

Stitching Resistance

Supplementary Materials
for Teaching about Chilean Arpilleras



Pictured: Violeta Morales, Justice, 2006.
Collection of Marjorie Agosín. Photograph by Addison Doty.

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INTRODUCTION

These resources have been created to support teachers in implementing The Making History Series: “Stitching Truth: Women’s Protest Art in Pinochet’s Chile” from Facing History and Ourselves.

“Stitching Truth: Women’s Protest Art in Pinochet’s Chile” includes a series of readings and comprehension questions to help students learn both about the history of Chile and the use of art as a form of political protest. Facing History and Ourselves has also provided complementary lesson plans on their website.

You can access both “Stitching Truth: Women’s Protest Art in Pinochet’s Chile” and the complementary lesson plans at <http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/publications/bordando-la-verdad-arte-de->.

Below you will find a number of materials to supplement the resources listed above. First, a short overview and introduction to the relevant themes and topics raised through the readings and lessons such as: politics and authoritarianism, women and community, abductions and desaparecidos (the disappeared ones), human rights and exile, and significant events after 1990. Created by the National Hispanic Cultural Center Art Museum, these materials provide an important overview for teachers preparing to implement the lesson plans and readings in their classrooms.

In addition to the introductory materials, you will also find activities created around some of the readings in the “Stitching Truth: Women’s Protests Art in Pinochet’s Chile.” We’ve also included a list of books organized by reading level to support teaching about Chile, along with a list of relevant films.

These materials were developed in conjunction with “Stitching Truth: Chilean Arpilleras in the Classroom,” a professional development workshop for K-12 educators that was co-sponsored by the Latin American & Iberian Institute at the University of New Mexico and the National Hispanic Cultural Center (NHCC). The workshop was held on March 5, 2013, at the NHCC in

Albuquerque, New Mexico. For more information on these organizations, please visit <http://laili.unm.edu> and <http://www.nhcc.org>., respectively.

The workshop was organized to explore teaching about the exhibition, “Stitching Resistance: The History of Chilean Arpilleras,” on view at the NHCC from October 19, 2012 through January, 2014. The intent of this powerful and extensive exhibit is to help illuminate the artistry and the history of *arpilleristas* and *arpilleras* in the hope that what happened to Chileans between 1973 and 1990 is never forgotten. And the artists who stitched it forever recognized.

STITCHING RESISTANCE: THE HISTORY OF CHILEAN ARPILLERAS

The following background information was provided courtesy of the National Hispanic Cultural Center Art Museum.

INTRODUCTION

When the armed forces of Chile overthrew the administration of Salvador Allende nearly forty years ago now, the *arpillera* suddenly became much more than a charming and quaint appliqué, embroidery, or patchwork depiction of everyday life by Chilean and Peruvian women. September 11, 1973 created the necessary conditions in which this art form was born and soon the *arpillera* became the most visual (and visible), poignant, and widespread manifestation of opposition to authoritarianism, violation of human rights, the disappearance of loved ones—all things associated with the violation of human rights of the military government that ruled Chile until 1990.

Arpilleras are a powerful art form. Layers of sackcloth or burlap fabric (*arpillera*) were joined, principally through applique, to create multi-dimensional (in layers and meaning) works of protest and resistance. *Arpillera* the burlap cloth became the preferred medium for resistance and protest because the material was easily obtained and inexpensive. Appliqué, embroidery, and patchwork were traditional skills of women, the widows and mothers—whose families were destroyed in the months and years following the *golpe de estado* of September 11, 1973. Their artistry with humble cloth is vibrant testimony: history in textile form, every bit as compelling as any other of the visual media. The detail and composition of the works can be simple or intricate. Each one tells a story; each one conveys a message.

The exhibition, *Stitching Resistance: The History of Chilean Arpilleras*, is a result of an intense collaboration by poets, artists, scholars, and curators. Its intent is to help illuminate the artistry and the history of *arpilleristas* and *arpilleras* in the hope that what happened to Chileans between 1973 and 1990 is never forgotten. And the artists who stitched it forever recognized.

POLITICS AND AUTHORITARIANISM

President Salvador Allende Gossens was elected president in September 1970. A longtime leader of Chile's Socialist party, he led a Marxist-democratic left coalition government. On September 11, 1973 (el once de setiembre) the Chilean armed forces, the navy, and the national police, *Carabineros de Chile*, seized control of the government by means of a coordinated *golpe de estado* in which President Allende took his own life rather than surrender to the insurgents. On that day, General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte became president of a four-man military junta. Today, “once de setiembre” is as fateful a date (with as meaningful an aftermath) for Chileans as 9/11 is for New Yorkers, Pennsylvanians, and citizens of Washington DC metropolitan area—and for all citizens of the United States.

Rather than restore civilian rule to Chile with elections, the junta, with Pinochet as its head, wielded power over the country for nearly seventeen years, years of extreme hardship for Chile. The *golpe*, or coup, split the intellectual and political communities. Many were exiled and others voluntarily left. In the streets, there were tear gas and water cannons, curfews and fear. Abductions, death squads and disappearances (whence the term *desaparecidos*) affected thousands of families.

In 1988 the government gave Chileans an opportunity to express their preference of a future: People flocked to the voting polls to check one of the following “**Augusto Pinochet Ugarte: Si—No—**.” This was not a democratic election per se and there didn't need to be a choice, the government believed they would win. Instead, “Si” or “Yes”, lost with only 44% of the vote. On October 6, 1988 the Government conceded the loss. A year and a half later Chile had a civilian president for the first time in seventeen years with the election of Patricio Aylwin Azócar.

WOMEN AND COMMUNITY

Chilenas, Chilean women, have always been depicted as having strong character as well as a sense of the importance of place and of self. They have always been noted for their outspokenness and for being politically and socially active (despite not having been able to vote in national elections until 1952). That *Chilenas* organized themselves into solidarity movements of protest and resistance through art during the 1973-1990 years should not surprise anyone.

Visual (and visible) courage and resistance in the guise of “simple and quaint” women’s work, *arpilleras* made in Chile between 1973 and 1990 were masterful and significant as non-violent expressions of denunciation, outrage, and opposition. Post-1990 works show the continuing importance of stitching memory and history into humble cloth scraps.

As significant as the works themselves are the artists who created them. Gathering in church basements, soup kitchens, community centers, and workshops the *arpilleristas* gained momentum as a movement during these crucial years in the history of Chile. Together the women not only created noteworthy works of art, they stitched together a community torn to pieces by violence; they gathered strength to defy, protest, and denounce. With each stitch they grew more vocal and more resilient.

International Women’s Day became another vehicle for women in Chile as well as around the world, to celebrate and demonstrate. Held every year on March 8th, International Women’s Day has its roots in suffrage movements of the early 1900s. 1975--precisely as Chileans were suffering from the ravages of suppression-- was declared “International Women’s Year” by the United Nations. Today, March 8th is celebrated globally as part of Women’s History Month. *Chilenas* used this day to the best of their advantage and *arpilleristas* often depicted it in their works.

As more and more husbands, sons, fathers, brothers, and boyfriends were “disappeared” by the military regime, *chilenas* took it upon themselves to search for their *desaparecidos*. They literally chained themselves in protest in very public venues like the former tribunals of justice. They consulted lawyers and church officials, and implored public officials in their searches. And all the while they continued to produce these remarkable art works that chronicle this time period in Chilean history.

ABDUCTIONS AND DESAPARECIDOS (THE DISAPPEARED ONES)

Dónde están? Where Are They?

Can anything be more terrifying than the unexplained loss of a loved one? For the *arpilleristas* and so many Chileans, it was one of authoritarianism's tragic realities. Students and teachers of all levels, artists, writers, singers, scholars, members of the intelligentsia—anyone who opposed the *junta* might be abducted, go missing, and become a *desaparecido*.

Throughout Chile, in big cities and small towns alike, abductions and disappearances were all too common. Remaining family members demanded to know the whereabouts of their *desaparecidos*, often to no avail. As much as the people demanded and searched, the government was not forthcoming with information. Vulnerable communities, including the Mapuche, feared reprisals and could not publicly announce their search for lost loved ones. But all the people could not be deterred.

To put a human face on these *desaparecidos*, the women wore black and white identification photos on their clothing like badges, marking themselves with the image and memory of the missing. *Arpilleristas* incorporated such photos and other likenesses as well as scraps of clothing and other objects belonging to *desaparecidos* into their works. In doing so, they kept them ever in the public eye and memory. An empty chair, a longing glance from a window, grieving women dancing alone are emotionally haunting visuals utilized to convey this experience.

As the *desaparecidos* grew in number, women, families, church groups and other human rights organization continued to press for information, gaining strength in numbers and expanding protest methods. *Encadenamiento* (enchainment) became an important method to visibly and physically denounce human rights abuses. Organizations like *La Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos* (Association of Families of the Detained and Disappeared) and *Vicaría de Solidaridad* (Vicariate of Solidarity- a Catholic Church run agency to help families of victims) formed and grew in numbers.

Over twenty years after the return of democracy, many Chilean families continue to search for answers to the whereabouts of their *desaparecidos* and stage public protests in their honor and memory.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EXILE

The record of human rights violations in Chile during the 1970s and 1980s includes, but is not limited to, imprisonment, torture, murder, and exile. Opponents of the regime were detained, interned, and imprisoned-- often sent to remote parts of the country as *relegados* (individuals internally exiled in locations with adverse weather and harsh living conditions).

Torture was a routine occurrence, ranging from severe beating to simulation of execution by firing squad, from mutilation to electric shock. More routine methods were frequent. Assassination of influential Chileans and the murder of suspected enemies of the regime marked the days, the months, the years. Intentional abuses of human rights by the government have been likened to tactical and strategic policies designed to wage war on internal enemies of the regime change initiated in 1973. The official violation of human rights (“state-sponsored terrorism”) served to create an environment of terror and fear that permeated everyday life for Chileans.

Martial law, state of siege, and curfews; tear gas, water cannons and the breaking up of public gatherings terrified a nation. Prisons and prison camps bulged with detainees. Chile was not alone among Latin American countries in suffering human rights abuses at the hands of the government during these decades, but the extent of the abuses found greater and more lasting artistic portrayal there. The *arpilleras* in the exhibition speak to these violations through their depictions of the confrontations between Chileans and their own police and armed forces.

Human rights organizations were formed in response to these abuses that occurred in Chile. In 1975 Chile’s popular Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, an outspoken activist in the human rights movement organized what became the internationally well-known *Vicaria de Solidaridad* (Vicariate of Solidarity) as an official agency of the Catholic Church for the express purpose of rendering assistance to afflicted families of the detained and disappeared.

Exile, clearly a human rights abuse, was also a form of emotional and mental torture. Being forced to flee one’s homeland for fear of death, or having to leave for one’s own safety, is a most severe sentence to be handed down by a government that is widely seen as illegitimate. Many had no choice in the matter, others including members of the intelligentsia left voluntarily. All were exiles. More than a few, like Hortensia Bussi de Allende, the dead president’s wife, were perceived by the government as potential threats to its existence, rivals who challenged the authority of Pinochet and the *junta*. Academics, artists, musicians, novelists, poets, students, writers, and activists from various stations of life traveled to neighboring countries, to Europe, and to the United States. Every Chilean exile left behind family, jobs, and community.

In 1992, then President Patricio Aylwin Azócar relayed the well-documented findings of the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation Report (the “Rettig Report,” named for its chairman Raúl Rettig Giessen) to Chile and the world. The report made clear the extent of human rights abuses that occurred in Chile resulting in death or disappearances. Since the report first came out, all Chilean administrations have made it a priority to locate unmarked graves and

the remains of the missing. A 2004 report published by the Ethics Commission against Torture found that 33,000 Chileans had been tortured during the seventeen years between 1973 and 1990.

In Chile, the process of recovering *desaparecidos*' bodies has taken on symbolic and enormous importance as well. In Chile unmarked graves are still being uncovered; survivors of torture are still struggling to recover.

AFTER THE DARKNESS: POST 1990 WORKS

In 1990, Chileans became once again a people with a civilian, democratic government. Seventeen years of dictatorship had taken their toll on the country, but had not exhausted the creative talents of *arpilleristas*. In the post regime decades, they have enhanced the use of this art form as a medium for visual, political, and social commentary. Recent works remind viewers to both remember the painful times of the past and to look forward to a better future.

It was a long-standing tradition in Chile (and for families) to fly kites on Sundays and festive occasions. In *arpilleras* the flying of brightly colored kites represents affirmation of faith in the present with soaring hopes for the future of democracy. Numerous *arpilleras* portray aspects of the rebuilding of Chilean democratic institutions and constitutionalism after the military regime. Flowers and colors used are more vibrant, and while always on message politically and socially, these artworks portray less sorrow, more hope. Some artists now proudly sign their full names to their works, whereas before they may have been afraid to do so.

The 1998 arrest and detention in London of Augusto Pinochet was a milestone event for the human rights movement and a symbolic step toward healing for Chileans. Numerous *arpilleras* make reference to this controversy and Spain's attempt to extradite him for trial there. Spain's request for, and Britain's refusal of, extradition made it imperative that Chile take responsibility for legal action against the former president.

Works portraying the presidency of Michelle Bachelet, especially her dedication to women's causes and her vigorous support for the founding of the Museum of Memory, have also been popular themes of the post 1990 *arpilleras*. The Museum of Memory continues to attract large numbers of visitors. In recent years, the Chilean government has turned some of the most notorious detention and torture centers into memorials and museums; streets and buildings have been renamed in honor of torture and murder victims. That Chileans' memories of the 1973-1990 years do not fade has become a fact of life owing greatly to the efforts of the *arpilleristas*.

Most recently, works have vividly depicted the 2010 Chilean earthquake and tsunami and the rescue of the trapped Chilean Miners- events that captured the world. They also depict continued protests by Chile's indigenous people, who seek to recover lands taken from them in the past. While opinions continue to differ on the experiences of the 1973-1990 years --and beyond-- Chileans are more united than ever before on the merits of civilian, democratic, representative government. The simple *arpillera* and the courage of women who made (and still make) them are an integral part of this unity.

VOCABULARY

Arpillera

Layers of sackcloth or burlap fabric (*arpillera*) that are joined through applique, to create multi-dimensional works of protest and resistance.

Arpillerista

A woman who creates an arpillera.

Dictator

A person who exercises absolute power, often times a ruler with complete and unrestricted control in a government.

Dictatorship

The rule of a dictator.

Communism

A socialist movement with the goal to create a social order based upon common ownership of the means of production.

Activism

Efforts to bring about social or political change through direct action, like protests or demonstrations.

Social Movement

A group of people connected by a set of common beliefs or ideals who work together to achieve certain goals, often related to social change.

Facism

An authoritarian and nationalistic right-wing system of government and social organization.

Coup d'état

A sudden change of government illegally or by force; the overthrow of a government.

Disappeared/desaparecido

A person who disappeared during a period of military rule, presumed to have been tortured and/or killed by members of the regime.

REFLECTIONS: ANALYZING “INTRODUCTION”

The following is based upon Marjorie Agosín’s article “Introduction” which can be found on pages ix-xii in “Stitching Truth: Women’s Protest Art in Pinochet’s Chile.” The article serves as a short overview or introduction to the themes and topics that will be raised in the other readings included in the curriculum guide. The following are suggested questions to use in guiding students as they read through Agosín’s article.

1. According to Agosín, in what ways did people resist the Pinochet government? (p. ix-x)
2. What is an arpillera? (p. x)
3. How did the arpilleras help to get information about what was happening inside of Chile to people outside of the country? (p. x)
4. What did the arpilleras show? (p. x)
5. How does Agosín contrast the Latin American dictatorships with the women’s movements? (p. x)
6. How did the arpilleristas become more visible? (p. xi)
7. What was the background of many of the women who joined the arpilleristas? Had many of them been involved in politics previously? (p. xi)

THE ARPILLERISTA: POEM ANALYSIS

The following activity guides students through an analysis of Marjorie Agosín's Poem "The Arpillerista" (found in the front of "Stitching Truth: Women's Protest Art in Pinochet's Chile" and *Scraps of Life: Chilean Arpilleras*).

Agosín's poem offers an excellent way to bridge literacy with content area studies. Through analyzing the poem, students gain both knowledge of this period of Chilean history, but also experience in practicing literary analysis of poetry. Since students would need at least some understanding of the historical period in order to complete the analysis, this is an activity best done after the unit has already been introduced. It could even be used as an assessment activity at the end of the unit to gauge student knowledge.

1. What is an arpillerista? Agosín defines the arpillerista as "artisan of remains." What does this mean within the Chilean context?
2. How does an arpillerista "burn" with *cold*? What does the cold represent? (s. 1 v. 3)
3. What is a shroud? (s. 1 v. 6)
4. Why do you think Agosín uses all of the allusions to fabric? (remnants, trousers, ragged scraps)
5. Who is Philomena? (s. 1 v. 13) Why is she relevant to the poem?
6. Who are the "victorious armies"? (s. 2 v. 7)
7. What does it mean to "bring the dead back to life" in the context of the arpilleras? (s. 2 v. 9)

BOOKS

While the majority of the following books do not speak directly to the Pinochet dictatorship or the Arpillera art form, they all focus on Chile in one manner or another. There are a variety of genres represented from folktales and fiction to non-fiction. They are grouped according to reading level.

[A Hen, a Chick, and a String Guitar](#)

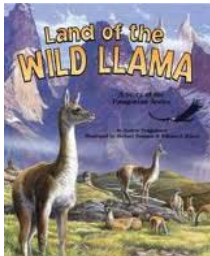
by Margaret Read McDonald. Ages 2 and up



Inspired by a Chilean folktale, this rollicking chant-along tale is a delight for young children. "Grandma gave me a clucking white hen. Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! ... One day that hen gave me a chick! I had a hen. And I had a chick. Ay! Ay! Ay! Ay! Ay! How I loved my two little pets." As the animals arrive two by two, the story adds them up...ending with 16 pets! Thus a counting/adding book, a baby animal names book, and a just plain fun to chant story. Includes a CD composed, sung and played on guitar by Bob King.

[Land of the Wild Llama: A Story of Patagonian Andes](#)

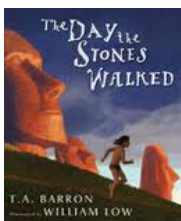
by Audrey M. Fraggaloch. Ages 4 and up



Among the windy peaks of the Andes Mountains in Chilean Patagonia, herds of guanaco, wild ancestors of the domesticated llama, make their home. In spring, a newborn guanaco is born.

[The Day the Stones Walked](#)

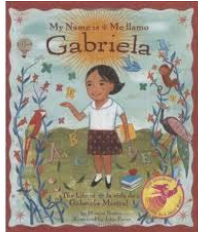
by T.A. Barron and William Low. Ages 4 and up



Pico's father isn't like the other fathers on Easter Island. Instead of building boats or hunting octopus, he sculpts the giant stone figures that he believes, in times of trouble, will rise and walk. Impossible, thinks Pico, until the Great Wave crashes into the island and Pico experiences firsthand the wonder of the stones. In this stunning tale of faith and the humbling power of nature, T. A. Barron and William Low envision life as it might have been on the mysterious Easter Island . . . before the stones became the island's only inhabitants.

[My Name is Gabriel/Me Llamo Gabriela: The Life of Gabriela Mistral/La vida de Gabriela Mistral](#)

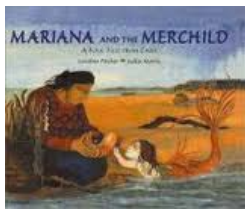
by Monica Brown | Ages 4 and up.



Gabriela Mistral loved words and sounds and stories. Born in Chile, she would grow to become the first Nobel Prize-winning Latina woman in the world. As a poet and a teacher, she inspired children across many countries to let their voices be heard. This beautifully crafted story, where words literally come to life, is told with the rhythm and melody of a poem. The second in Luna Rising's bilingual storybook biography series. My Name is Gabriela/Me llamo Gabriela is beautiful tribute to a woman who taught us the power of words and the importance of following our dreams. The story of Gabriela Mistral will continue to inspire children everywhere.

[Mariana and the Merchild: A Folk Tale from Chile](#)

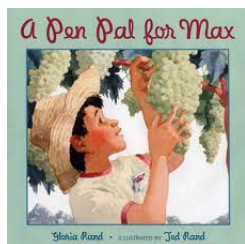
by Caroline Pitcher. Ages 5 and up



Old Mariana longs for friendship, but she is feared by the village children and fearful of the hungry sea-wolves that hide in the sea-caves near her hut. When one day Marianna finds a Merchild inside a crab shell her whole life changes- but she knows that one day, when the sea is calm again, the Merchild's mother will come to take her back. A memorable story of unconditional love, this poetic retelling of a traditional South American folk tale beautifully conveys the joy that may come if you open your heart to what you cannot keep.

[A Pen Pal for Max](#)

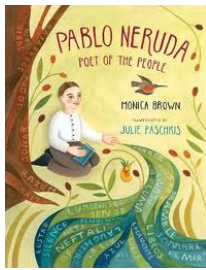
by Gloria Rand and Ted Rand. Ages 5 and up



Max doesn't know what to expect when he slips a note into a box of grapes headed to the United States, so he is thrilled when he receives a response from a girl named Maggie. The two quickly become pen pals. Then one day Max's village in Chile is hit by a huge earthquake, and his school must be closed because of damages. When the school finally reopens, a surprise is waiting for Max from his faraway friends.

[Pablo Neruda: Poet of the People](#)

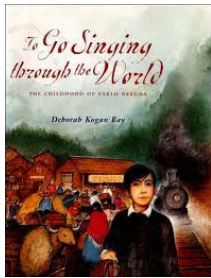
by Monica Brown. Ages 6 and up



Once there was a little boy named Neftalí who loved wild things wildly and quiet things quietly. From the moment he could talk, he surrounded himself with words. Neftalí discovered the magic between the pages of books. When he was sixteen, he began publishing his poems as Pablo Neruda. Pablo wrote poems about the things he loved—things made by his friends in the café, things found at the marketplace, and things he saw in nature. He wrote about the people of Chile and their stories of struggle. Because above all things and above all words, Pablo Neruda loved people.

[To Go Singing Through the World: The Childhood of Pablo Neruda](#)

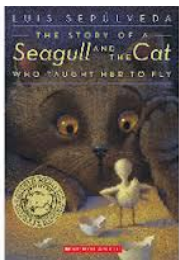
by Deborah Kogan Ray | Ages 8 and up



Pablo Neruda grew up in the rough and wild frontier town of Temuco, Chile. His father was a railroad man and not inclined to draw out the introspective boy. However, his stepmother, descended from the Mapuche people, was gentle and nurturing and told him stories of Chile's native people. But in her husband's presence, she was as silent as Pablo. So the child found refuge in nature and in books. And secretly he wrote down his thoughts. With the encouragement of Gabriela Mistral, an award-winning poet, teacher, and friend, Neruda's writing grew resonant and powerful. At age sixteen he left Temuco for the university in Santiago and went on to become the "people's poet" and to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

[The Story of the Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly](#)

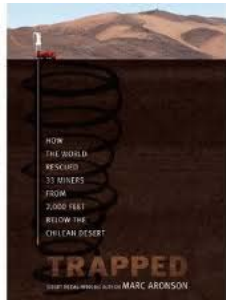
by Luis Sepúlveda. Ages 8 and up



It's migration time and as a mother gull dives into the water to catch a herring she's caught in an oil slick! Thinking of the egg she is about to lay she manages to extract herself and fly to the nearest port. Exhausted, she lands on a balcony where Zorba the cat is sunning himself. Zorba wants to get help, but the gull knows it's too late and she extracts three promises from him: 1) That he won't eat the egg, 2) that he'll take care of the chick until it hatches, and 3) that he'll teach it to fly. Well the first two are hard enough, but the third one is surely impossible. Isn't it?

[Trapped: How the World Rescued 33 Miners from 2,000 Feet Below the Chilean Desert](#)

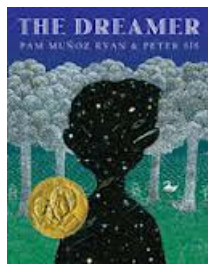
by Marc Aronson | Ages 10 and up



In early August 2010, the unthinkable happened when a mine collapsed in Copiapó, Chile, and 33 miners were trapped 2,000 feet below the surface. For sixty-nine days they lived on meager resources and increasingly poor air quality. When they were finally rescued, the world watched with rapt attention and rejoiced in the amazing spirit and determination of the miners. What could have been a terrible tragedy became an amazing story of survival. Now, with exclusive interviews with rescuers and expert commentary, Marc Aronson brings us the backstory behind this incredible event. By tracing the psychological, physical, and environmental factors surrounding the rescue, *Trapped* highlights the amazing technology and helping hands that made it all possible. From the Argentinean soccer players who hoped to raise morale, to NASA volunteering their expertise to come up with a plan, there was no shortage of enterprising spirit when it came to saving lives.

[The Dreamer](#)

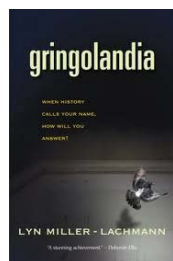
by Pam Muñoz Ryan. Ages 10 and up



From the time he is a young boy, Neftali hears the call of a mysterious voice. He knows he must follow it—even when the neighborhood children taunt him, and when his harsh, authoritarian father ridicules him, and when he doubts himself. It leads him under the canopy of the lush rain forest, into the fearsome sea, and through the persistent Chilean rain, until finally, he discovers its source. Combining elements of magical realism with biography, poetry, literary fiction, and sensorial, transporting illustrations, Pam Muñoz Ryan and Peter Sís take readers on a rare journey of the heart and imagination.

[Gringolandia](#)

by Lynn Miller Lachman. Ages 14 and up



Daniel's *papá*, Marcelo, used to play soccer, dance the *cueca*, and drive his kids to school in a beat-up green taxi—all while publishing an underground newspaper that exposed Chile's military regime. After *papá's* arrest in 1980, Daniel's family fled to the United States. Now Daniel has a new life, playing guitar in a rock band and dating Courtney, a minister's daughter. He hopes to become a US citizen as soon as he turns eighteen. When Daniel's father is released and rejoins his family, they see what five years of prison and torture have done to him. Marcelo is partially paralyzed, haunted by nightmares, and bitter about being exiled to "Gringolandia." Daniel worries that Courtney's scheme to start a bilingual human rights

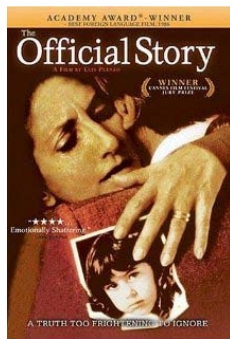
newspaper will rake up *papá*'s past and drive him further into alcohol abuse and self-destruction. Daniel dreams of a real father-son relationship, but he may have to give up everything simply to save his *papá*'s life. This powerful coming-of-age story portrays an immigrant teen's struggle to reach his tortured father and find his place in the world.

FILMS

The following films can be used in parts or their entirety to teach about different facets of Chilean history and society.

The Official Story

Rated R. In Spanish with English subtitles

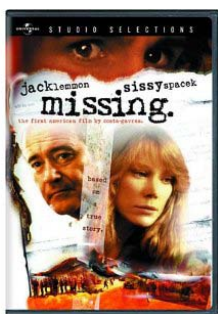


This film takes place in Argentina, but tells a story similar to what many experienced in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship.

An Argentine teacher lives in blissful ignorance of the evils perpetrated by her country's government. Over time, however, her students' rejection of the "official" versions of their history leads her to question things herself. Suspecting that her adopted daughter may have been the child of a murdered political prisoner, she attempts to unearth the truth. But her investigation reveals levels of political corruption so abhorrent that the illusions of her past life are irrevocably shattered.

Missing

Rated PG. In English

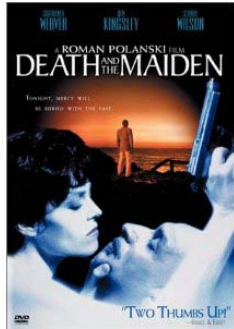


The peril facing a lone American amid Third World political turmoil is elegantly communicated in this important film from Costa-Gavras (Z), adapted by the director and Donald Stewart from Thomas Hauser's nonfiction book. The key to its power onscreen stems from the decision not to center the action merely on the disappearance of Charles Horman (John Shea), but also on the search for him by his father Ed (Jack Lemmon)--and on Ed's discovery of a son he never knew. The Oscar-winning script flows freely between that search and Charles's earlier experiences in the unnamed country (in the true account, Chile). Providing a link between those two stories is Charles's wife Beth (Sissy Spacek), who follows her father-in-law around a country in chaos, teeming with reckless authority and disinterested American diplomats (epitomized by ace character actor David Clennon). The film, which was nominated for a Best Picture Oscar and won the Cannes Film Festival's top prize, is certainly manipulative, but it works because of its finely detailed human elements. Usually emotionally

extroverted, Lemmon gives one of his finest performances playing against that type--here, he's a controlled, intellectual man who learns more about his son, and his country, than he ever dreamed he would. --*Doug Thomas*

Death and the Maiden

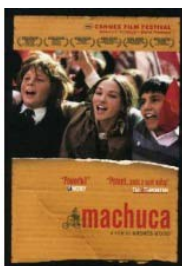
Rated R. In English



Roman Polanski's film adaptation of Ariel Dorfman's stunning [play](#) about the legacy of torture has more in common with the director's first film, *Knife in the Water* (with all the latter's unnerving ambiguities about power, sexual transgression, and confused alliances among three people) than a straightforward political parable. Sigourney Weaver (a bit underwhelming in this role, but good overall) plays a former political prisoner in an unnamed South American country that has gone democratic. She is married to a government official (fine work by Stuart Wilson) heading up official inquiries into the practice of torture under the former regime. Still shattered by her experience, Weaver's character seeks safe haven in closets of the cliff-top house she shares with her husband. But when the latter comes home in the company of a seemingly nice fellow (a brilliant Ben Kingsley), she believes she recognizes the stranger as the interrogator who raped her repeatedly in prison. She violently takes him hostage, and what ensues is a hurricane of fury and confusion, as Kingsley's terrified character denies all accusations, Wilson's guilt-ridden spouse can't decide whom to defend, and Weaver turns her psychosexual rage into a weapon of humiliation. Dorfman adapted the screenplay himself, but there's no question that Polanski is leading us down a familiar path of human betrayal and terror that he crossed in such films as *Rosemary's Baby*, *Repulsion*, and *Bitter Moon*. At times stunning in its bluntness and compelling to the last, *Death and the Maiden* literally takes us to the edge of oblivion, where--in Polanski's films--the hardest truths always seem to fall into a heretofore unknown perspective. --*Tom Keogh*

Machuca

Not Rated. In Spanish with English subtitles



Set in Chile, 1973, this is an astonishingly intimate and painful coming-of-age story about a pair of 12-year-old boys from opposite extremes of society who form an unlikely friendship during the last days of President Allende and the first days of Pinochet. The potent events are accompanied by a searingly beautiful soundtrack with heart-stopping beats that propel the drama of the story.

El Clavel Negro: The Black Pimpernel

Rated PG. In Spanish with English subtitles



Santiago, Chile, September 11th, 1973. Allende is overthrown. The film is based on the true life of Swedish ambassador Harald Edelstam (Michael Nyqvist) and his struggle to help Chilean refugees. During the panic after the State Coup, Edelstam fought for human rights, justice, and dignity. What drove him? What price did he have to pay for his total commitment? Haunted by his past, we follow the search of a man's desperate account to find true love again. Saving thousands of people persecuted by the new regime, Edelstam finds himself and his true love, Consuelo (Kate del Castillo).

Dawson Isla 10

Not Rated.



After the 1973 coup that deposed Allende and brought Pinochet to power in Chile, the former members of his cabinet are imprisoned on Dawson Island, the world's southernmost concentration camp. Veteran filmmaker Miguel Littin follows the ordeal of these men who are determined to survive and provide history with their testimony. *Written by [Palm Springs International Film Festival](#)*

Gringuito

Not Rated. In Spanish with English subtitles



Gringuito is the story of a young child that is uprooted from his New York home and forced to move back to Chile with his parents. He has always lived in New York and feels totally out of place the day his parents settle in to their new apartment in Santiago, Chile. Ivan, the Gringuito, considers his parents return very disappointing and feels that his mother's pregnancy will also take attention away from him and cause him to lose his "exclusivity". Shortly after moving in, he decides to runaway and gets involved with "El Flaco", who looks after Ivan and for whom he develops a true friendship. Ivan's experiences develop into a young boy's rite of passage and lead him to a poignant encounter with Chile.

Comparing Herstories

The Arpilleristas of Chile and
African American Women Quilters in the U.S.



Pictured: Violeta Morales, Justice, 2006.
Collection of Marjorie Agosin. Photograph by Addison Doty.

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INTRODUCTION

These resources have been created to support teachers in implementing The Making History Series: “Stitching Truth: Women’s Protest Art in Pinochet’s Chile” from Facing History and Ourselves.

“Stitching Truth: Women’s Protest Art in Pinochet’s Chile” includes a series of readings and comprehension questions to help students learn both about the history of Chile and the use of art as a form of political protest. Facing History and Ourselves has also provided complementary lesson plans on their website.

You can access both “Stitching Truth: Women’s Protest Art in Pinochet’s Chile” and the complementary lesson plans at <http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/publications/bordando-la-verdad-arte-de->. Additional supplementary materials including activities to accompany “Stitching Truth: Women’s Protest Art in Pinochet’s Chile” and descriptions of book and film resources for teaching about Chile in the classroom can be found at <http://laili.unm.edu/outreach/lesson.php>.

These materials were developed in conjunction with “**Bringing An Art Form to Life in the Classroom,**” a professional development workshop for K-12 educators that was co-sponsored by the Latin American & Iberian Institute at the University of New Mexico and the National Hispanic Cultural Center (NHCC). The workshop was held on March 19, 2013, at the NHCC in Albuquerque, New Mexico. For more information on these organizations, please visit <http://laili.unm.edu> and <http://www.nhcc.org>, respectively. The workshop was organized to explore teaching about the exhibition, “Stitching Resistance: The History of Chilean Arpilleras,” on view at the NHCC from October 19, 2012 through January, 2014. The intent of this powerful and extensive exhibit is to help illuminate the artistry and the history of *arpilleristas* and *arpilleras* in the hope that what happened to Chileans between 1973 and 1990 is never forgotten. And the artists who stitched it forever recognized.

The purpose of this workshop was not only to demonstrate hands-on ways to bring the content of this exhibition into the classroom, but also to explore the possible connections one could make between the *arpilleristas*’ social movement in Chile and the history of African-American quilting in the United States. Superficially speaking, these two topics may seem to have very little in

common, yet when one delves a little deeper quite a few commonalities emerge—for example, art and craft as social protest, women’s social movements, or story-telling through art.

The materials below provide information and resources to help teachers discuss these connections in the classroom. Included first is a short overview of the significance of arpilleras in Chilean history. The rest of the materials focus on quilting: its history, significance for women, and role in the African-American community. Print resources and links to relevant websites are provided throughout.

STITCHING RESISTANCE: THE HISTORY OF CHILEAN ARPILLERAS

The following background information was provided courtesy of the National Hispanic Cultural Center Art Museum. For a more in-depth discussion of the history and politics surrounding the arpilleras, please see our related guide, “*Stitching Resistance: Supplementary Materials for Teaching about Chilean Arpilleras.*”

INTRODUCTION

When the armed forces of Chile overthrew the administration of Salvador Allende nearly forty years ago now, the *arpillera* suddenly became much more than a charming and quaint appliqué, embroidery, or patchwork depiction of everyday life by Chilean and Peruvian women. September 11, 1973 created the necessary conditions in which this art form was born and soon the *arpillera* became the most visual (and visible), poignant, and widespread manifestation of opposition to authoritarianism, violation of human rights, the disappearance of loved ones—all things associated with the violation of human rights of the military government that ruled Chile until 1990.

Arpilleras are a powerful art form. Layers of sackcloth or burlap fabric (*arpillera*) were joined, principally through applique, to create multi-dimensional (in layers and meaning) works of protest and resistance. *Arpillera* the burlap cloth became the preferred medium for resistance and protest because the material was easily obtained and inexpensive. Appliqué, embroidery, and patchwork were traditional skills of women, the widows and mothers—whose families were destroyed in the months and years following the *golpe de estado* of September 11, 1973. Their artistry with humble cloth is vibrant testimony: history in textile form, every bit as compelling as any other of the visual media. The detail and composition of the works can be simple or intricate. Each one tells a story; each one conveys a message.

The exhibition, *Stitching Resistance: The History of Chilean Arpilleras*, is a result of an intense collaboration by poets, artists, scholars, and curators. Its intent is to help illuminate the artistry and the history of *arpilleristas* and *arpilleras* in the hope that what happened to Chileans between 1973 and 1990 is never forgotten. And the artists who stitched it forever recognized.

SEWING STORIES: THE HISTORY OF QUILTING AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

INTRODUCTION

Above, we wrote of arpilleras: “Their artistry with humble cloth is vibrant testimony: history in textile form, every bit as compelling as any other of the visual media. The detail and composition of the works can be simple or intricate. Each one tells a story; each one conveys a message.” I believe that we can make a very similar statement about quilting in the African American community. In *Crafted Lives: Stories and Studies of African American Quilters*, Patricia Turner discusses her own realizations on the significance of quilting. She writes about how she came to think of “the role art and craft can play in anchoring the stories that African Americans tell about themselves and their pasts. In the two decades since, I’ve come to realize that stories of individual and black collective experience can be narrated through quilts” (p. 1). Just as the arpilleras tell an important story, so do quilts. While the story they tell, and the manner in which they tell it, are different, there are enough similarities to make the comparison of quilts and arpilleras an interesting area to consider. As so many teachers already cover content areas like slavery, the Underground Railroad, and the Civil Rights Movement where a study of quilting could easily be included, a comparison study of the two art forms offers a way to bring in the story of the arpilleras.

WHAT IS A QUILT?

In order to begin a comparison, students must first have a definition of both art forms. Arpilleras are defined above. The following definition of a quilt comes from Susan Meeske’s “Quilt Me a Story” which is available at <http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/professionaldevelopment/childlit/books/MEESKE.pdf> . Meeske’s piece offers simple and straightforward background information on quilts that could even be used as supplementary reading with students.

Meeske writes, “A quilt is comprised of three layers. The top is either pieces of fabric stitched together to form a pattern or it is a solid piece of fabric. The center of a quilt contains batting or

filler. . .The final layer of a quilt is the backing. This is usually a solid piece of fabric, but some quilts do have pieced backings.”

QUILTING AS CONSTRUCTED STORIES

While quilting certainly isn't limited to African American women in the United States, that is our primary interest here, as the role of quilting in this community has significant similarities to the role of arpilleras in Chile. There are a number of easily accessible and informative resources on quilting available. Listed below are the resources used to put much of the following information together. Where possible, they have been linked to their online location.

- Fry, Gladys-Marie. (1990). *Stitched from the Soul: Slave Quilts from the Ante-Bellum South*. New York: Dutton.
- Meeske, Susan. “Quilt Me a Story.” Found at <http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/professional-development/childlit/books/MEESKE.pdf>
- Susurro, Potente. (2009). “BHM: African American Women Quilters as Herstorians and Keepers of Our Dreams.” Found at <http://likeawhisper.wordpress.com/2009/02/25/bhm-african-american-women-quilters-as-herstorians-and-keepers-of-our-dreams/>
- Turner, Patricia. (2009). *Crafted Lives: Stories and Studies of African American Quilters*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

While quilting in Africa was largely done by men, in North America it was done mainly by women. As slaves, African American women were charged with sewing, mending, and other textile work as part of household chores. Often they used discarded fabric or rags to piece together blankets for the colder months. In her book *Stitched from the Soul: Slave Quilts from the Ante-Bellum South*, Fry discusses both the art and the freedom or autonomy represented by these quilts. Meeske discusses the importance of the quilting bees that allowed slaves to gather without being watched by their owners.

Quilting was significant for women in a number of ways. Susurro provides an excellent discussion of the importance of quilting for African American women in her blog post, “[BHM: African American Women Quilters as Herstorians and Keepers of Our Dreams](http://likeawhisper.wordpress.com/2009/02/25/bhm-african-american-women-quilters-as-herstorians-and-keepers-of-our-dreams/).” Through her discussion, the similarities between the roles of both arpilleras and quilting for women become quite obvious.

She writes:

Women quilters used the symbols above as well as innovations in the form developed in the colonies, to mark down the history of their families and their struggles. They were the first African American historians and their stories were invaluable at a time in which slaves were denied literacy and colonials did not care to mark their lives except in terms of ledgers and occasional notes. Despite the fact that the WPA Slave Narratives included references to the importance of quilts (for income) and later collection as art by primarily white female collectors/educators, it was most often slave ledgers and white slave and plantation owners letters and diaries that early historians went to when writing our lives back into the historical record.

Women also used quilts to protect their families and their homes. Often words or symbols for protection were woven into quilts, particularly those that hung over doors or were meant to cover children.

Both before and after slavery, quilting provided African American women with homosocial bonds. As one of the modern quilters from the Pacific Northwest African American Quilters organization argues, quilting bees allowed African American women with limited funds an opportunity to come together and socialize after church or in the evenings with very little economic investment. . . It is also true that quilting bees have always proliferated in working class and subsistence level communities among both white and black women.

The same interviewee argued that quilting also helped secure bonds between black women in the same community through “sister quilts.” Sister quilts were done by the quilting bee to mark key rites of passage, 50th birthdays, graduations, births of children, etc., and were presented to the group member only when completed. The key elements of these quilts were a combination of personal aesthetics of the recipient and memorialized oral history of her life and/or connecting her life to larger African and African American themes. Though these quilts may have different names in other parts of the country, they are common. In my own life, my grandmother made “sister quilts” for the women in our community and in our family and when my closest friend had her first child, the first thing I thought to do was ensure she had a quilt whose symbols reflected our shared African and African American pasts as well as hopes for the baby’s future. The quilt maker who helped me put it together was absolutely familiar with the form, though she had not made one for a newborn before.

The tradition of quilting was passed on along gendered lines as well. Women learned quilting from each other including white women teaching black women during slavery, black women teaching white women especially in antebellum, and especially women passing the knowledge down from generation to generation. Most modern quilters site their mothers’ or grandmothers’ work as an inspiration for becoming quilters.

One of the most obvious connections between the role of African American quilts and arpilleras may seem to be the use of quilts as part of the Underground Railroad. Yet, this is a controversial subject that has been hotly debated within the quilting community, especially among quilting historians. Many argue that the idea that a Quilt Code was used to help direct runaway slaves is merely a myth. Again, I'm going to defer to Susurro's discussion of this debate. Not only does she explain the controversy, but she also shows how, regardless of the truth of the Quilt Code, it's now an important part of the dialogue.

Susurro writes:

There has been much controversy over whether or not quilts symbols were used along the Underground Railroad. There are two major proponents of the theory, Gladys-Marie Fry's book *Stitched from the Soul* and Tobin and Dobard's *Hidden in Plain View*. Fry's book argued that the color black meant refuge, triangles indicated prayer, etc. but offers no substantial citations for her deductions. Tobin's book is based on the report of an African American quilter who remembered a history of using quilt patterns as a way to escape slavery; according to some, the quilter was hounded by Tobin for "meaning in her quilts" and by others that her "quilt code" was given freely. This matters b/c it goes to the credibility of the account and the role of informant as possible trickster; unfortunately, Tobin's source died before the book went to print. The patterns in question. . .include "Bear's Paw" to follow animal tracks north through the Appalachians, "Flying Geese" as other escapees, "Drunkard's Path" is the erratic route, and other patterns meaning wheels, cabins, crossroads, etc. There were also symbols in the stitching and tying of quilts. There were no actual quilts made just the memorization of pre-existing quilt patterns as a remembered road map to freedom. Tobin and Dobard argue that this symbolic language would be in keeping with other maps to freedom like "negro" spirituals. Despite criticism from quilt historians about the utter lack of textile evidence for such a story, Tobin and Dobard remind that slaves did not make, carry, or look for quilts but rather memorized quilt patterns.

The dispute seems to stem largely from a lack of evidence in the textiles themselves, pattern dating that precludes certain pattern use, and leaps of logic that do not leave room for existing ambiguities in the known record. (see link for a list of historian and quilter criticisms of the quilt code [here](#) – scroll past the yellow block text to the actual documented piece) Others have argued that the confusion comes from popular names for patterns like the "under ground railroad pattern". . . Names related to slavery and freedom cropped up in antebellum and may have fused with oral histories of escape to create a "quilt code" after the fact. There are also stories of Tubman giving a quilt to an abolitionist, though no mention of a quilt code. Also fictional accounts of the quilt code were published in both children's and young adult literature, and some historians have argued that people wanting to make money manipulated the fiction(s) to turn them into fact.

What is important for this post is that regardless of whether these symbols were actually used in the railroad, they have become a part of modern symbolic language among some African American quilters. In the modern version, these elements are used to tell the story of escape to freedom, in quilts honoring Tubman, or as border art in quilts connecting our past to our present. In this way, they serve a new purpose that can be deconstructed through the quilt code but do not necessarily have to reflect an actual historical reality or worse “exotica” for capitalist gain. Instead they can be seen as reterritorialization from a largely white imaginary of black quilting forms into one of African American storytelling, like the Penny Sisto quilt to the right that frames Tubman with the supposed symbol for safe house. As elements of modern herstory technique they remain significant and need to be recognizable to those analyzing quilt content.

Despite (or maybe because of) the controversy, the idea of the Quilt Code can be a powerful lesson for our students. A number of children’s books have been written about the Quilt Code, and it’s a valuable discussion for the classroom. In examining the arguments for or against the reality of a Quilt Code students can learn how historians study and examine the past to come to conclusions about what is historical reality. Even beyond this, it’s important for students to consider why or how historical myths come to be presented as truth, and why they become so powerful.

Below are listed various books and lesson plans for teaching about the connection between quilting and the Underground Railroad. Keeping in mind the controversy surrounding this topic, it will be up to you how you present the information provided in the books and lessons to your students.

RELATED BOOKS

- Grady, Cynthia. (2012). *I Lay My Stitches Down: Poems of American Slavery*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman’s Books for Young Readers.
- Hopkinson, Deborah (1993). *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*. New York: Scholastic.
- Hopkinson, Deborah (2001). *Under the Quilt of Night*. New York: Atheneum Books.
- Vaughn, Marcia (2005). *The Secret to Freedom*. New York: Lee and Low Books.

RELATED LESSON PLANS

- [Mathwire.com](http://mathwire.com) has a number of lesson ideas and resources related to the Freedom Quilts and their mathematical patterns. These can be found at <http://mathwire.com/quilts/quilts.html>
- [Really Good Stuff](#) provides a number of ideas for how to teach about the connection between the Underground Railroad and the Quilt Code. Students study the Underground

Railroad by learning about the quilts—and the secret escape codes quilters stitched into them to guide their people to freedom. Included here are a number of templates that can be used to teach various quilting patterns. Lessons and resources can be found at <http://page.reallygoodstuff.com/pdfs/154227.pdf>

- [ReadWriteThink](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/escaping-slavery-sweet-clara-127.html) has a lesson plan for using *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* in the classroom. This can be found at <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/escaping-slavery-sweet-clara-127.html>
- At <http://ses.westport.k12.ct.us/squire/ivdivsquares.htm> find pictures and explanations of the Quilt Code Squares.

THE ARPILLERISTA AND THE QUILTER: COMPARATIVE POEM ANALYSIS

In our related guide, “Stitching Resistance: Supplementary Materials for Teaching about Chilean Arpilleras,” we created an activity based upon Marjorie Agosín’s poem “The Arpillerista.” This activity is also included in this guide through the comparative poetry lesson below. For this guide, we’ve included another poem, “Basket” taken from *I Lay My Stitches Down: Poems of American Slavery*, written by Cynthia Grady and illustrated by Michele Wood.

Through analyzing the two poems, students gain knowledge both in literary analysis and historical content. In comparing the two poems for similarities and differences, students deepen their knowledge of these two historical periods and art forms. Some background knowledge of the two contexts will be necessary for students to complete the analysis.

Suggested questions for analysis:

1. What symbols are included in both poems?
2. How does sewing become a form of resistance in each poem?
3. In each poem, the arpillera or the quilt represents a way to tell the artist’s story or history, to connect them to her past. How does each author communicate this?
4. How does the practice of creating the art (the arpillera or quilt) help the artist to heal or feel better about their situation?

<p>The arpillerista</p> <p>The arpillerista, artisan of remains burns with rage and cold as she tenderly picks through the remnants of her dead, salvages the shroud of her husband the trousers left after the absences submerges herself in cloth of foaming, silent blood and though she is fragile she grows large, sovereign over her adobe hut, her ragged scraps and determined to tell her story truer than the tale woven by her sister Philomena. Disruptive and beautiful she puts together her flayed remnants like a greenish forgotten skin and with her disguised thimble hidden in the pocket of her modest apron and her harmless needle</p>	<p>“Basket”</p> <p>Each night I take my patches, blocks, and scraps of fabric from the basket by the chair; my thimble, thread and needle comfort me. I lay my stiches down and troubles fall away. Before too long, I’m breathing with the rhythm of my quilting—listening wide with every fiber of my soul: the praise songs of my people; voices of my kin; drumbeats of my motherland form the threads that weave the fabric of my life.</p> <p>— Cynthia Grady <i>I Lay My Stitches Down: Poems of American Slavery</i></p>
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<p>she conjures up victorious armies embroiders humble people smiling, become triumphant brings the dead back to life fabricates water, bell towers, schools, dining rooms giant suns and the Cordillera of the Andes peaks opening like portals of this splendid city.</p> <p>—</p> <p>Marjorie Agosín Scrap of Life: Chilean Arpilleras</p>	
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THE ARPILLERISTA: POEM ANALYSIS

The following activity guides students through an analysis of Marjorie Agosín’s Poem “The Arpillera” (see above; taken from “Stitching Truth: Women’s Protest Art in Pinochet’s Chile” and *Scrap of Life: Chilean Arpilleras*).

Agosín’s poem offers an excellent way to bridge literacy with content area studies. Through analyzing the poem, students gain both knowledge of this period of Chilean history, but also experience in practicing literary analysis of poetry. Since students would need at least some understanding of the historical period in order to complete the analysis, this is an activity best done after the unit has already been introduced. It could even be used as an assessment activity at the end of the unit to gauge student knowledge.

1. What is an arpillerista? Agosín defines the arpillerista as “artisan of remains.” What does this mean within the Chilean context?
2. How does an arpillerista “burn” with *cold*? What does the cold represent? (s. 1 v. 3)
3. What is a shroud? (s. 1 v. 6)
4. Why do you think Agosín uses all of the allusions to fabric? (remnants, trousers, ragged scraps)
5. Who is Philomena? (s. 1 v. 13) Why is she relevant to the poem?
6. Who are the “victorious armies”? (s. 2 v. 7)
7. What does it mean to “bring the dead back to life” in the context of the arpilleras? (s. 2 v. 9)

Stitching in the Classroom

Creating a Simplified Arpillera



Pictured: Violeta Morales, Justice, 2006.
Collection of Marjorie Agosin. Photograph by Addison Doty.

INTRODUCTION

The following lesson plan was developed in conjunction with “**Bringing An Art Form to Life in the Classroom,**” a professional development workshop for K-12 educators that was co-sponsored by the Latin American & Iberian Institute at the University of New Mexico and the National Hispanic Cultural Center (NHCC). The workshop was held on March 19, 2013, at the NHCC in Albuquerque, New Mexico. For more information on these organizations, please visit <http://laii.unm.edu> and <http://www.nhcc.org>, respectively.

The workshop was organized to explore teaching about the exhibition, “Stitching Resistance: The History of Chilean Arpilleras,” on view at the NHCC from October 19, 2012 through January, 2014. The intent of this powerful and extensive exhibit is to help illuminate the artistry and the history of *arpilleristas* and *arpilleras* in the hope that what happened to Chileans between 1973 and 1990 is never forgotten. And the artists who stitched it forever recognized.

For additional teaching resources developed around this exhibit, visit the following website: http://www.laii.unm.edu/workshops/2013-03-19_stitching-resistance-bringing-an-art-form-to-life-in-the-classroom.php

Stitching in the Classroom

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students identify a social issue either in contemporary global society or within a specific historical period and then design and create an arpillera which comments on or illustrates that issue.

Suggested Grade Level

9th to 12th grade; can be adapted for elementary and middle school students.

MATERIALS

Activity Duration

90 minutes (minimum)

- Fabric (felt is recommended), embroidery thread, needles, scissors
- *Optional:* safety pins or straight pins, beads, found objects, sewing thread
- *Adaptation:* for younger students, provide pre-cut shapes (circles, rectangles, squares, triangles) to speed design and construction process

ACTIVITY

Warm Up

To prepare students for the main activity, brainstorm social issues which are relevant to the time period and/or country being addressed. Brainstorming can happen in large or small groups. Record this list on the board.

Ask each student to choose a social issue to illustrate through simple pictorial representation with a minimal amount of text. Encourage or require students to draft their design using paper and pencil before moving to fabric.

Suggestion: Ask students to submit their design before providing instruction on stitches and *arpillera* construction. Perhaps, allow students to work in small groups to provide each other feedback on designs before moving to fabric.

Main Activity

Provide students with fabric scraps to learn and practice stitches before moving to their *arpillera* construction. Teach students three basic stitches using embroidery thread: blanket stitch, outline stitch and satin stitch. Discuss how each element/figure in quilting and textile work is usually created by using smaller geometric shapes.

Provide each student with a large piece of fabric (approximately 9 in x 12 in) and an assortment of smaller pieces of fabric to create their illustration through fabric. Ask students to completely create and assemble their *arpillera* in pieces before beginning any stitching! Allow sufficient time for students to assemble and embellish their *arpilleras* either during class time or as homework.

Follow through:

Ask students to write a short narrative description about their completed *arpillera*.

SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT

Students can write three short narrative descriptions about the *arpilleras* of three classmates.