Task: **CIVIL WAR QUILTS**

**PART 1** (35 minutes)

**Student Directions:**

**Your assignment:**
During the U.S. Civil War, quilts became a popular item for women to make. In part 1, you will watch a video, view three images, and read two articles about quilts that were made during the Civil War. In part 2, you will write an informative essay summarizing the history and purposes of civil war quilts.

**Steps you will be following:**
In order to plan and write your essay, you will do all of the following:

1. Watch a video and read two articles with relating images about Civil War quilts.
2. Answer three questions about the sources.
3. Plan and write your essay.

**Directions for beginning:**
You will now watch a video and read two articles including images about Civil War Quilts. Take notes because you may want to refer back to your notes while writing your essay. You can refer back to any of the sources as often as you like.

**Source Information:**

**Source #1:** Video
Smithsonian National Quilt Collection: Civil War Sunday School Quilt
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFS34M_5PIM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFS34M_5PIM)

**Source #2:** Article #1
[http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/professional-development/childlit/books/MEESKE.pdf](http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/professional-development/childlit/books/MEESKE.pdf)

**Source #3**
Images
# 1 “Quilting Bee”, Henry Mosler, 1841-1920
# 2 Abraham Lincoln Birthplace Replica, Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park
# 3 American Log Cabin Quilt
[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24682/24682-h/24682-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24682/24682-h/24682-h.htm)

**Source #4**
Article #2
Task: **CIVIL WAR QUILTS**

### NOTE TAKING TOOL

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<th>Log Cabin Pattern</th>
<th>What We Learn about History</th>
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### VIDEO

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### QUILT ME A STORY

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### QUILTING PIECES OF THE PAST

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### THE IMAGES

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Quilt Me a Story
by Susan Meeske

Quilting is a craft that has roots deeply sown into the heart of America. Surviving quilts that date back to the early and mid-1800s are reminders that quilts are an important part of our heritage. Quilts originally protected people from the cold. They were used as door and window coverings. New babies were wrapped in quilts when they were born and many young babies were wrapped in a special quilt when they died. Quilts provided warmth and comfort to the sick and disabled. They could be folded and used as cushions in a wagon or slung over a clothesline and used as a play tent for children.

The quilts produced by our ancestors told stories about their lifestyles that could not be captured by pen and paper. Every quilt we see today, regardless of when the quilt was made, relates a story. The types of fabrics, the design of the quilt, the signature of the quilter, all reveal an intimate story of the woman or man who made the quilt.

QUILT MAKING

A quilt is comprised of three layers. The top is either pieces of fabric stitched together to form a pattern or it is a solid piece of fabric. The center of a quilt contains batting or filler. It is this layer of batting that provides the warmth of a quilt. Over the years, a wide variety of materials used for batting has appeared inside quilts. Some examples of fillers are discarded cotton scraps; worn blankets or quilts; lint from dryers; cotton, wool, or silk batting. The final layer of a quilt is the backing. This is usually a solid piece of fabric, but some quilts do have pieced backings.

THE CIVIL WAR AND QUILT MAKING

The issue of slavery in the United States in the mid-1800s led to quilt patterns called Slave Chain or Underground Railroad. During the Civil War, the Sanitary Commission collected approximately 250,000 quilts that were distributed among soldiers in the Union Army. One can think about the tremendous sacrifice that some of these women made in order to contribute to the war effort. Money, food, and fabrics were scarce, and frequently women were in charge of the household and farms while their sons and husbands were participating in the war. Yet almost one-quarter of a million quilts were made by these women.

AMERICAN SLAVERY AND QUILT MAKING

Quilting also played an important role in the lives of African Americans who were slaves in the early and mid-1800s. Young slave children were often present when the women were quilting. Children were expected to be silent. They were responsible for threading the needles, filling the quilts, fetching items, and holding the light.
Quilting bees were important social gatherings for the slaves. It was one of the few times when they had the freedom to go about their business without being under the watchful eyes of their mistresses and masters. They spoke in coded languages, for example, “Bugs in de wheat” meant “look out for patrollers” (Fry 64).

The colors in quilts were used to send messages for slaves traveling on the Underground Railroad. Quilts with the color black in them indicated a safe house. Triangles in a quilt indicated prayers.

Slaves also considered it “bad luck to make a perfect quilt.” (Fry 67) They believed that “an imperfect quilt would distract the devil in the night” (Fry 67).

An example of a story quilt is presented in Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt, by Deborah Hopkinson. This picture book is based on the true story of a young slave girl who is taken away from her mother to work on another plantation. Clara’s greatest wish is to be reunited with her mother and to become a free slave.

Clara had excellent sewing skills and earned the job as a seamstress for the plantation owners. She was privy to conversations that took place in the plantation house between her master and visitors, and other slaves on the plantation. Through these conversations, Clara realized how close they were to the Ohio River and decided to quilt a map that would lead the slaves to the Underground Railroad on the banks of the Ohio River. She appliquéd the landmarks, the swamps, rivers, fields of crops, and a bright star that signified freedom. After her quilt was finished, Clara went to her mother at the other plantation and they followed her map to freedom.

**STORY TELLING AND QUILTS**

Quilting is not a uniquely American art form, but it has played a very important part in our past. Quilting captures our history and provides an artistic outlet today. Colored fabric cut into symbolic shapes can tell very rich and meaningful stories – stories of slavery, of Civil War and of home and family.

Enjoy exploring the past through the art of quilting!

**WORKS CITED**

Log Cabin blocks dated from the 1860 presidential campaign of Abraham Lincoln, whose origins were represented by the humble cabin on his birth. The block is symbolic of the American frontier, with strips of fabric representing the interlocking logs of a cabin stacked row upon row. The red center square often used represents the hearth as the center of the cabin. Yellow centers signify candles in the cabin window.

Log Cabin blocks in a Barn Raising setting depict the beams of a new barn. The Straight Furrows setting reflects patterns in a plowed field, and Zigzag sets imitate the jagged split-rail fences of rural fields and gardens. Other variations include Courthouse Steps and Pineapple.

During the time of the Civil War (1861-1865), quilts were part of a divided nation’s social consciousness. Women in both the North and the South supplemented supplies by making quilts for their husbands, brothers, and sons at war. They made elegant quilts to raffle to raise funds for the cause, and simpler ones to supply bedding for hospitals.

Strong feelings on both sides of the war effort inspired patriotic quilt designs. Red, white, and blue quilts were encouraged in such publications as Peterson’s Magazine, and 34 stars for the number of states often were incorporated. Eagles, arrows, laurel leaves, and other emblems of war and peace were added. More quilts survived in the North, which suffered less physical destruction than the South.

Better Homes and Gardens, 2004
American Log Cabin Quilt

Circa 1861 - 1865

“The Quilting Bee”
Henry Mosler 1841-1920
REPLECA OF

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace
National Historical Park
Task: CIVIL WAR QUILTS

Questions
Use the remaining time to answer the questions below. Your answers to these questions will be scored. Also, they will help you think about the sources you have read and viewed. You may click on the appropriate buttons to refer back to the sources or your notes when you think it would be helpful. Answer the questions in the spaces provided below them.

1. Explain how quilts are made by using information from both the article ‘Quilt Me a Story’ and the image of the Quilting Bee. (Claim 4, Target 2)

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2. Which source is most useful for finding information about the meaning of the log cabin pattern used in Civil War quilts? *(Claim 4, Target 3)*

   A) Civil War Sunday School Quilt Video
   B) Quilting Pieces of the Past Article
   C) Photographs and Illustration

   Explain your reasoning:

   ____________________________________________________________
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3. Read this statement: *Quilts help us to learn about Civil War history.* Use information from the video and at least one of the articles to support this statement *(Claim 4, Target 4)*

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PART 2 (70 minutes)

Student Directions:

You have 70 minutes to review your notes and sources, and plan, draft, and revise your essay. You may also refer to the answers you wrote to the questions in part 1, but you cannot change those answers. Now read your assignment and the information about how your essay will be scored.

Your assignment:

Your class is planning a field trip to a history museum. To help you prepare for what you will see, write an informative essay about Civil War quilts. In your essay, discuss the history of the quilts, including the reasons people made these quilts during the Civil War, and explain how the quilts were made. Include evidence from the sources in part 1 to help support the information you include in your essay.

Essay Scoring

How your essay will be scored:
The people scoring your essay will be assigning scores for

1. **Statement of Purpose/Focus** – how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea

2. **Organization** – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay

3. **Elaboration of Evidence** – how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information

4. **Language and Vocabulary** – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose

5. **Conventions** – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Now begin work on your essay.
Manage your time carefully so that you can:

- plan your essay
- write your essay
- revise and edit for a final draft
Our Field Trip to the History Museum!

PLANNING MY ESSAY

Introduction, Statement of Purpose:

History of Quilts:

Reasons Why People Made Quilts During the Civil War:

How Quilts were Made:

Conclusion: