



**ARTS FOR
LEARNING
MARYLAND**

Teacher Guide

RESIDENCY: Felted Story Square

Artist: Katherine Dilworth



Program Description

After an examination of the narrative paintings of Jacob Lawrence's Migration series, students will design and create their own needle-felted square depicting events in history or their own lives.

Particularly suitable for older students, this felted story square residency focuses on how simple visuals can communicate complicated ideas and how art can allow viewers to examine subjects that can be difficult

to confront directly.

ARTIST BIO

Katherine brings the centuries-old art form of felting to your school. Comprised of sculpting loose wool into solid shapes and murals, felting is an ideal medium for broadening students' perception of visual art.

Katherine has been integrating fabrics and fibers into her art for more than 20 years. Her work is in galleries throughout the U.S. and was included in two books. "I love

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the moment when someone in the room looks at what they are making and their face says: 'I like this. I get this. I can do this.' And suddenly they are excited. And they want to know and do more. And the art is no longer something they are being taught, but something that is theirs."

STANDARDS

Standard 1.0 Perceiving and Responding: Aesthetic Education

Students will demonstrate the ability to perceive, interpret, and respond to ideas, experiences, and the environment through visual art.

SL.2.2 Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

L.2.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION / TEACHER PREP

- Review "[The Migration Series](#)" with students. Discuss what is noticed while browsing his work.
- Use [the Phillips Collection website](#) to review Jacob Lawrence and his work.
- Question students: What patterns are you noticing in Jacob's work? What do these illustrations tell you about his life? His upbringing? What are you

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noticing about the colors he used in his paintings? How do these paintings tell a story? What story are they telling?

- [Needle Felting 101: History, Wool, Tools](#). This blog is dedicated to all things “needle felting!” The site gives examples, how-to instruction, and even a question/ answer section if you would like to take up the craft! Very colorful and easy to navigate!

Resources

[Website dedicated to “The Migration Series.”](#) This site features all of the works in this series, as well as the artist biography of Jacob Lawrence, games for kids, migration stories, and much more! An experience to check out!

[Biography.com website page](#). Includes quotes, inspiration, life before and after World War II, and more.

[Website dedicated to Jacob Lawrence](#), geared towards teachers. Includes: biographical information, artwork, lesson plans, and other learning resources. Very engaging site!

CONTENT EXAMPLES

- The first day is a discussion/brainstorming day to get to know the materials as well as begin our exploration of the story quilt themes. Students talk about wool, which animals it comes from, looking at photographs of sheep, goats,

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alpaca, rabbits. The students are shown examples of cotton plants and silk cocoons. We brainstorm visual elements for the mural. Students choose what they will do, as well as a predominant color for their element and choose the roving that best fits it. Using soap, water, and rubbing, students wet felt a piece of roving into a swatch of felted wool in a Ziploc bag. Swatches are allowed to dry overnight.

- Students watch a 6-min film of contemporary wet-felting on a large scale in Mongolia. We talk about cultures that use the technique today (some houses are still made this way by nomadic herding tribes). I supply the voice over to the film and can draw direct connections between the process they are seeing and the process they completed the session before. Students sketch their element/story panel to scale on paper. They learn how to identify the big shapes in their image. Students cut their paper sketch into "pattern pieces" and tape to swatch and begin to cut out basic shapes.
- Students use special felting needles to attach their element to a large background, adding additional colors and details with felting needles. Depending on the number of story quilt panels and size of the group, students work at their seats initially and move onto the shared background as they are ready and as there becomes space.

POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

Culminating activities have ranged from gallery walks, as part of a larger school art show, to PowerPoints in which students explain the process before presenting the



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finished project to the rest of the school. Sometimes, a culminating activity is not necessary.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

This residency is used specifically as a way to examine how art can allow students to examine subjects that can be difficult to look at directly. Teachers might want to research paintings of Jacob Lawrence and Ester Krinitz. Both of these artists could be more fully explored by teachers and incorporated into the curriculum prior to the residency.

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