**MY MOTHER PIECED QUILTS**

they were just meant as covers

in winters

as weapons

against pounding january winds

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

these strips of gentle communion cotton and flannel

nightgowns

wedding organdies

dime store velvets

how you shaped patterns square and oblong and round

positioned

balanced

then cemented them

with your thread

a steel needle

a thimble

how the thread darted in and out

galloping along the frayed edges, tucking them in

as you did us at night

oh how you stretched and turned and re-arranged

your michigan spring faded curtain pieces

my father's santa fe work shirt

the summer denims, the tweed of fall

in the evening you sat at your canvas

---our cracked linoleum floor the drawing board

me lounging on your arm

and you staking out the plan;

whether to put the lilac purple of easter against the red

plaid of winter-going-

into-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

somber black silk you wore to grandmother's funeral.

You were the river current

carrying the roaring notes…

forming them into pictures of a little boy reclining

a swallow flying

You were the caravan master at the reins

driving your thread needle artillery across the mosaic

cloth bridges

delivering yourself in separate testimonies

oh mother you plunged me sobbing and laughing

into our past

into the river crossing at five

into the spinach fields

into the plainview cotton rows

into tuberculosis wards

into braids and muslin dresses

sewn hard and taut to withstand the thrashings of

twenty-five years

stretched out they lay

armed/ready/shouting/celebrating

knotted with love

the quilts sing on

~ Teresa Palomo Acosta

**SOAPSTone: A Close Reading of a Text**

**Title of Text**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SOAPSTone** | **Response** | **Textual Support**  **(Quotations from the Text)** |
| **S**peaker:  Who is the speaker? What does the reader know about the speaker? |  |  |
| **O**ccasion:  What are the circumstances surrounding this text? |  |  |
| **A**udience:  Who is the target or intended audience? |  |  |
| **P**urpose:  What is the message of the text? Why did the author write this text? |  |  |
| **S**ubject:  What is the text about?  What is the theme? |  |  |
| **T**one:  What is the speaker’s attitude toward the subject? |  |  |

**Guided Reading Questions for “My Mother Pieced Quilts”**

**Guided Reading Questions for “My Mother Pieced Quilts”**

* **Read the poem aloud together.**
* **Share ideas from the SOAPSTone charts you completed for homework.**
* **Discuss the questions in your small group. (Use a dictionary if necessary.)**
* **Record the group’s responses on one sheet.**
* **Be prepared to share answers in large group.**

1. **Stanza 1**—What are quilts usually used for? What consonant sounds are repeated in these lines?

2. **Stanza 2**—Quote the words the speaker uses to make the quilts seem like they’re alive?

3. Search the **whole poem**. List all the fabrics the speaker’s mother used to piece quilts. Where did these fabrics come from?

4. **Stanza 3**—List the verbs. What feeling(s) or idea(s) do these verbs suggest when you consider them all together?

5. **Stanza 4**—How is the mother’s quilt-making compared to the way she cared for her children “at night”?

6. **Stanza 6**—What are testimonies? How are the quilt pieces “separate testimonies”?

7. **Stanzas 8 and 9**—In your own words, what is the speaker expressing/saying in the last two stanzas of the poem? What is the tone?

**Guided Reading Questions for “My Mother Pieced Quilts”**

* **Read the poem aloud together.**
* **Share ideas from the SOAPSTone charts you completed for homework.**
* **Discuss the questions in your small group. (Use a dictionary if necessary.)**
* **Record the group’s responses on one sheet.**
* **Be prepared to share answers in large group.**

1. **Stanza 1**—What are quilts usually used for? What consonant sounds are repeated in these lines?

2. **Stanza 2**—Quote the words the speaker uses to make the quilts seem like they’re alive?

3. Search the **whole poem**. List all the fabrics the speaker’s mother used to piece quilts. Where did these fabrics come from?

4. **Stanza 3**—List the verbs. What feeling(s) or idea(s) do these verbs suggest when you consider them all together?

5. **Stanza 4**—How is the mother’s quilt-making compared to the way she cared for her children “at night”?

6. **Stanza 6**—What are testimonies? How are the quilt pieces “separate testimonies”?

7. **Stanzas 8 and 9**—In your own words, what is the speaker expressing/saying in the last two stanzas of the poem? What is the tone?