

Lucy Virginia Smith French & Embroidered Flower Quilt

GRADE: 3-5

LESSON DURATION: 2 Sessions

INTRODUCTION:

People living in Tennessee during the Civil War were not unlike you and me. They loved their families and the natural world around them. They were creative and passionate and they made artwork and beautiful things. In this multi-disciplinary lesson, we will learn about one such person and compare aspects of her life to aspects of our own.

Lucy Virginia Smith French was a young married woman living in Warren County, Tennessee, during the Civil War. She was an author and poet who sought refuge from the horrors of the war through her journal, her garden, and her beautiful hand-embroidered quilt. In this lesson, your students will learn about her life and create their own Lucy Virginia Smith French inspired quilt by collecting flower specimens from their homes, gardens, or neighborhoods and bringing them to class. They will learn that French's quilt became a family heirloom—one that she protected dearly—that is now in the collection of the Tennessee State Museum. Students will also explore their own family heirlooms and share those with the class. The lesson ends with students receiving writing prompts to reflect on French's experience during the war and why she loved her quilt so much.



This multi-disciplinary lesson can be taught in a variety of class settings.

Science—botany—collect flowers or plants from the world around you to create beauty—press them onto paper and paste them together to make a class “quilt” of flowers.

Social Studies—Lucy Virginia Smith French—read and learn about a fascinating Tennessee woman and how she held onto her beautiful quilt, which became a family heirloom.

Language Arts/Writing—Journal—Lucy Virginia Smith French became a writer at a young age. She wrote about the world around her, students will too.

Holding Fast to Beauty—bring a picture in about an object your family cherishes. Why do you hold onto it and protect it?

GOAL: To gain a holistic understanding of how to appreciate beauty around us, why there is a need to create art, and how we hold onto it for generations.

OBJECTIVES:

The students will [TSW] read a first-hand account of what life was like in Civil War Tennessee.

TSW gain a deeper appreciation of the context for a work of art.

TSW understand how art-making can preserve a moment in time, a personal experience, or a memory.

CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Science:

Conceptual Strand 4

Plants and animals reproduce and transmit hereditary information between generations.

Guiding Question 4

What are the principal mechanisms by which living things reproduce and transmit information between parents and offspring?

GLE 0507.5.1 Investigate physical characteristics associated with different groups of animals.

90507.5.1 Classify animals according to their physical characteristics.

GLE 0507.4.2 Recognize that some characteristics are inherited while others result from interactions with the environment.

Language Arts: Listening:

3 0501.2.1 Listen attentively by facing the speaker, asking questions, and summarizing what is said.

Writing:

3 0501.3.3 Practice writing to narrative and descriptive prompts within a specified time limit.

3 0501.3.4 Write poems, stories, and essays based upon personal reflections, observations, and experiences.

3 0501.3.5 Compare and contrast two persons, places, things, or ideas.

3 0501.3.6 Respond in writing to literature studied (e.g., critique, journal, group project).

3 0501.3.7 Create a well-developed story or passage summary, as well as personal reflections and imaginative writing samples.

Social Studies:

5.5.01 Understand the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War.

c. Identify similar and different northern and southern social and cultural customs.

e. Describe the role of Tennessee in the Civil War.

5.6.01 Recognize the impact of individual and group decisions on citizens and communities in a democratic republic.

a. Identify and describe examples of tension between an individual's beliefs, government policies, and laws.

HOOK/SET:

Begin by growing an imaginary garden. Ask each student to name their favorite flower and list them on the board. Encourage students to name different flowers, the more variety the better. As each student names their flower, describe it for your students so that each can get a mental image. Show a web picture of it if necessary. After the list of flowers is on the board, have students close their eyes and get a mental image putting all their flowers together in a beautiful class flower garden. Explain that we are going to explore the life of a woman who had a beautiful garden like this at her home and that she created a quilt of her favorite flowers. She lived during the Civil War and her flowers and quilt gave her comfort during those troubling times.

PROCEDURES:

Activity 1: Literacy/Reading Comprehension

1. Begin by reading the story of Lucy Virginia Smith French from the Civilwarshades.org web site.
<http://www.civilwarshades.org/holding-fast-to-beauty/lucy-virginia-smith-french/>

Show the class the miniature portrait of this artist/writer:

<http://www.civilwarshades.org/lucy-virginia-smith-french/>

2. Ask students why they think her garden and her quilt were so important to her during the Civil War. Talk about how both Union and Confederate armies raided her home.
3. Have students read the following passages from her journal and respond to the questions each raises. The language may be above their reading level so the teacher may need to read it or help less proficient readers.
4. Complete the handout based on reading French's journal.
5. Hold a class discussion about what the journal says and the struggles that French and other Tennesseans were going through at this time. Explain that in the midst of such terrible times, family heirlooms and prized possessions made or given to them by a loved one became something someone would cherish and keep at all costs.
6. Now introduce the hand-embroidered quilt she made. Ask the students why they think she made it? What does it say about her? Use the zoom feature on the web site to look closely at the flowers. Ask them what else they notice about the quilt?
<http://www.civilwarshades.org/forest-home-quilt/>

7. Introduce Assignment: Pick your favorite flower and bring a specimen from home or allow them to print out an image from the web at school. The class will spend a class session making a class quilt with a flower design like Lucy Virginia Smith French's.

Science Activity (Option) – If your students bring real flowers, you may use this activity as a life science lesson.

1. Have students look closely at their flowers. Ask them if they've ever really looked at a flower closely. Ask why the flower has the different parts.
2. Explain that the parts inside the flower's bloom help it to reproduce.
3. Demonstrate these parts and list them on the diagram provided at this web site.
<http://worksheetplace.com/mf/Parts-Of-A-Flower-Labelled.pdf>
4. Pair the students and give each group a magnifying glass to closely examine their flower. Ask them to locate each part of the diagram on their own flower.
5. What questions do they have about their flower?
6. Hold a class discussion and then ask the students to label the worksheet provided.
<http://worksheetplace.com/mf/Parts-Of-A-Flower.pdf>

Art Activity : Creating Lucy Virginia Smith French's Quilt

1. You may choose to use a bed sheet, a large poster board, or butcher paper. Students can either bring in real flowers or printed pictures of their flowers or cutouts from a magazine. If using real flowers you may want to press the flowers, and then attach them to the paper or sheet.
 2. Have students consider the design of French's quilt. Have students work in groups to plan their arrangement and then have the class vote to see which design they will use for their "quilt."
 3. While drawing their design, ask students why they feel French made her quilt the way that she did? Ask them what they think inspired her? Do you think these were her favorite flowers?
 4. Using the winning design, have students attach their flowers to the quilt. They may attach the flowers using glue or staples.
 5. Once the quilt is complete, hang it in the classroom or out in the hallway.
 6. To wrap up this activity, talk about this quilt as a prized possession of the artist/maker and her family. Ask students how many have a quilt at home. Talk with your students about other heirlooms and why they are important to us. Ask students to go home and pick out something important to them personally or significant to their family. They may want to ask other family members about important keepsakes such as photographs or letters or other mementos that have been saved through the years.
- Ask them to take a picture or draw an image of their heirloom and bring it in to class the next day.

Assessment /Writing Activity: Writing about Their Own Heirloom

Lucy Virginia Smith French loved her garden. She loved the flowers in her garden. They inspired her to create this beautiful quilt. She kept it through the struggles of the Civil War.

Writing Prompt:

Write a creative story in which you go through a long and challenging process to keep your heirloom or artwork from being destroyed.

For an extra challenge you may have your students write it in journal form (like French) using five different journal entries to explain what happens in their story.