**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**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| **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”**

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* **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?

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