EISENHOWER BIRTHPLACE
STATE HISTORIC SITE
Denison, Texas

The Art of Quilting

What exactly is a quilt? A **quilt** is layers of fabric that have been joined together to form a warm bed covering or decoration. **Quilting** is the act of sewing the layers together. People who make quilts are called **quilters**.

Before sewing machines, quilts were made by hand and could take many hours. The materials, patterns, and stitches can tell us a lot about the time they come from and the people who made them. In this activity, you'll look at quilts that are part of the Eisenhower Birthplace collection and explore making your own quilt patterns.

Tools of the Trade

Here are some of the tools that quilters use when making their quilts.

Thimble

Needle and thread

Scissors

Fabric

Sewing machine

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Quilts at the Eisenhower Birthplace

Crazy Quilt

These kinds of quilts are unique because they don't follow a pattern like most quilts. Instead of sticking to one fabric type or stitch, quilters used a variety of fabrics and stitches to make their crazy quilts. Sometimes they even used fabric from mementos (objects kept as a reminder of a person or event). Crazy quilts were not meant to keep people warm. They were usually displayed in the parlor, (a room like our living rooms today), in a place where guests could view them. This quilt is an example of one of the crazy quilts in the Eisenhower Birthplace collection.

Feed Sack Quilt

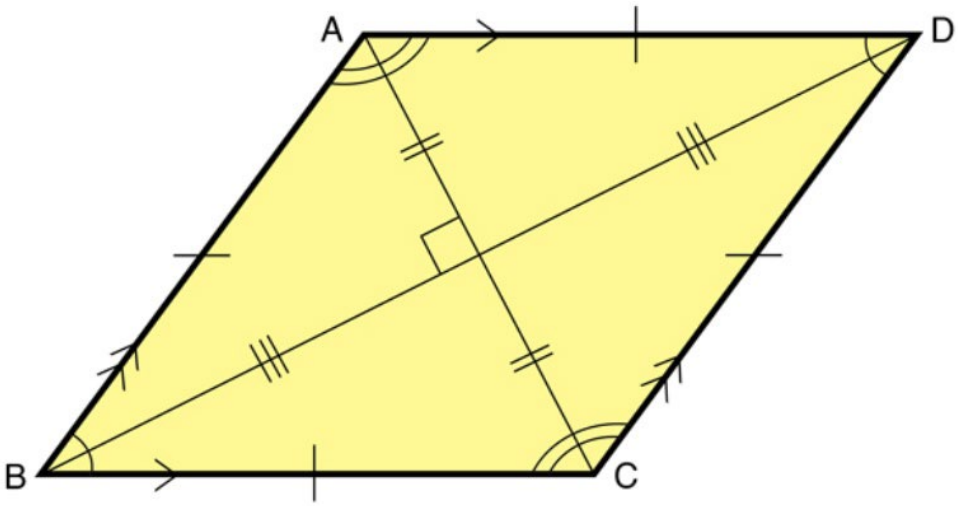
The name of these quilts does not refer to the pattern, but to the material used to create them. They are made using the sacks from supplies such as animal feed and flour. Patterns for these quilts varied from person to person. When companies stopped packing items in barrels, they began using bags or sacks instead. In the 1920s, companies started printing simple but colorful patterns on the sacks. The quilt in the photo was made by Eva Gentry. She lived down the street from the Birthplace house for many years. She created a wide variety of quilts that are now part of the Eisenhower Birthplace collection.

This photo shows a logo from the sack used to create the quilt pictured on the previous page. Unlike the crazy quilts, these quilts were used for warmth. What do you think this sack held before it became a quilt? Look at the picture closely for clues.

Tumbling Blocks Quilt

This tumbling blocks quilt belonged to the Eisenhower family. The quilt was made by Ida Eisenhower, Dwight's mother, and pieced together by the Eisenhower brothers. Quilts such as this were used primarily for warmth, but they also looked beautiful when displayed.

This quilt pattern, called tumbling blocks or baby blocks, was first used in the mid-1800s. It is one of the most recognizable patterns and is easy for beginning quilters because the edges are straight. The pattern looks like falling blocks, but it is several rhombuses put together. A rhombus is a parallelogram with four equal sides. The opposite sides are parallel to each other and the opposite angles are equal. Here is an example of a rhombus and its properties.



① All four sides are equal

② Opposite sides are parallel

③ Opposite angles are equal

④ Diagonals are perpendicular and bisect each other

⑤ Adjacent angles add up to 180°

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Activity: Compare and Contrast Quilts

Put a check mark to show the qualities that apply to each of the quilts. How are they alike and different? Use the information on the quilt pages for reference.

	Crazy Quilt	Feed Sack Quilt	Tumbling Blocks Quilt
Used for decoration			
Used for warmth			
Based on a pattern			
Named after a pattern			
Named after the material			
Uses a variety of stitches			

Would you make a quilt to display or one to use? Which pattern would you pick?

_____

_____

What can quilts tell us about the people who made them? _____

_____

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Activity: Make a Quilt with Rhombus Shapes

In this activity, you will use several rhombus shapes to create your own tumbling blocks quilt.

Follow these steps to make your quilt:

1. Look at the **Rhombus Shapes** resource for an example of how individual rhombus shapes can be placed together to form a pattern.
2. Use the **Rhombus Pattern** resource to cut out the paper or material shapes you will use to make your quilt. You will need to cut out several shapes in order to have enough individual pieces to make a quilt pattern.
3. Arrange your shapes into a tumbling blocks pattern on a blank piece of paper. Move the pieces around until you have a pattern that you like.
4. When you have a final pattern you like, glue or tape the pieces in place. Carefully cut off any edges that hang over the paper.
5. Hang your quilt for display.

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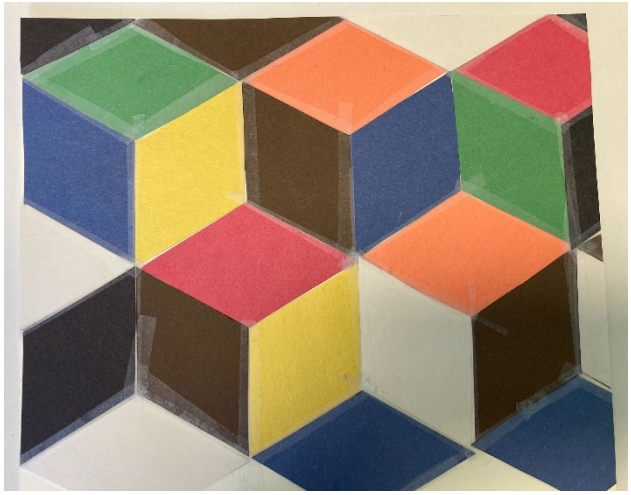
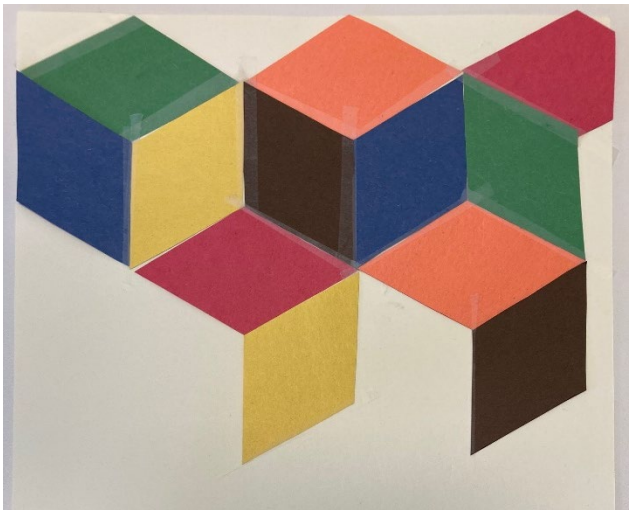
Rhombus Shapes





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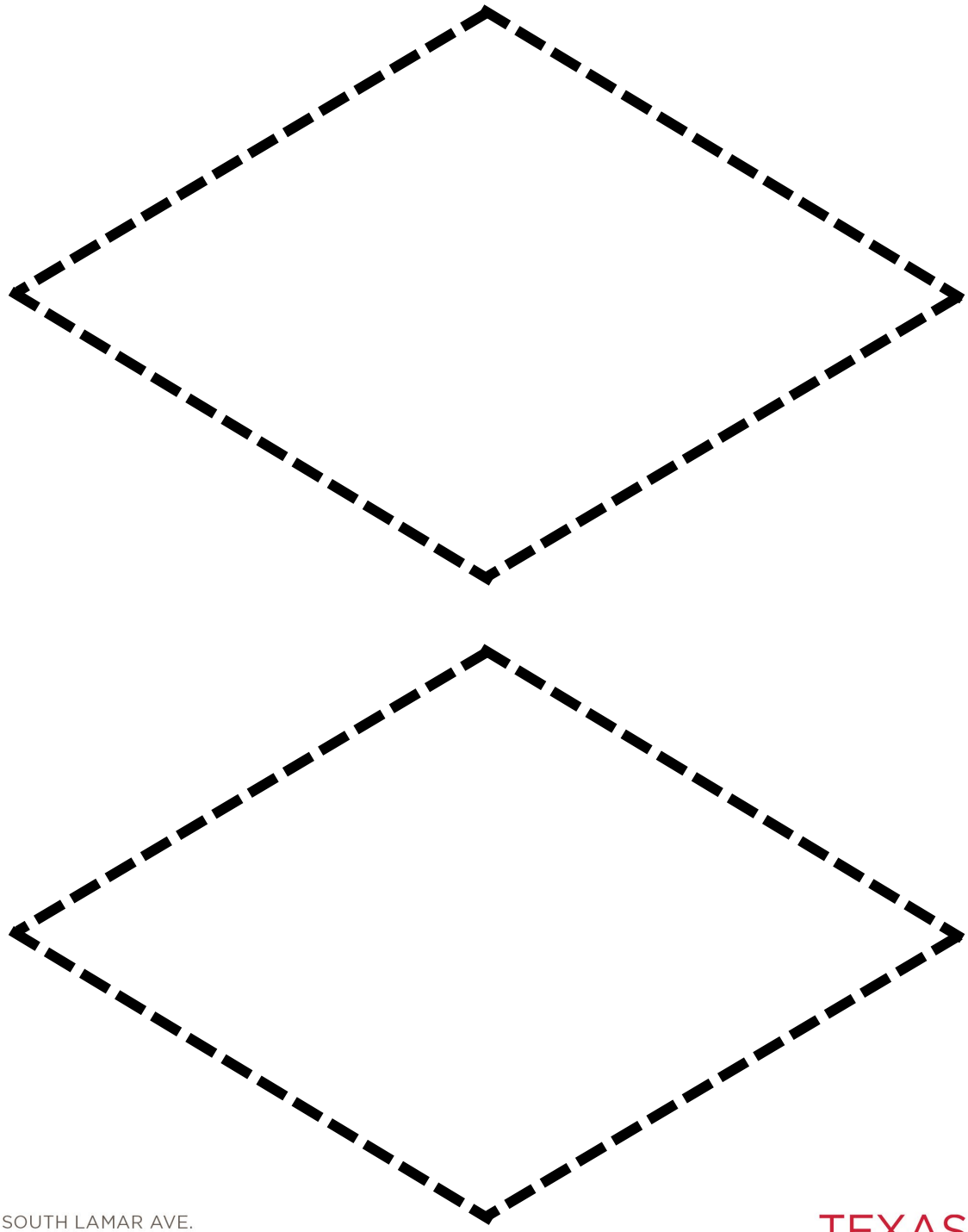
Rhombus Pattern



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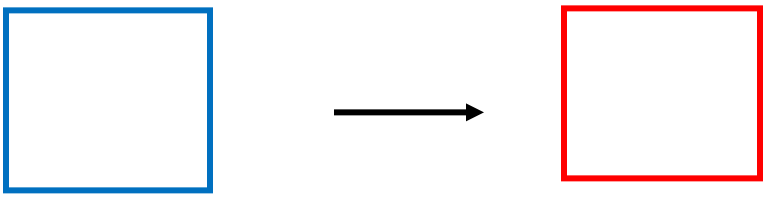
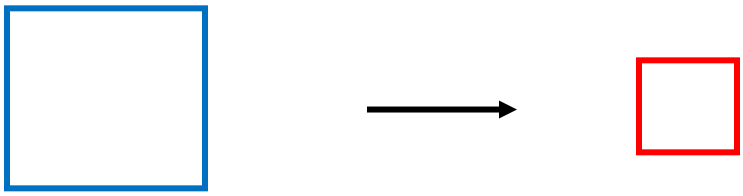
Activity: Geometric Transformation Quilt

In this activity, you will make a quilt using at least one of the following geometric transformations.

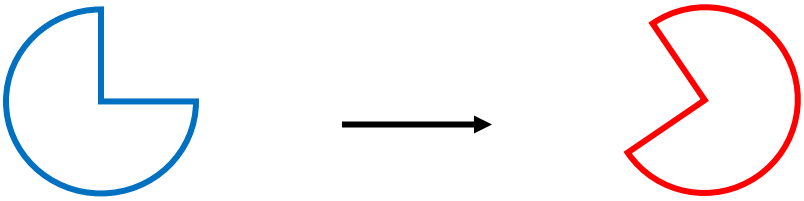
Translation: Shapes move along vertical, horizontal, or diagonal lines.



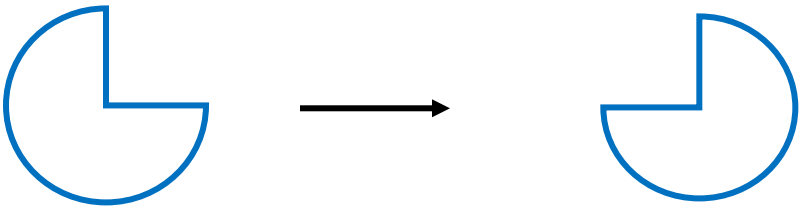
Dilation: Shapes resize either smaller or bigger.



Rotation: Shapes revolve clockwise or counterclockwise around a central axis.



Reflection: Shapes mirror each other in size, shape, and direction bilaterally.



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Activity: Tied-Together Class Quilt

In this activity, you will decorate a square that will become part of a class quilt.

1. You should receive a piece of paper or fabric that has a hole punched in each of the four corners. These holes will be how your class quilt is put together.
2. If your quilt piece is paper, draw a picture to fill the square. Pictures can be a reflection of a field trip, a memory from school, or more!
3. If your quilt piece is fabric, draw on the fabric with fabric markers or use Mod Podge to glue a picture to the fabric.
4. Once everything is dry, follow directions to use string, yarn, or ribbon to help tie the corners of everyone's squares together to make a class quilt.
5. Display your quilt and share what you put in your square!

TEKS

Social Science

- 3rd grade
  - Use social studies terminology correctly
  - Interpret oral, visual, and print material by sequencing, categorizing, identifying the main idea, distinguishing between fact and opinion, identifying cause and effect, comparing, and contrasting
  - Gather information, including historical and current events and geographic data, about the community using a variety of resources
- 4th grade
  - Use social studies terminology correctly
- 5th grade
  - Explain how examples of art, music, and literature reflect the times during which they were created
  - Use social studies terminology correctly

Math

- 3rd grade
  - Use attributes to recognize rhombuses, parallelograms, trapezoids, rectangles, and squares as examples of quadrilaterals and draw examples of quadrilaterals that do not belong to any of these subcategories.
  - Classify and sort two- and three-dimensional figures, including cones, cylinders, spheres, triangular and rectangular prisms, and cubes, based on attributes using formal geometric language.
- 4th grade
  - Identify and draw one or more lines of symmetry, if they exist, for a two-dimensional figure.
- 5th grade
  - The student applies mathematical process standards to classify two-dimensional figures by attributes and properties. The student is expected to classify two-dimensional figures in a hierarchy of sets and subsets using graphic organizers based on their attributes and properties.

Art

- 3rd grade; 4th grade; 5th grade
  - Compare and contrast artworks created by historical and contemporary men and women, making connections to various cultures.
  - Investigate the connections of visual art concepts to other disciplines.
  - Evaluate the elements of art, principles of design, or expressive qualities in artworks of self, peers, and historical and contemporary artists.
  - Compile collections of personal artworks such as physical artworks, electronic images, sketchbooks, or portfolios for purposes of self-assessment or exhibition.