

10.1.21 – Class Culture Quilt

Poetry

**“My Mother Pieced Quilts” by Teresa Palomo Acosta**

**About the Author**

Born in 1949 in McGregor, Texas, poet Teresa Palomo Acosta grew up listening to family stories about working in and living near cotton fields. She came from a family of hardworking men and women. The women were known particularly for their sewing skills. Palomo Acosta combines her love for her Mexican heritage and her family’s quilting and storytelling abilities in her poem “My Mother Pieced Quilts.”

<p>they were just meant as covers in winters as weapons against pounding january winds</p> <p>5 but it was just that every morning I awoke to these october ripened canvases passed my hand across their cloth faces and began to wonder how you pieced all these together</p> <p>10 these strips of gentle communion cotton and flannel nightgowns wedding organdies dime store velvets</p> <p>how you shaped patterns square and oblong and</p> <p>15 round positioned balanced then cemented them with your thread</p> <p>20 a steel needle a thimble</p> <p>how the thread darted in and out galloping along the frayed edges, tucking them in as you did us at night</p> <p>25 oh how you stretched and turned and rearranged your michigan spring faded curtain pieces my father’s santa fe work shirt the summer denims, the tweeds of fall</p> <p>in the evening you sat at your canvas</p> <p>30 —our cracked linoleum floor the drawing board me lounging on your arm and you staking out the plan:</p>	<p>whether to put the lilac purple of easter against the red plaid of winter-goinginto-</p> <p>35 spring whether to mix a yellow with blue and white and paint the corpus christi noon when my father held your hand whether to shape a five-point star from the</p> <p>40 somber black silk you wore to grandmother’s funeral</p> <p>you were the river current carrying the roaring notes . . . forming them into pictures of a little boy reclining a swallow flying</p> <p>45 you were the caravan master at the reins driving your thread needle artillery across the mosaic cloth bridges delivering yourself in separate testimonies</p> <p>oh mother you plunged me sobbing and laughing</p> <p>50 into our past into the river crossing at five into the spinach fields into the plainview cotton rows into tuberculosis wards</p> <p>55 into braids and muslin dresses sewn hard and taut to withstand the thrashings of twenty-five years</p> <p>stretched out they lay armed/ready/shouting/celebrating</p> <p>60 knotted with love the quilts sing on</p>
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## Imagery & Diction

Novelist Robert Newton Peck once said, “A good author makes a camera out of a pen.” An author creates imagery through his or her **diction**. Imagery is language that appeals to the sense. Writers use it to describe an experience and evoke a feeling.

1. Review Acosta’s poem and identify two **images**. Explain why the images appeal to you.
2. Next, consider the topic, purpose, and occasion of Acosta’s poem. How might they shape her diction or choice of words?
3. The power of a sentence or a line of poetry to produce a reaction in the reader lies mainly in the **connotation** (the suggested meaning) of words. Consider the final image in the poem, “knotted with love the quilt sings on.” What are the denotations of the words *knotted* and *sings*.
4. Consider what would happen if the author’s **diction** were different. For example, if instead of “knotted,” she had used “entangled,” “Mixed up,” or “tied together.” How might a different word or phrase affect the reader’s perception of the final line in that poem?