



INTERNATIONAL LAND ART CONTEST FOR CLIMATE CHANGE SOLUTION - Materials -

if you are unable to do outdoor Land Art activity

**2009
Budapest**

EARTH QUILT

Art Form	Collaboration with Nature
Multi-Disciplines	Science, Art, Language
You will need	25-30 identical small containers, such as shallow boxes, margarine tubs, plastic half pint storage boxes, etc.; (square, if possible) crayons, drawing tools, journal, a floor space for assembling the quilt.
Time	One day for collecting; one session for discussion, and a time to write

Overview

When we try to grasp the living Earth as a whole it can be overwhelming. We sometimes need help to see the individual parts and value them.

The class will assemble a virtual quilt out of a variety of natural materials that they have collected, an Earth Quilt.

Quilting has been a community-building activity for centuries.

This activity helps students perceive how diverse elements in a community can together make a pleasing whole.

Nature alone is not art but our perception and arrangement of nature can be art.

A quilt is more than a blanket. A quilt is evidence of community. (see Annex 1 what is a Quilt)

The Activity

Begin: Bring in pictures of quilts, or have kids bring in actual quilts. Look at various patterns. Look at ways that scraps of material can together create a harmonious whole. Briefly discuss the tradition of quilting circles and quilting bees as crucial community builders, especially in pioneer societies where women often lived far apart from one another.

Collect: Give each student one of the containers.

Ask students to each collect a single natural material to fill their container—materials such as sand, grass, gravel, charred wood, soil, oak leaves, cattails, etc.

One container for each material.

The materials is to be collected and brought in from home, from around the school or from a park or any natural patch.

Even in winter there will be a variety of dried grasses, leaves, weeds, branches.

Suggestion: Teacher fills a few containers in advance to show students diverse possibilities.

Caution: Encourage students to be careful in collecting, not to take all of any material from one place, especially living plants (even in winter dormancy). Ask for imagination in collecting: pine needles are easily collected even in deep snow by digging down to the base of the tree trunk. Berries and rose hips are often available even in winter, as are the wonderful textures of grapevine bark.

Assemble: As the containers of material are brought together, take a moment to notice how each is so different and yet each comes from the same source: Earth. Try a variety of arrangements. Finish by deciding what arrangement pleases you most, or pleases most of you. Think about the communal decisions you made about colors, textures, and apparent weight that resulted in the final quilt pattern.

Discuss how each material has been shaped differently by its environment.

Lay the containers out together where the earth quilt is going to be assembled.

Instruct students to create an Earth Quilt with their containers. Each container equals one square of the quilt. As students begin to add their containers into the piece, decisions need to be made as to balance, color, variety etc. You may want to ask the students to invent a process for assembling the group's quilt.

However the Earthquilt is assembled, students should think about:

- **possibilities for color and contrast:** how does season play a role here? Think about gradations of color as a design possibility (look at the line of cherry leaves on [Andy Goldsworthy's Artist/Naturalist page](#)). Think about color contrast: look at Goldsworthy's red poppy petals wrapped around a boulder.
- **visual texture**—sand creates a different visual impression than dry leaves, pebbles quite different from either.
- **actual sewn quilts** they have seen. What kind of pattern or design will best represent Earth? (Bring in pictures of quilts, or have kids bring in actual quilts.)
- **Experimenting** with several assemblages, deciding which is most effective. (This is the artist's way of proceeding—by doing, by playing.)

Journal Entries

- Describe your collecting experience.
- Notice and note textures and variety in nature. Draw one.

Rationale

Students will be introduced to the concept of Collaborating with Nature, learning that art assembling natural materials can be an art form. They will see the varieties of colors and textures in nature. They will be introduced to transitory art or ephemeral art in visual art form.

Assessment

They will be able to distinguish between art and natural forms.
They will see and compare textures and colors and have a new awareness of the range of both in the natural world.

Make Connections

Look at the work of artists who use units or multiples of units to create a whole. Musicians make compositions, as do writers, dancers—all art forms are compositions.

Variations

- Look at the work of Andy Goldsworthy. Discuss how their arrangements of natural objects are art and compare to [Ansel Adams](#) (Artist/Naturalist pages) and Christo (he's the guy who wraps things).
- Create more than one earth quilt, each one using materials from a specific local habitat or community. Or photograph your quilt and make another one in a different season, or photograph a sequence of assemblages.

Summary

This quilting idea is in contrast to the dominant individualism of our culture, where seeing ourselves as separate from our world makes it easier not to be bothered by what's happening in it. Ecology sees our world in terms of 'systems', where each system is a 'whole' that is more than the sum of its parts, but also itself a 'part' of larger wholes.

ANNEX 1

Quilt is A **quilt** is a type of bedding— a bed covering composed of a quilt top, a layer of batting, and a layer of fabric for backing, generally combined using the technique of quilting. And this lesson activity is to create a Quilt from the small containers of the children with natural objects.

A quilt:



From small natural objects like these:

