

# HOW TO MAKE A STORY QUILT

Do you like crafts or needlework? Would you like to create something special to decorate your home or give to a friend or relative? Why not make a story quilt and share your stories and interests in a creative way.....

## What is a story quilt?

A story quilt is a material quilt with pictures, sound, scents and textures that are used to tell a story. You make a story quilt by hand either on your own or with others to tell a story of a moment, an event, a feeling that is important to you.

## A bit of background

The story quilt is an art form that features in many different cultures around the world. The leading contemporary artist working in this area is Faith Ringgold. Faith Ringgold has used both personal stories and historical memories as inspiration for her quilt artworks. Visit [www.faithringgold.com/](http://www.faithringgold.com/) for more information about her and her work.

## Why make a story quilt?

- It's an opportunity for you to express yourself, tell your story or commemorate a special moment
- Create something to decorate your home (you can hang the quilt on the wall or put it on a sofa or bed)
- Make a gift for a friend or relative
- Practice your craft or learn new skills
- Share memories and stories with friends while you design and make your quilt
- Create a sensory quilt for those with mental or physical health problems (i.e. visual impairment, depression, Alzheimers etc)

## Be inspired!

Anyone can make a story quilt. You can make it on your own or as part of a group and you don't have to have any particular craft skills in order to help make something really beautiful. Think about ideas, stories, places, events, feelings that you find interesting or are passionate about and use this as the theme for your quilt. For example, you might love music and dancing; you could create a quilt which includes sound buttons so that when people touch the quilt they hear short snippets of your favourite songs.

Or maybe you would like a floral theme. You could create pockets in the quilt and fill them with potpourri so that people can smell flowers when they are close to the quilt.

You can also use and learn skills. If you are a good seamstress, there are plenty of opportunities for sewing; if you are good at drawing, you could help to design the quilt; you don't have to sew, you can cut out images and stick them on and anyone can make a valuable contribution by simply telling the stories that will become part of quilt.

## Getting started

Whether you are working on your own or as part of a group, here are few pointers for getting started:

- Have a good think about what you want your quilt to be about – What interests you? What stories do you want to tell and what particular elements do you want to include in your quilt
- Before starting your quilt, draw the basic design on paper - Do you want a central image and a decorated border? Do you want to create a patchwork of squares or hexagons, each with their own story?
- Make a list of the materials you would like to use to make the quilt
- Think about all the different design techniques you can use: collage, patchwork, layering, embroidery, beading etc.
- Try and decide how you will use the quilt. If you are using it on a bed or as a rug, make sure any fittings are secure; if you are likely to wash the quilt, make sure you use materials that can withstand a turn in the washing machine!
- If you are working as part of a group, try and decide who is going to create which part of the quilt
- If you are using sound buttons, scents or particular textures, think about how you will secure these to the quilt – sound buttons and scents might be sewn into pockets at the back of the quilt
- Don't restrict yourself to sewing if you are not confident in your ability. You can use iron-on adhesives and glue and create something just as good.



The most important thing to remember is to enjoy the process of creating the quilt as much as you enjoy the end product. Don't rush it ... have a good time sharing stories and creating something beautiful.

### Helpful hints and tips

**Adult learning courses** - Taking an adult learning course can be a great way to refresh or gain skills in craft and design. Visit your local library or local authority to find out about adult education courses in your area. Or visit [www.hotcourses.com/](http://www.hotcourses.com/)

**Societies and associations** - Meet others who share your creative passion

- The Quilters Guild of the British Isles: [www.quiltersguild.org.uk/](http://www.quiltersguild.org.uk/)
- The Quilt Association: [www.quilt.org.uk/page-1-Home.html](http://www.quilt.org.uk/page-1-Home.html)

**Exhibitions and festivals** – See what other people are doing and find inspiration for your next project. Buy a copy of Time Out from your local newsagent or look in

your local newspaper for events of interest near you. Alternatively, these websites offer UK exhibition and festival information:

- Quilt Museum and Gallery, St Anthony's Hall, York: [www.quiltmuseum.org.uk/](http://www.quiltmuseum.org.uk/)
- The Twisted Thread offers information about exhibitions and festivals: [www.twistedthread.com/](http://www.twistedthread.com/)

**Shops** - Always stop by your local fabric/craft shop to see what they have on offer. However, sometimes you may need to shop online for specialty items:

- Hobbycraft: <http://direct.hobbycraft.co.uk/>
- Craft Superstore: [www.craftsuperstore.co.uk/](http://www.craftsuperstore.co.uk/)
- Creative Fabrics: [www.creative-fabrics.co.uk/](http://www.creative-fabrics.co.uk/)
- Talking Products Ltd (sell sound buttons which are excellent when creating a sensory quilt): [www.talkingproducts.co.uk/](http://www.talkingproducts.co.uk/)

**Reading** – Visit your local library for books and magazines on all sorts of craft activities. You can also buy craft magazines such as Sew and Crafts Beautiful in most newsagents:

