

Faith Ringgold Story Quilts



Faith Ringgold, *Tar Beach* (Woman on a Bridge Series #1) 1988

Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY

Meet the Artist

Faith Ringgold

1930-

“Anyone can fly. All you need is somewhere to go that you can't get to any other way. The next thing you know, you're flying among the stars.”

—Faith Ringgold



Faith Ringgold was born in 1930 in Harlem, NY. The Harlem Renaissance from the 1920's left her neighborhood with a vibrant and thriving arts scene that influenced her greatly. She loved to make art from an early age and learned to sew from her mother, who was a fashion designer. The people, poetry, and musicians she encountered as a child later affected her art—as well as the challenges that she faced as an African American woman.

In 1950 Ringgold went to college to study art education and taught for the New York City public schools. In 1973 she quit teaching to pursue her art career full-time. She began her career as a painter, but later turned to fabric, creating quilts as a way to share stories. While her artistic career included painting, sculpture, performance art, and mixed media, she is best known for her narrative quilts.



1. Look closely at **TAR BEACH**, which is one of Faith Ringgold's most recognized works. This artwork is considered a narrative, or "**STORY**" QUILT. What materials do you think were used to create this artwork?

The visual story that Faith Ringgold is telling has the same elements as a written story. Let's review them on the next page.

ELEMENTS OF A STORY

CHARACTERS

the people, animals, and things in the story

SETTING

where and when a story takes place

PROBLEM / CONFLICT

what goes wrong in a story – the challenge

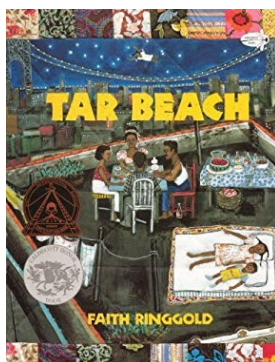
RESOLUTION

how the problem is fixed or solved

1. Regarding the **TAR BEACH** story quilt who do you think the **CHARACTERS** are?
2. What do you think is the **SETTING**?

TAR BEACH is the first of five story quilts in Faith Ringgold's "*Woman on a Bridge*" series. Collectively, the quilts are used to illustrate her children's book called **Tar Beach**. Follow the link below to watch a video of Faith Ringgold reading her book.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9RKJleFdBu>



Now that you have heard the story, answer the following questions:

4. What is the **PROBLEM** in the story?
5. What is the **RESOLUTION**?

The book is set in New York in 1939. Tar Beach is the roof of Cassie's Harlem apartment building. Cassie's dearest dream is to be free to go wherever she wants, and one day it comes true when the stars help her to fly across the city.

In this lesson, we are going to create our own **STORY QUILT** inspired by Tar Beach.

Ask yourself "Where would you go if you could fly (real or imaginary place) and why?" This is going to be the inspiration for your work!

MATERIALS:

9"x9" Paper, pencil, scrap paper cut into 1 1/2" squares (wrapping paper, junk mail, magazine pages, etc. work great), scissors, glue stick, black pen or colored pencil, crayons or colored pencils.

PROCEDURES:

1. First, create a "quilt" border on your paper by gluing the small squares side-by-side around the edges.
2. Next, draw an illustration of yourself flying over your special place. It can be daytime or nighttime in your drawing. Be sure to show as many details as you can to show the viewer where you are!

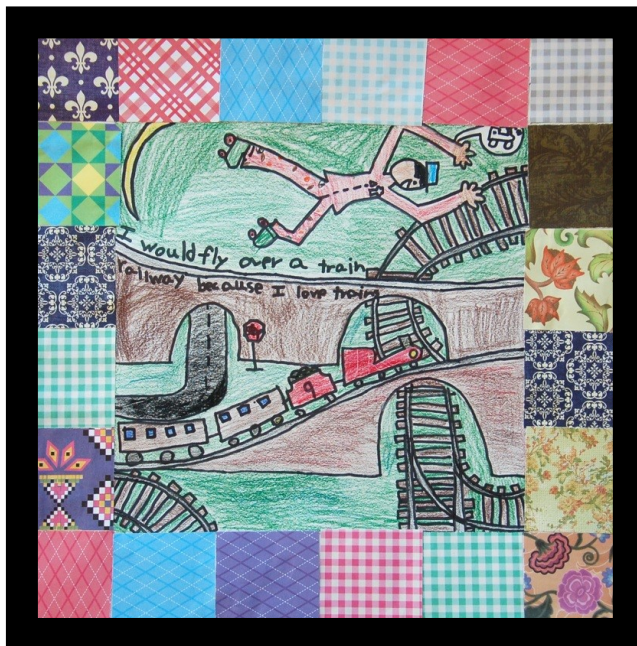


2. Next, outline your drawing with a black pen and use colored pencils or crayons to color the entire image, including the sky.



4. Finally, use your black pen to write your narrative on the picture or border. Be sure to answer the following question:

Where would you go if you could fly and why?



Watch a free video of this lesson on



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Faith Ringgold, *Self-portrait* , 1965

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