photographed for a book, people could still read my stories.

I have “written” 30 story quilts since then. They are written the way I write my children’s stories: page by page.

Kara Walker was born in Stockton, California, in 1969. She received a BFA from the Atlanta College of Art in 1991, and an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1994.

The artist is best known for exploring the intersection of race and gender through her iconic, silhouetted figures. Walker unleashes the traditionally proper Victorian medium of the silhouette directly onto the walls of the gallery, creating a theatrical space in which her unruly cut-paper characters combine in strange ways. She often uses overhead projectors to throw colored light onto the ceiling, walls, and floor of the exhibition space; the lights cast a shadow of the viewer’s body onto the walls, where it mingles with Walker’s black-paper figures and landscapes. With one foot in the historical realism of slavery and the other in the fantastical space of the romance novel, Walker’s fictions involve the audience.
Templates: MLK and Dove – Print on thick paper or cardstock.

Writings (you may print poetry or allow students to reproduce excerpts by hand.)
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill for the caged bird
sings of freedom

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.
Dreams by Langston Hughes

Hold onto dreams
For if dreams die
Life is like a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Excerpt from 1962 Speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream”

I say to you today, my friends,
so even though we face the
difficulties of today and tomorrow,
I still have a dream. It is a dream
depth rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this
nation will rise up and live out the
ture meaning of its creed:
“We hold these truths to be self-evident:
that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on
the red hills of Georgia the sons
of former slaves and the sons of
former slave owners will be able
to sit down together at the table
of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even
the state of Mississippi, a state
weltering with the heat of injustice,
weltering with the heat of oppression,
will be transformed into an oasis of
freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little
children will one day live in a nation
where they will not be judged by
the color of their skin but by the
content of their character.
I have a dream today.