



## **Understanding Race and Racism Through Faith's Ringgold's Work**

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by Carol Boynton

### **Introduction**

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This curriculum unit introduces Faith Ringgold's art and children's books to my Kindergarten students through a new lens for me. I have always been drawn to her artwork while sharing her stories with my students over the years. Now with the opportunity to dive deeply into her life, her work, and understand more about the messages and stories she tells, this unit serves as a rich author study, grounded in a "universal themes" approach as opposed to the formulaic Black History Month format. Through Ringgold's work, my students will see the ways that her books and art teach us all about Black resilience, creativity, and survival. Ringgold gives us a view of history that reaches out to young students through bright and colorful pictures with a playfulness about them as they uncover strong and serious issues around growing up African American.

I teach in a self-contained classroom at Edgewood Magnet School in New Haven. I find the neighborhood/magnet setting a rewarding environment, with students coming to school each day from a variety of home circumstances and with differences in academic levels. As a result of these variables, the children have differing levels of background knowledge and life experiences. The classroom is a mixture of varied ethnicities, economic strata and social and emotional strengths and weaknesses. The use of collaboration allows all students at all levels to learn in an inherently differentiated environment, learning new concepts and experiences through hands-on practices. Throughout the school year, the Kindergarten curriculum centers heavily on social development, which is certainly appropriate for five- and six-year old children. Our school mission and vision statements focus on equity and inclusion, acknowledging and including everyone in our learning environment. This unit will be in direct alignment with my responsibility to design curriculum that helps our students learn social and community responsibility.

I had the good fortune to spend my childhood in many cities across the country and attend public schools wherever we lived. From Washington D.C. to St. Louis, Missouri to Orange County, Los Angeles, and places in between, I was enrolled in ten schools over thirteen years of education. So many teachers, new friends all the time, a different neighborhood and home every year or two was what I thought was a normal existence. I was used to "not really unpacking" because I would just be putting everything in boxes again very soon. In my child's mind, this was how everyone lived. Obviously, I eventually discovered and understood that, generally, people stay put, at least for more than a couple of years. Two sets of experiences were very formative. I loved my teachers everywhere I went and although I did not appreciate that I was experiencing diversity among my

teachers then, I certainly do now. Second, I met so many other children who came from families and homes much different than my own and I made short but strong friendships despite being the perennial “new girl at school.” I knew at a young age that I wanted to become a teacher. I wanted to create an environment that makes my students have the open, positive experiences I know can allow for understanding and caring. My life of bouncing across the country created the experiences grounded in diversity that guided my strong desire to become that person.

## Countering Colorblindness

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This idea of being “blind” to the color of a person’s skin and to the racial meaning it confers sounds, at first, like an even and equitable approach to thinking about others and how we treat others. We are all just people, so we are all the same. No one is more entitled than another so simply by saying “I don’t see color” sounds honorable and a balanced view of how teachers can approach subjects, content, or discourse in the classroom. In an ideal world, students are treated fairly, regardless of race, ethnicity, and social position. “Even without deliberate malice or forethought on the part of those in power within the educational system, ‘treating others all the same because we are all the same’ is often the attitude adopted by educators who believe strongly that by simply ignoring racial group membership or skin color, all resulting decisions and practices will be fair.<sup>1</sup> That is all we are trying to do here. Be fair. But this attitude is just the opposite of fair.

Mae Chaplin’s article, *Reclaiming Multicultural Education: Course Redesign as a Tool for Transformation*, encouraged me to think about the changes to the approach I’ll make in presenting Ringgold’s books and work and the manner in which I introduce and discuss her life and work. This statement stood out to me:

“To counter such silencing, educators who believe in the transformative nature of multicultural education must not shy away from critically analyzing their own multicultural courses and their proposed outcomes to ensure that such coursework will allow students to develop the ability to name social problems and take subsequent action to address such issues.”<sup>2</sup>

A good starting point for organizing this unit is to apply the findings in the transformative rubric in Chaplin’s study. Thinking about the indicators of perspectives represented, student engagement and critical thinking and aiming for the goal of moving my standards of teaching multicultural concepts from a narrow and minimal purpose to an approach more aligned with transformative level is the manner in which this unit will be designed and taught.

To shift away from the “flavor of the month” approach to multicultural literature, the categories of teaching and learning could include: (1) Culture, multiculturalism, and social justice (2) Analyzing literature for biases and stereotypes (3) Ethnic and linguistic diversity (4) Culture and religion (5) Media analysis (6) Defining gender (7) Queer perspectives (8) Mental and physical ability. Reorganizing the way we think about presenting content to students can build a sense of continuity with the material covered. These topics can provide students with the means of considering the role their own identities and social status plays when reading and analyzing literature.<sup>3</sup>

## Faith Ringgold's Life

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A recent article from June 11, 2020 in the New York Times, *Faith Ringgold Will Keep Fighting Back*, shares an interview with Ringgold as she expresses her continued passion to make a change in the world. "I'm always thinking about what can be better," Ms. Ringgold said about looking at life straight on while questioning it. "And if you don't get it out there, the situation will never change."<sup>4</sup> Ringgold's life has been filled with teaching, art, and activism. Her thoughts and voice have reached an expansive audience, through painting, murals, quilts, and several other media including masks, soft sculptures and children's books. "I've got to see an idea in my head first, and I'm starting to visualize what it is I have to say."<sup>5</sup>

In an autobiography she shared with Scholastic Magazine written for children as the audience, Ringgold says, "When I was a little girl growing up in Harlem, I was always encouraged to value who I was and to go after what I want. I became an artist for the same reason I became a writer - I wanted to tell my story."<sup>6</sup>

Born Faith Willi Jones in 1930, Ringgold was the youngest of three surviving children. Together with her older brother and sister, she grew up in Harlem raised by her fashion-designer mother and truck-driver father. It was the Great Depression, which meant they dealt with the economic hardships felt by many Americans. For the family, such difficulties were eased by regular visits to jazz performances during the waning years of the Harlem Renaissance. Ringgold enjoyed art from a young age; it was often her comfort and entertainment when she was bedridden with asthma as a child. It was not until after high school that she started to consider the possibility of art as a profession.

In 1948 she entered City College. Women could not enroll in the school of Liberal Arts so Ringgold majored in education with an emphasis on art. Her art training was entirely conservative and traditional: she drew from antique sculpture; studied and copied old masters of Western art; and learned lessons of perspective, light, and shadow. By 1955 she was teaching, as well as managing, a household that included her jazz-pianist husband, Robert Earl Wallace, and their two small daughters. After divorcing Wallace in 1954, Ringgold began to focus on her own artistic development. After receiving her B.S. in Fine Art and Education in 1955, Ringgold spent the latter half of the decade juggling several different roles. While looking after her children, she taught art in the public school system and also enrolled in a graduate studies program at City College. Ringgold received her M.A. in art in 1959 and later toured Europe, visiting many of its finest museums.

"I appreciated the beauty of European art.... But I understood it wasn't my heritage.... Most black people who are artists have the same problem. The only way you can make works of art in another person's style is to copy.... It hampers your own development. It's making art from art instead of art from life"

One of her professors at City College, encouraged his students to find their own aesthetic "voices," and he supported Ringgold's color experiments as she sought a solution to rendering dark skin tones. Ringgold remarried in 1962; her new husband, Burdette (Birdie) Ringgold, was a longtime family friend. In the summer of 1963, Ringgold began her first major series of paintings, the American People Series. Over the next four years and across 20 canvases, she created a visual record of tension-filled racial interactions and power dynamics from her own perspective as an African American woman.<sup>7</sup>

Early into the 1970s, Ringgold's art took a new direction. She was deeply affected by her visit to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and its collection of Tibetan *thangka* paintings. Back in New York, Ringgold began to incorporate similar elements in her work, painting with acrylic on canvases with fabric borders and creating cloth dolls and soft sculptures, including *Wilt*, which depicted basketball legend Wilt Chamberlain. She left her teaching job in 1973 and was now free to focus more on her art. She began to pursue working in other media. She first branched out with a collection of portrait sculptures called *The Harlem Series* and then she created African-influenced masks that were included in performance pieces. She also made posters in support of the Black Panthers and activist Angela Davis.

And then, in 1980, came the story quilts, narrative paintings on canvas surrounded by patchwork cloth borders and turned into quilts, picking up a craft Ringgold's great-great-great-grandmother had worked in as a slave for her masters. Her mother assisted early on.<sup>8</sup> Ringgold's first story quilt *Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?* was created in 1983 as a way of publishing her unedited words. The addition of text to Ringgold's quilted paintings has developed into a unique medium and style all her own. "During that time, I was 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. They are written the way I write my children's stories — each section written on the quilt is a page."<sup>9</sup>

*Tar Beach*, Faith Ringgold's first children's book, has won over 20 awards including the Caldecott Honor and the Coretta Scott King award for the best-illustrated children's book of 1991. The original painted story quilt, *Tar Beach*, is in the permanent collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

## The Quilting Tradition

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Harriet Powers was once a slave in rural Georgia, but her intricate quilts make her a celebrated artist today. Her story quilts depict biblical tales and local histories. She began exhibiting them in 1886 at the Cotton States and International Expo. Now her quilts, *Bible Quilt*, is at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and *Pictorial Quilt* is at Museum of Fine Arts in Boston ([blackartinamerica.com](http://blackartinamerica.com)) As a slave and bearing at least nine children, Powers was subjected to a racist and sexist society yet seemed to have remained unwavering in her faith. The function of her quilts is similar to the story quilts of contemporary artists who use this medium to express their own devotion in what they believe to be significant.

The traditional African textile usage of bright colors, asymmetry, and large shapes is seen in the quilt of the Gee's Bend quilters. In 2002, *The Quilts of Gee's Bend*, an exhibition highlighting the work of these African American women quilters traveled to several museums around the country including the Smithsonian. The Gee's Bend community is actually Boykin, Alabama, but it is known for the plantation owned by Joseph Gee. The women of Gee's Bend—a small, remote, black community in Alabama—have created hundreds of quilt masterpieces dating from the early twentieth century to the present. Gee's Bend is an inland island, surrounded on three sides by the Alabama River. The roughly seven hundred inhabitants of this small, rural community are mostly descendants of slaves who for generations worked the fields belonging to the local Pettway plantation. Quiltmakers there have produced countless patchwork masterpieces beginning as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, with the oldest existing examples dating from the 1920s, models that represent an important chapter in the history of African American art.<sup>10</sup>

Gee’s Bend quilts continue an old and proud tradition of textiles made for home and family. They represent only a part of the incredible group of African American quilts, but they are unique in many ways - the extent of Gee’s Bend’s artistic achievement, the result of both geographical isolation and an unusual degree of cultural continuity. These works have been formed by three and sometimes four generations of women in the same family and “bear witness to visual conversations among community quilting groups and lineages. Gee’s Bend’s art also stands out for its flair—quilts composed boldly and improvisationally, in geometries that transform recycled work clothes and dresses, feed sacks, and fabric remnants.”<sup>11</sup>

In traditional African cultures, art is functional first. Traditional African art is meant to be used. The tradition of quilt making that has been passed down through generations of women might be considered a skill because quilts are generally thought to have some functional purpose. Their artworks are founded on traditions handed down to them from mothers and grandmothers. They serve the function of keeping bodies warm in cold weather, but they also serve the function of telling African American narratives through the African artistic traditions. During slavery, women patch-worked quilts out of scraps of fabric to keep themselves and their families warm. As many quilt makers provided warmth for themselves and their family members through the production of quilts, they also created quilts that demanded considerable skill and that were incredibly artistic. The function of the quilt works together with their beauty.

Quilts became a means of getting her own story out there. “I have always wanted to tell my story or, more to the point, my side of the story,” Ringgold writes in the preface to her memoir, *We Flew Over the Bridge*, published in 1995 “It was then that I hit on the strategy of self-publication through masked performance pieces and readings of my story quilts at college lecture dates and exhibitions,” she explains in her book.

Quilts have been both a functional and determined medium. As Ringgold says in a 2019 article in *The Guardian*, “It was an art form that slaves used to keep themselves warm and to also import their art because they couldn’t bring the art forms that they practiced in Africa. This was a way of them being able to continue their art in a way that was acceptable to the slavers because it was keeping them warm.”

Understanding the tradition of quilting can help the students learn about communal traditions of family, kinship and relations that have long strengthened black communities and other communities of color. It really provides an opportunity to talk about slavery, and the ways enslavement sought to disorganize and control people’s decisions about families and kinship. Traditions like Gee’s Bend represent how Black communities and people survived and responded to that violence.

## Teaching Strategies and Classroom Activities

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Faith Ringgold children’s books: *Tar Beach*, *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*, *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*, *Bonjour Lonnie*, *If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks*

Within the following activities, students will be introduced to four of Faith Ringgold’s children’s books. Each activity is designed to introduce color-conscious and race-conscious reading practices to students with concepts and ideas included for each book and a corresponding activity to help the students understand.

The broad objective is for students to learn about each other’s unique families through experiencing Faith

Ringgold’s work. Students will communicate an important aspect of their lives visually by designing an art piece about their own family. They will learn about their classmates’ families through story quilt squares and family memory stories. Students will compose a one- or two-line family memory story and visually depict a family memory or a hope or dream for their family drawn in a well-developed piece of art.

### **Activity One: *Tar Beach* - Visualizing/Verbal Sharing**

The story, *Tar Beach*, is told from the point of view of eight-year-old Cassie Louise Lightfoot. During the summer Cassie and her family play at the “tar beach,” which is the rooftop of the apartment building where she lives in Harlem. Cassie lies on the “beach” and imagines herself flying through the sky over the rooftops. She dreams about being free—to go where she wants without any boundaries, or anyone to tell her she *can’t*. The story of Cassie’s flying adventure begins.

The notion of flying has wonderful and magical connotations in the African American culture. Historically, flying was symbolic to African Americans for freedom from slavery and the opportunity to return to their native land. In *Tar Beach*, flying symbolizes freedom in Cassie’s world. Her father is a construction worker and in her flying dreams, her father *owns* the buildings he looks up to rather than down from buildings. In her dreams, Cassie’s mother has the privilege of laughing and sleeping late into the morning like the well-to-do neighbors. And best of all, her family eats ice cream every day!

The border of the illustrations resembles a quilt. Ringgold wrote this story on a quilt that she sewed and then used as a canvas for her paintings. The actual quilt is part of a series called, “Woman on a Bridge.” and on display at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

Cross Curricular Connections: language arts using imagery commonly found in the African American culture, reading comprehension, vocabulary, art, history.

#### History and Symbolism

Read the story out loud to the students, showing the pictures in the book or, if possible, display the images on a big screen while the students follow along. This is a way to meet every child’s level of reading and comprehension. After finishing the story, engage the students in a deeper understanding of the text. Here are a few questions to prompt a lively group discussion:

- What is meant by “tar beach” in the story? (The blacktop roof on the top of Cassie’s apartment building where she lives). How does the reader know this?
- What does flying symbolize for Cassie? (Possible answers might be: Freedom for herself to go beyond the boundaries of her home, freedom for her father in his job, and freedom for her mother to be able to live like the wealthy neighbors who can sleep late each morning). Ask students to give examples from the text and illustrations to support their answers.
- Are Cassie’s adventures real or imaginary? How can you tell?
- What are some traditions that Cassie and her family have?

#### *Visualizing/Verbal Sharing*

Materials: beach towel for each student (students can bring a towel from home but have extras available).

Clear some space in your classroom by moving desks and tables to the side. Ask your students to lay out their beach towels and lie on their backs. Next, ask them to imagine they are at “tar beach.” Tell them they are

flying through the sky. Remind them that flying is symbolic for freedom from something in their lives. It could be something as immediate as chores or bedtime or some connection to Cassie's dreams. Invite students to share out loud to the class what some of their freedoms are. Teacher participation is important.

### *Dream Journal*

Materials: in-class writing journals, pencils, colored pencils

Use the following quote from Ringgold to open this lesson: "I was always encouraged to value who I was and to go after what I want. I became an artist for the same reason I became a writer - I wanted to tell my story."

This drawing and writing component can be done directly after the previous activity or on a subsequent day. Give students the opportunity to recall their think by reviewing the text, either in whole or by a picture-walk and discussion session. Students can work at the spot on their "beach" to write about their dreams. This is a free-write or journaling exercise and can extend over the course of a few days to include the writing process from prewrite to final draft.

### **Activity Two: Aunt Harriet and the Underground Railroad in the Sky - Comprehension/Setting**

*Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky* is based on the true story of Harriet Tubman who escaped from slavery and then risked her life to guide hundreds of slaves to new lives of freedom in the North. The Underground Railroad was a path that slaves traveled at night with the help of conductors, people who guided them from safe house to safe house until they had reached the free states in the North and Canada. Despite of her petite figure and head injury she suffered as a slave, Harriet Tubman took charge, made about 13 trips to the south to help hundreds of people escape from slavery while risking her own life.

Prior to 1860, America captured and enslaved about four million Black people from Africa. Slavery came about because Americans needed workers to do the difficult labor on the sprawling plantations that stretched across the South, and because slave-traders saw an opportunity to make a great deal of money buying and selling slaves. From the beginning, slaves tried to escape from owners. But attempting an escape, or helping someone else to escape, was dangerous and could result in severe punishment or death. The Underground Railroad is the name for the secret route fugitives took to escape to freedom. It was so named because fugitives who traveled on it just seemed to vanish as if traveling underground. It was, of course, not a real railroad, but rather a series of safe hiding places called "stations." The people who helped the fugitives travel from one station to the next were known as "railroad workers." The people who helped fugitives get food and places to sleep were known as "station masters." People who worked and traveled on the Railroad used secret codes to learn the routes from one safe place to the next. An Underground Railroad Quilt Code existed to guide fugitives to freedom. Because it was illegal in slave-holding states to teach slaves to read, slaves could not communicate with each other in writing. But, because slaves of all backgrounds shared an oral history of storytelling coupled with a knowledge of textile production and African art they were able to communicate complex messages in the stitches, patterns, designs, colors and fabrics of the American quilt. To memorize the code, researchers believe fugitives used a sampler quilt, with blocks arranged in order of the code. The patterns told slaves how to get ready to escape, what to do on the trip, and where to go. Once stitched, the coded quilts were "aired" out the windows of slave cabins, acting as secret maps for slaves brave and desperate enough to make the dangerous trek from South to North, from slavery to freedom

The two young siblings, Cassie Louise Lightfoot and Be Be, are traveling the Underground Railroad to freedom in Canada, just like generations before them did. They fly through the sky learning about the ways in which

their ancestors traveled from slavery to freedom. As Cassie and her brother BeBe fly through the sky, they encounter a train marked "Go Free North or Die" and the train's conductor, Aunt Harriet. Be Be quickly hops aboard but the train departs before Cassie could climb on. Aunt Harriet steps in as Cassie's tour guide and shows to her the conditions of slavery for African Americans in the United States during the 1800's, as well as ways in which so many sought freedom. This book incorporates the use of the North Star; songs sung by escaping slaves, and Underground Railroad quilt codes to further explain the experience and challenges faced by many. In the end, Cassie is reunited with her brother, and they both have a newfound understanding of what their great-great grandparents had to go through to escape to the North. Then she decides to follow the train one stop behind. During her journey, Cassie relives the fears and challenges her great-great-grandparents had to face with 100 years ago. Harriet leaves clues for Cassie along the way, just as she did for other slaves. In the end of the book Cassie and her brother reunite in Canada, in the land of freedom.

Cross Curricular Connections: reading comprehension, vocabulary, art, history.

### *Comprehension/Setting*

Materials: large chart paper for teacher use, 8" x 8" squares, one per student, crayons, markers, colored pencils

Make a general map of the classroom, playground, or school, depending on what works for the activity and class. Let the students know that they will be making a secret code to follow as they travel around the designated area. Working with the students, identify the starting place and the destination. The students will create a code to help them get from the beginning to the end. The class could think about how the slaves and conductors were the only ones that understood the secret codes coded within the quilts. Encourage them to use landmarks and objects that are located on the path and that will be of help to each other move the next stop. Together they can think of ways to "disguise" them from others who would not know the code by creating images or designs that represent and not explicitly identify the information. Students will create a square to show the coded information for their designated location on the map. Once the squares are complete, they can be assembled into a pattern, like a quilt, that will help students discover the path they can secretly take to make it to the destination. In the way that students learned from the story of Harriet Tubman, they can all help each other as they decode the "quilt" square on their travels.

### **Activity Three: *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* - Comprehension/Characters**

*Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* was inspired by one of Ringgold's quilts, *The Dinner Quilt*. If technology is available, the image of the quilt could be projected and used for discussion throughout this activity.

This is a story about a young girl named Melody who goes to her Aunt Connie's house every summer for a dinner and a special showing of her aunt's artwork. Melody meets Aunt Connie's adopted son Lonnie and they play hide and seek, in the house, before dinner. While playing the game, the youngsters discover 12 paintings in the attic, each of which depicts a famous African American woman. What is unusual about the portraits is that they can speak. The children are mesmerized as the women tell the stories of their lives. The children listen to the life stories of

Marian Anderson, Mary McLeod Bethune, Dorothy Dandridge, Fannie Lou Hamer, Zora Neale Hurston, Rosa Parks, Augusta Savage, Bessie Smith, Maria W. Stewart, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman. Ringgold's pictures tell the book's many stories in vibrant colors and great love for her characters.



Cross Curricular Connections: reading comprehension, vocabulary, art, history, speaking skills

### *Comprehension/Characters*

Materials: 8" x 8" squares of white paper, one per student, crayons (include skin color options), markers, colored pencils, small mirrors, 12' x 12" construction paper for portrait frames

Tips for reading the book: This is a lengthy book, particularly for younger students. It is difficult to get through all the biographies of the famous women featured quickly and in one sitting, so it is important to plan to read these biographies over several days. This book has excellent discussion topics -- women who often stood alone and were not afraid to take risks; diversity and the Civil Rights Movement; the Lonnie character and diversity in families; and festive dinners with relatives and close friends.

For the hands-on activity, students will draw their own portrait in Ringgold's style on the 8" x 8" squares. Encourage students to use the small mirrors to focus on their features as they create their image. As they work on their self-portraits, have students consider their current skills and accomplishments or plans of things they would like to do as they get older. Students can choose a color for the frame and glue their portrait in the center. Post the portraits around the classroom in the manner of Ringgold's book and have students walk around as if in a museum. Half of the class can be the "guests" while the others are speaking by their portraits as they talk about their skills and accomplishments. Students can then switch roles.

### **Activity Four: *If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks* - Comprehension/Making Connections**

*If A Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks* uses a different lens to tell Parks's story. An African American girl named Marcie, living in modern day society, boards a talking bus to school. The talking bus takes Marcie on journey as it retells the story of Rosa Parks, the mother of the Civil Rights Movement. The magic bus ride shows the struggles Rosa Parks and other African Americans faced during times of segregation in the 1950's and 60's. It illustrates the impact Rosa Parks and other key figures of the time, like Martin Luther King Jr., had on society and the influence they were able to accomplish through non-violent forms of protest and persistence for equality. Ringgold's pictures show scenes from various sit-ins, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the assaults on people who were not white. At the end of the story, Marcie has arrived at school and realizes that she is aboard the same bus Rosa Parks was arrested on. She also realizes that all the key figures in Rosa Parks's life are aboard the bus, as well as Rosa Parks herself, and they all celebrate Parks's birthday.

Cross Curricular Connections: reading comprehension, vocabulary, art, history, social/emotional skills, speaking skills

### *Comprehension/Making Connections*

Materials: writing journals, crayons (include skin color options), markers, colored pencils,

Students will think of something they have done or would do that is considered brave and helps others. In their writing journals, they will draw and write about that brave, courageous act. Students can think about: Who does it help and how can others do the same? Why is it hard to be brave?

### **Activity Five: Creating a Classroom Quilt**

Returning to the first book of the unit, *Tar Beach*, have students listen once again with Faith Ringgold's reading, available online. Students will experience the author herself and hear her voice reading her own

words.

### *Comprehension/Visual Sharing*

Materials: 8" x 8" squares, crayons (including skin colors), colored pencils, paints

Students will communicate an important aspect of their lives visually by designing an art piece about their own family. They will learn about their classmates' families through story quilt squares and family memory stories. Students will compose a one- or two-line family memory story and visually depict a family memory or a hope or dream for their family drawn in a well-developed piece of art.

Encourage students to sketch with pencils first as they draw in their square. Once all squares are complete, students can present their work to their classmates, identifying who they have included in their artwork. Then create a wall in the class that resembles a quilt. Students can create painted borders to go around (and between) the student work. By creating this family quilt as a class, the children will be able to connect with their own families, to share with pride their family experience with others and to realize and appreciate the diversity of families in the classroom and the larger community. This project illuminates the concept that all families are unique and different.

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## Appendix - Implementing District Standards

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Connecticut Social Studies Framework: *Kindergarten - Me and My Community*

In Kindergarten, students engage in the study of themselves, their families, and their communities and learn how to participate and use effective citizenship skills. They explore their classrooms, schools, neighborhoods, and home communities through an interdisciplinary approach including history, civics, economics, and geography. The study of themselves, their families, and their communities requires that students generate and research questions such as:

What is my role in my community?

What is "history" and how is the past different from the present?

How are we connected to the past?

Change, Continuity and Context

HIST K.1 Compare life in the past to life today.

HIST K.2 Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped a significant historical change.

Compelling Question:

- How do our communities and the people who live in them change over time?

Supporting Questions:

- How does the time in which we live affect us?
- How is the past different from today?
- How has my family changed (where they live, what they do)?

Perspectives

HIST K.3 Compare perspectives of people in the past to those in the present.

Compelling Question:

- Were people in the past the same as people today?

Supporting Questions:

- How do past experiences shape who we are today (family, home, school)?
- How is my family's past similar to and different from my peers' families?

Common Core State Standards: *Kindergarten – Reading Informational Text*

*CCSS ELA-Literacy RI K.1:* With prompting and support, students will ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

*CCSS ELA-Literacy RI K.2:* With prompting and support, students can identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

*CCSS ELA-Literacy RI K.3:* With prompting and support, students will be able to describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Sheri A. Castro-Atwater, *Color-blind Racial Ideology in K-12 Schools*, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Mae Chaplin, *Reclaiming Multicultural Education: Course Redesign as a Tool for Transformation*, 2019

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Bob Morris, "Faith Ringgold Will Keep Fighting Back. *New York Times*, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Faith Ringgold Books, Author Biography, and Reading Level, Scholastic.

<sup>7</sup> National Museum of Women in the Arts

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Russeth, *The Storyteller: At 85, Her Star Still Rising, Faith Ringgold Looks Back on Her Life in Art, Activism, and Education*, ARTNews, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> crockerart.org

<sup>10</sup> soulsgrowndeeep.org

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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