



# Textile Techniques

**Suitable for use with KS3/4 students,  
university students and adult learners**

Use this checklist to make sure that all objects are placed back in their individual calico bags at the end of each session.

Take care to re-fold and pack pieces away neatly.

1. Unfinished paper-pieced hexagons
2. Crimson quilted cushion
3. Mola skirt
4. Unfinished hand quilting samples
5. Jessie Brown's Crazy Patchwork with frill
6. Foundation piecing (3 samples)
7. Wholecloth Canadian Red Cross quilt
8. Silk Hexagons cushion
9. Quilted skirt (Susan Small)
10. Kantha Work (3 samples)
11. Contemporary Cool quilt
12. Replica Welsh Wholecloth

We hope you enjoy using this resource.

For further information about patchwork and quilting visit our online Learning Centre available on our website [www.quiltmuseum.org.uk](http://www.quiltmuseum.org.uk)



# Textile Techniques

## Loans Box Guidelines

All of the textiles are important examples of different quilting and patchwork techniques, and some are fragile.

Please treat them with care.

### DO

- supervise pupils using materials
- ensure pupils have clean hands
- handle items on a table
- display the textiles in a safe, stable and secure area
- cover the textiles if left out overnight

### DO NOT

- display the textiles in direct sunlight
- use adhesives such as blue-tack on, or near the textiles
- alter or modify the textiles in any way
- try on or wear any of the quilted clothing
- hesitate to ask for further advice on using or displaying items
- take photographs of the textiles for commercial purposes

### Conditions of using the Loans box

- The textiles must only be used for educational purposes, in the classroom/ group setting and should not be taken offsite.
- The loans box must be risk assessed by the teacher/group leader
- Due care must be taken to safeguard the textiles.
- Textiles must be locked away when not in use.
- The Quilt Museum must be informed at once if textiles are damaged, lost or stolen.
  - Borrowers must not attempt repairs, but should keep all the pieces safely together and return them to the Quilt Museum as soon as possible.



# Textile Techniques

## Unfinished Paper Pieced Hexagons

### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** late 1800's

**Fabrics:** Top: printed cotton  
Backing: None

**Wadding:** None (fragment)

**Construction:** printed cotton, paper pieced with hexagon templates and visibly tacked in place



### Quilting Context

This unfinished fragment contains printed cottons dating from the mid to late 1800's. There are only a few papers left in the back, near the edge of the piece, this suggests that the maker was working from the centre outwards.

This fragment contains scraps of printed cottons that have been hand-stitched in small hexagons. There are some areas of repair.



**Above:** the shape of the fragment suggests that if finished the piece may have been used as a table-runner or decorative covering.

**Left:** the white rosette centrepiece with different coloured borders.

Patchwork was a popular pastime for Victorian ladies. Women saved their fabric scraps to swop with friends. The Industrial Revolution in Britain led to cheaper ways of printing and dyeing fabric, particularly cotton. Into the late Victorian era, patchwork continued to be a favoured hobby with ladies, however as cottons became cheaper, wealthy people stopped using them and chose more expensive silks and velvets instead. This trend is known as the high-Victorian, 'patchwork for the parlour style'.

Throughout this time, paper was an expensive commodity, this is why it is common to see recycled writing paper, used as hexagon-shaped templates in all types of patchwork from the period irrespective of social class.

### Learning Links

1. Investigate the social history of quilting and patchwork. Use our online '[Quilts past and present](#)' sheets to find out who made quilts in Victorian times and what different techniques were used at this time.



# Textile Techniques

## Crimson Quilted Cushion

### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** 1930's-1960's

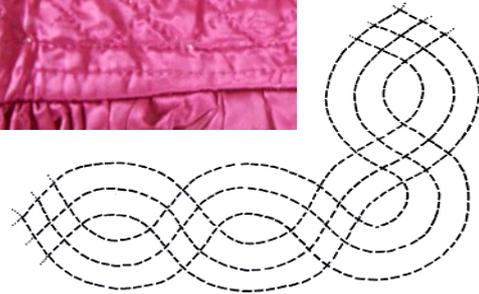
**Fabrics:** Top: pink silk/rayon  
Backing: pink silk/rayon

**Wadding:** thin cotton

**Construction:** wholecloth, hand-quilted designs.



**Below:** hand-quilting templates are often drawn out by the maker when planning the design of the quilt.



### Quilting Context

This hand-quilted cushion dates from between 1930's-1960's. It has a frilled rouleau edge that was fashionable from the early to mid-twentieth century.

Hand-quilting was very popular in the Victorian period but has fallen in and out of fashion in the more recent past. Hand-quilting is the process of using a needle and thread to sew a running stitch across the area to be quilted.

Quilters often use templates, both commercial and hand-drawn to work out their designs. This cushion cover has an intricate hand-quilted design with a central flower shape and stitched diamonds all over the surface.

When hand-quilting, a frame or hoop is often used to hold the fabric in place. This enables the quilter to use 'stab stitch' to achieve a neat finish.

Alternatively, quilters use 'rocking stitch'. The quilter has one hand on top of the quilt, with a thimble on their finger and the other hand underneath to pull the needle back up. Hand-quilting is very time consuming and requires great skill and accuracy. It has seen a revival since the 1970's and many people have taken it up as a hobby, rather than hand sewing out of necessity.

### Learning Links

1. Visit our online Learning Centre to view video clips that show you how to quilt. Download the stitch guide sheets that show you how to do basic stitches and have a go at hand quilting.



# Textile Techniques

## Mola Skirt

### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** contemporary (unknown)

**Fabrics:** Top: cotton

Backing: cotton

**Wadding:** none (two layers)

**Construction:** reverse appliquéd by hand in Mola style



### Quilting Context

This circular wraparound skirt is a contemporary example of the traditional costume of Kuna women.

The Mola style of stitched panel originated in Panama and was done by women from the Kuna tribe. It was a symbol of independence.

Early explorers and traders to central America discovered the Mola Geometric patterns. In the 17th century these patterns were painted onto skin or cloth, often as a simple border pattern.

These patterns started to appear in stitch in the late 19th century. The patterns developed from simple borders to being stitched all over an item of clothing. Many themes inspire the designs such as animals, birds and shapes.

**Appliqué** is a French term that means 'applied'. In quilting pieces of fabric are sewn onto a background to create designs, patterns and pictures. As shown above on the Mola skirt.

Molas are handmade using a reverse appliqué technique. Several layers of different coloured cloth are sewn together. The design is formed by cutting away parts of each layer. The edges of the layers are turned down and sewn under. The finest Molas have fine, almost invisible stitching done using very small needles and the same coloured thread as the layer being sewn.

### Learning Links

1. Visit our online Learning Centre to view video clips about Molas in Kuna culture and to find out how to make Mola work.



# Textile Techniques

## Unfinished Hand Quilting Samples

### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** contemporary

**Fabrics:** Top: orange silk  
Backing: silk

**Wadding:** thick poly-cotton

**Construction:** wholecloth, hand-quilted designs



### Quilting Context

These samples show how hand-quilting is constructed.

These are unfinished samples but the shape suggests that if finished the pieces could be used to make a tea cosy or similar object.

The three pieces are made of an orange-coloured silk. The silk pieces have been tacked

using white thread to the wadding. If finished the tacking would be removed.

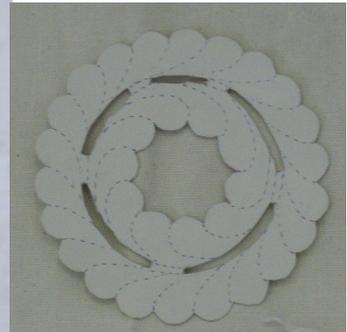
The cardboard template is used to draw out the design, often using a special quilting pencil that washes off. Then, the design is quilted in stitch.

Silk is a thin fabric, so the hand-quilting can cause it to ruffle, adding to the design. The quilting also compresses the wadding, causing the rippled effect on the surface of the quilting.

Hand quilting often uses motifs and symbols that are particular to a different region or country (see the Replica Welsh Wholecloth for an example of this) or they may be designs that are personal or unique to the individual maker.



**Below:** quilting templates can be shop-bought, or are often designed and made by the quilt maker in their own design.



### Learning Links

1. Compare the unfinished samples with the other hand-quilted pieces in the Loans box. What do they show about the process of quilting?
2. Investigate regional quilting in the British Isles, such as North Country quilting and Durham quilting. How are they similar and different?



# Textile Techniques

## Jessie Brown's Crazy Patchwork with Frill

### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** 1895-1899

**Fabrics:** Top: plain and printed cottons, silks, velvets, furnishing fabrics  
Backing: floral printed cotton

**Wadding:** thin cotton

**Construction:** hand-sewn patchwork with embroidery and frill



### Quilting Context

This quilt was made by Jessie Brown for her 'bottom drawer'. In Victorian times this was a term to refer to the items a woman stored and made in preparation for marriage.

Jessie was born in 1872 and worked as a teacher in a village school.

Her quilt is typical of the 'patchwork for the parlour' style that was a popular pastime with middleclass ladies in the late Victorian period.

**Below:** image shows Jessie Brown in front of the village school.



**Above:** the elaborate embroidery stitches are typical of the high-Victorian style.

The frill and floral backing are more unusual touches.

Brightly coloured expensive silks and velvets were used alongside scraps of printed cottons, and would be decoratively hand-embroidered in colourful threads, chain stitch and feather stitch were common techniques. The fabrics reflected wealth and status and as the trend for patchwork spread no surface was left uncovered— from tables to pianos, chairs and teapots!

This quilt is in very good condition, and contains a costly singular backing piece of floral fabric so it is likely that it was only used for 'best'.

### Learning Links

1. Investigate Victorian textiles, what differences are there between patchwork made for the 'parlour' and objects sewn for everyday use.
2. Have a go at 'crazy patchwork', visit our online Learning Centre to find out how to do basic patchwork and embroidery stitches.



# Textile Techniques

## Foundation Piecing Samples

### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** contemporary

**Fabrics:** Top: coloured cottons  
Backing: cotton

**Wadding:** Cotton

**Construction:** foundation-pieced and machine stitched



### Quilting Context

These pieces were made by members of the Quilters' Guild as an introduction to 'foundation piecing'.

Foundation piecing was initially used to hold fabric in place. It has been used in British quilting since the 18th and 19th centuries. It is sometimes referred to as English paper



piecing because of its popularity in Britain. Foundation piecing enables the quilt maker to achieve a very precise design and neat finish.

In the past pieces of scrap fabric formed the foundation layer. Today, the use of tracing paper has become popular to cut the pieces to size. Often notes about the design will be written on the paper to assist with the construction of the quilt.

There are several foundation piecing techniques, these include single template piecing, top pressed and under pressed. Under pressed is the most accurate because it allows the maker to see the seam line and sew on to it.

### Learning Links

1. These contemporary samples have been machine stitched and freezer paper have been used to draw out the design. Read our '[Quilts Past and Present](#)' sheets to investigate how this technique has been done in the past. **TIP:** Read about the 1718 Silk Patchwork Coverlet.



# Textile Techniques

## Wholecloth Canadian Red Cross Quilt

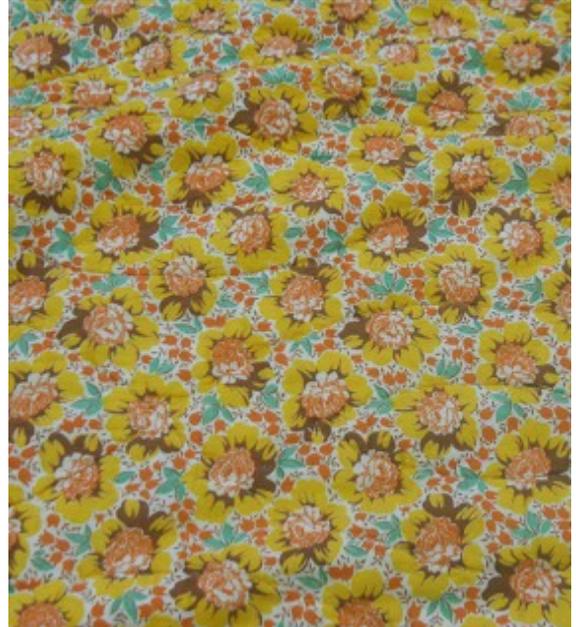
### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** 1939-1945

**Fabrics:** Top: orange floral cotton  
Backing: white cotton

**Wadding:** None

**Construction:** wholecloth, hand-quilted  
cable design



### Quilting Context

During the Second World War the Canadian Red Cross organised for quilters to make patchwork quilts to be sent over for evacuated and homeless families.

Recognised by a label reading 'Gift of the Canadian Red Cross Society' many people removed the label because of the stigma associated with receiving 'charity'. This quilt still has the original label.

'Red Cross' quilts were made from any available fabric, suiting and pyjama material was common. This quilt is unusual because it is a wholecloth. Most Red Cross quilts are patchwork in design.

It was given to Pam Jones of Beckenham. Pam and her sister were both given a quilt when they were bombed out of their home.



Quilt 'gift' label on back of a quilt in the Quilter's Guild Collection.



### Learning Links

1. Research the 'Make Do and Mend' campaign to find out more about recycling fabrics in war time.
2. Debate the idea of 'charity', why do you think that some people removed the 'Red Cross' labels?
3. Have a go at wholecloth quilting. Visit the Library section of our online Learning Centre for a 'How to Guide'.



# Textile Techniques

## Silk Hexagons Cushion

### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** 1930's?/1800's

**Fabrics:** Top: painted fabric  
Backing: paper pieced  
hexagons

**Wadding:** thin cotton

**Construction:** machine stitched cushion  
cover with hand sewn  
paper pieced hexagons



### Quilting Context

This is an unusual cushion because it appears to be two pieces that have been sewn together, therefore it is impossible to be precise about a date.

The cushion has been constructed using machine stitch. Hand stitching has been added to embellish the areas with pattern painted on. Then, a separate hand-stitched fragment of paper-pieced hexagons has been patched on to the back.

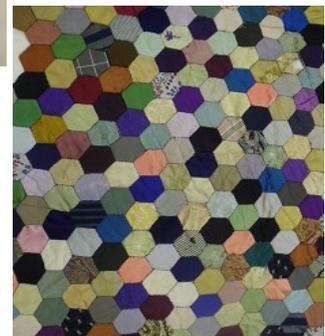
The hexagons fragment appears to have been attached using freezer paper, this is visible in areas where the patchwork has unpicked. Many of the hexagon pieces have started to fray and fade as the dyes in the fabric have broken down.

It is possible that the maker added the patchwork because it had symbolic or personal meaning for them, or it may have been added to repair the cushion.



**Left:** Machine-stitched cushion with what appears to be a painted design and paper-pieced hexagons attached at a later date.

**Below:** hexagonal patchwork with fabrics including brightly coloured silks and furnishing fabrics. Many pieces need repair work.



### Learning Links

1. In the past quilters used recycled materials or old fragments of patchwork. Research the history of quilting to consider why that was the case. Are there any contemporary comparisons?



# Textile Techniques

## Quilted Skirt (Susan Small)

### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** 1970's

**Fabrics:** Top: cotton  
Backing: cotton

**Wadding:** thick polycotton

**Construction:** machine quilted



### Quilting Context

Quilting has been used in clothing since the Middle ages. It has been used in armour, Victorian petticoats, and more recently by fashion designers.

This skirt was made by Susan Small, a British ready to wear firm that was founded in the 1940's.

Susan Small were best known for their party dresses and evening attire. This maxi skirt dates from the 1970's and is a typical style from that period.

It is machine stitched with a quilted diamond pattern all over the surface. It has a large frill at the bottom and thick wadding so it would have been a heavy item to wear.



The chief designer at Susan Small was responsible for Princess Anne's wedding dress in 1973, but the company closed not long after that.

### Learning Links

1. Investigate quilting in fashion. What items have been quilted in the past and are quilted today?
2. How are these items constructed? Compare and contrast commercially manufactured items with hand or machine quilted items made by individual makers. What are the differences?



# Textile Techniques

## Kantha Work (3 samples)

### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** contemporary

**Fabrics:** cloth, muslin, embroidery threads

**Wadding:** none

**Construction:** decorative running stitch motifs and embroidery



### Quilting Context

Kantha is a type of embroidery that is popular in Bangladesh and West Bengal, India. Kantha work is often found on saris. It is common for women in Bengal take old saris and stitch them with Kantha work to form quilts.

Kantha work is similar to the decorative running stitch of Japanese sashiko quilting. Kantha work typically has a border of running stitch motifs and uses the same stitch to create vibrant designs in brightly coloured thread. It originated with Bengali housewives, they would pull a colourful strand of thread from their clothing and make simple designs.

In the best examples of Kantha work the entire cloth is covered with motifs of the natural world, including flowers, animals, birds and geometric shapes. Designs may also depict everyday activities.

The stitching on the cloth gives it a slightly wrinkled effect. Contemporary Kantha work mostly uses cotton and silk.



**Above:** Kantha work with colourful bird motifs.

**Left:** elephant motif.

**Below:** patterned motif of peacocks.



### Learning Links

1. Compare the motifs and symbols used in Kantha work with traditional British quilting techniques. What has inspired the different styles?
2. Investigate how Kantha and Sashiko work are used in modern textiles.
3. Visit our online Learning Centre and watch our short video clips to find out more about different quilting techniques from around the World.



# Textile Techniques

## Contemporary Cool Quilt

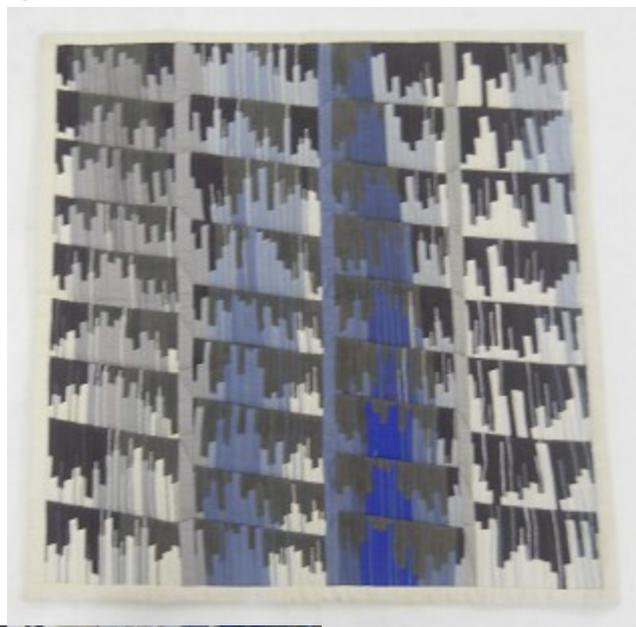
### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** contemporary

**Fabrics:** Top: printed cottons  
Backing: cotton

**Wadding:** thin polycotton

**Construction:** machine quilted



### Quilting Context

The quilting revival in the 1970's brought with it a new approach to quilting, the 'art' quilt.

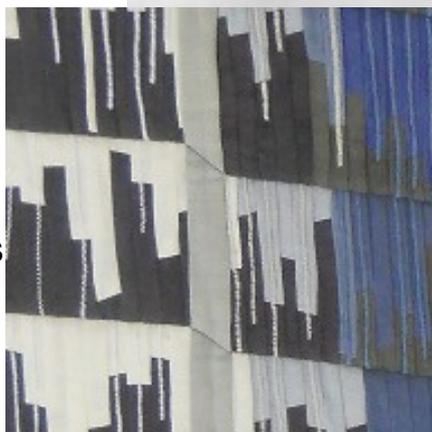
This movement took quilts from their historic place on the bed to the wall.

Since then contemporary quilt makers have been creating pieces to be appreciated for their artistic merit that may have no functional use.

This contemporary 'cool' quilt is a modern interpretation of the traditional log cabin technique.

Pieces of fabric have been layered in coloured strips and sewn together. There are thin vertical borders of block colour that break up the piecing. The effect of the combination of blacks, blues, greys and whites creates a cool feel to the piece.

Despite the work of many quilt artists to promote quilting as an art form, there is an ongoing debate about whether quilting can ever really be classed as art. Historically it has been seen as less artistic and technically skilled as other forms of textile work such as embroidery.



Contemporary quilt artists often dye their own fabrics to create the right tone for their work.

This is an integral part of the artistic process.

Contemporary makers may also experiment with new and unusual ways of constructing quilts like stitching over pieces as seen in this quilt.

### Learning Links

1. The Quilt Museum and Gallery has over 400 items online. Investigate contemporary quilts in the Museum Collection, examine the techniques used to make them. Use your research to debate 'Can a quilt be art?'



# Textile Techniques

## Replica Welsh Wholecloth

### Fabric Fact File

**Age:** contemporary

**Fabrics:** Top: orange plain cotton  
Backing: blue cotton

**Wadding:** poly-cotton

**Construction:** wholecloth, hand-quilted  
with motifs and symbols



### Quilting Context

This quilt is a contemporary replica of a traditional Welsh wholecloth. The hand-quilted designs include leaves, small circles, a central circular flower design and a thick border of straight stitch.

Quilting has been part of Welsh culture since the late 18th century. There are very few surviving examples of early Welsh quilts because they were often well-used.

The quilts contain motifs and symbols that are particular to Welsh quilts. These traditional stitch patterns can be a way of identifying Welsh quilts.

Until the early 20th century quilt-making was a way for working class women to make a respectable living. For many miner's wives and widows it was an essential source of income to support their families. Quilts would be made to order by local women who would buy a new quilt each winter.

Quilting in Wales fell in to decline when mass produced textiles became readily available. It had a brief resurgence between the wars when the Rural Industries bureau offered support to craft industries in areas of economic depression. Today, the tradition and techniques are kept alive by enthusiasts.



**Across:** Close up images of stitch patterns and designs.

**Below:** Central circular design with flower motif.



### Learning Links

1. Investigate regional quilting in the British Isles, such as North Country quilting. Consider how that style compares to the Welsh quilts.