



Grade Level: K-4

Essential Skills: 1, 4, 5, 7, 9

NGSS: K-LS1-1, 5-ESS3-1

CCSS: W.K.7, W.5.8, W.5.9

Arts: MA.11.CO2.K,
MA.11.CO2.1, MA.11.CO2.2,
MA.11.CO2.3, MA.8.RE2.K,
MA.8.RE2.1, MA.8.RE2.2,
MA.8.RE2.3, MA.7.RE1.4,
MA.8.RE2.4, MA.11.CO2.4,
VA.10.CO1.K, VA.10.CO1.1
VA.10.CO1.2, VA.10.CO1.3,
VA.11.CO2.4

Social Science: K.G.HI.6,
1.H.CP.4, 2.H.CP.6, 3.C.IR.4,

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials (*AITC provided):

- **Zora's Zucchini* book by Katherine Pryor
- *Barn Quilt kit (cut template pieces and mounting template)
- *Videos (see links in "Extension Activities"):
 - "Barn Quilt Trail of Washington County"
 - "Katherine Pryor Introduces the Fall Literacy Project"
- *Example Barn Quilt photograph (included in this lesson)
- Drawing tools: crayons, markers, etc.
- Tape or other adhesive

Lesson to Grow

Barn Quilt Trails: Stories of Food, History, and Community

Description:

This activity introduces students to barn quilt trails and how they can represent the agricultural history and community food systems of the area in which they are found. Begin by reading Katherine Pryor's, *Zora's Zucchini*, followed by the collaborative class barn quilt art activity.

Background:

Agriculture is a big word that can mean a lot, so it's helpful to think of it in terms of the "6 F's": Farming, Food, Fiber, Forestry, Fishing, and Flowers. In agriculture, food is important because it sustains us, and many farmers focus their practices on producing food. For many communities, production of food is an important part of local history. Barn quilts, then, can be a visual way for farmers to tell the stories of food production in their community. Quilting is a hands-on craft that has been around for a long time. Quilts are blankets made up of many fabric squares, each one a collection of stories, messages, colors, and patterns. In the United States, barn quilts have been around for almost 300 years¹. Inspired by the sewn squares that make up a quilt, people started painting large, unique quilt squares to hang on their barns as a way to tell stories and share information, such as where certain families live, what crops are grown, travel directions, or advertisements. The first barn quilt trail was started in Ohio back in the year 2001, and today, many states have barn quilt trails, including Oregon¹. A barn quilt trail is simply all of the barn quilts in an area, in which you can travel along to look at the individual pieces. Maps of barn quilt trails allow people to travel around and locate the squares as they are displayed on barns, homes, businesses, and even community centers. Each barn quilt trail is unique to its community.

Now, barn quilt squares may have symbols or images showing the types of crops grown, important events, and even special memories of the people who painted them. Sometimes, a barn quilt design is simple, made up of many colored triangles or squares. Sometimes the barn quilt looks like a familiar item such as corn, a tractor, or strawberry. In the Tualatin Valley, for example, there are almost 60 barn quilt squares²!



The Jossy Farm barn quilt on display, located in Hillsboro, Oregon.



AITC Library Resources:
**Check out these materials
on our Lending Library:**

Books

- *Zora's Zucchini*
- *Outdoor Farm, Indoor Farm*
- *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story*

Lessons

- *Source Relay*
- *Farm Web*
- *6 F's of Agriculture*
- *Grown in Oregon* map
- *Grown in Washington County* map

Lesson to Grow

Learning Goals:

1. As a group, students will define the word "**community**" and how it relates to food.
2. Students will learn as a class the ways to build community through food sharing practices and systems.
3. Students will learn what a barn quilt trail is and its significance to a farming community.
4. Students will collaborate as a class to create a barn quilt square.

Activity Directions:

Part 1: Community Food Systems

1. Start by asking students if they have heard the word **community**, inviting them to share aloud what they think it means. Clarify for students that **community** can be like **family** by meaning some or many people who may share interests, work together, and have similar goals. But community doesn't happen on its own, people help to make it that way.
2. Expand on the question by then inviting students to think about where food shows up in community. Ask: How can growing and sharing food help to build community? Validate answers and expand on those offered by describing how growing and sharing food helps our community by also:
 - Sharing cultures and favorite recipes
 - Helping to teach each other how to grow food
 - Creating jobs and supporting local shops
 - Making sure no one goes hungry
3. After sharing ideas about food in community, tell students that we can learn more about growing and sharing food by reading the book, *Zora's Zucchini*. Optional: First, watch the included video, "Katherine Pryor Introduction to the Fall Literacy Project" (linked [here](#) and full link provided in "Extension Activities").
4. After reading the story to the class, ask them the following questions:
 - What problem was Zora trying to solve?
 - What happened when Zora shared her extra zucchini?
 - Where in your community have you seen or heard of people sharing food in the ways that Zora did?

Part 2: Barn Quilts and Trails

1. Next, while displaying the included photograph of the Twin Fir Century Farm quilt:
 - Explain: Farmers grow and share food with their community, near and far, and they might celebrate by creating and displaying a barn quilt.
 - Ask: Have any of you seen or heard of barn quilts? What do you think this one means? Do you think there is a special story behind it?
 - Explain: Quilts are blankets that people have been sewing for a long time, and are made of many pieces of fabric sewn together. A barn quilt is a picture that might come from a quilt, which is painted onto wood and then hung up on a barn or other building.

Directions continued:

... When a farmer or other community member wants to have a barn quilt on their barn or other building, they will think of a picture that's special to them and use it on their square. Their community works together to hang up the quilt. Farmers may use a picture of something they grow, like a strawberry or corn, and others may use one that reminds them of a family member or special story. It's up to the owner what they want the square to look like. In an area like Washington County, known for having many farms and barn quilts, there is a barn quilt trail where you can travel around and look at the many barn quilts. A barn quilt trail tells a story of a community's history, including who has lived there and how they got there, the crops grown, and other important memories shared by the people who live there.

2. Tell students that they will now get to watch a short video to learn from some people in Oregon about their barn quilts. Watch the "Barn Quilt Trail of Washington County" video (linked [here](#) and full link provided in "Extension Activities"). After watching the video, ask students to share some things they learned, including:

- Which farms, stores, or people did we see in the video?
- What were some stories the people in the video shared about their quilt or community?

3. Tell students that your class is going to work together to create their very own classroom barn quilt, which will tell their story for all in their school to see. Display your barn quilt mounting template so students can see what it will look like when all of their pieces are put back together. Each student gets to decorate their own piece.

4. Take a few suggestions from the class of what they could depict on their piece of the barn quilt square, such as family, favorite plants or foods, places they have been, a pet or favorite animal, etc. Students may also free draw or use patterns to fill their piece. It will be unique to each student!

5. Distribute to each student a piece of the classroom barn quilt square, inviting them to draw or write on their piece with pictures or words of their own story. Remind them to only draw or write on the side *without* the "X" (which is the backside). Help students avoid decorating the side with an "X" as this will ensure all the pieces fit back together correctly. If a student's piece is accidentally destroyed, simply trace and cut from a matching piece.

6. Once students are done with their piece, they should return it to the teacher for them to (or collaboratively as a class) reassemble on the mounting template by using adhesive tape on the backside or glue. Your class now has a barn quilt of their own to proudly display!

7. For Washington County 2025 Fall Literacy Project participants, please *scan* or *snap a high-quality photo* of your completed class barn quilt and send to your Washington County Programs Coordinator, Anita Spaeth: anita.spaeth@oregonstate.edu

All of the completed and submitted photos of class quilts will be compiled into a poster and returned to classrooms!

Follow-up questions with students can include:

1. What is a barn quilt trail, and what are some stories (messages) it can tell about the farmers in a community?
2. Where are some places fresh food is grown? Answers may include: Farms, home gardens, in the wild, school and community gardens, fisheries, indoor farms (ex. aquaponics, hydroponics, mushroom cultivation), etc.
3. Once food is grown, where are some places it may be delivered to for people to purchase or get for free? Answers may include: Farmers market, farm stands, stores, restaurants, school, church, etc.
4. If you grew too much food, what are some ways to make use of it? How could you save the food for later?
5. What stories does the food on your plate tell about who you are, your history, or your community?
6. How can food build bridges between people and their communities?

Extension Activities:

1. Videos:
 - a. "Katherine Pryor Introduction to the Fall Literacy Project": <https://youtu.be/NfxNP-rxVFA>
 - b. "Barn Quilt Trail of Washington County": https://youtu.be/wgvH8lpN_m4
2. Grades 2-4: Extension Activity 1 (included in this lesson): *Barn Quilt Profile: Jossy Farm*
3. *Source Relay* lesson
4. "Grown in Oregon" *Map Scavenger Hunt* activity: <https://oregonaitc.org/lessonplan/grown-in-oregon-map-savenger-hunt/>
5. *Farm Web* lesson: <https://oregonaitc.org/lessonplan/farm-web/>

References:

1. Parron, S., & Groves, D.S. (2012). *Barn Quilts and the American Quilt Trail Movement*. Ohio University Press
2. Quilt Barn Trail of Oregon's Tualatin Valley website:
<https://quiltbarnswc.blogspot.com/>

Example Barn Quilt: Twin Fir Century Farm, Hillsboro, OR.

The extended Gates family gathered to help put this block up. The 5 interlocking squares represent 5 generations who have lived and worked on this farm, at 27007 NW West Union Road, Hillsboro.





Extension Activity 1: Barn Quilt Profile: Jossy Farm

Directions for Analysis and Interpretation of Visual Art

Directions:

1. For grades 2 - 4, split students into groups of three or four, or have them mix up or remain in their prearranged seated table groups and hand each group a copy of the included Jossy Farm (Hillsboro, OR) photo activity sheet.
2. Introduce students to the name of the farm and the city where it is located. As an option, invite students to then locate it on their *Grown in Washington County* map. Then ask students to work as a group to answer the following questions located on their photo activity sheet.
 - a. What do you see in this photo?
 - i. *Barn, cars, plants, sky, ground, barn quilt*
 - b. What does the picture on the barn quilt make you think of?
 - i. *Answers will vary*
 - c. What does the picture on the barn quilt tell us about what is important to the Jossy family?
 - i. *Answers will vary*
 - d. Why do you think there are different colors on the barn quilt tree? What could they mean?
 - i. *Different fruits grown on the farm***
3. Review answers with groups and provide them with the following information about the Jossy Farm barn quilt, provided by the Quilt Barn Trail of Oregon's Tualatin Valley website:

"This farm has been in the Jossy family since 1985 and is currently a commercial U-pick orchard featuring **peaches, pears and apples. The barn was built in the early 1900's. The block features a fruit tree, which was chosen by Bob Jossy to represent the fruit grown in the orchard."

Optional Extension Activity:

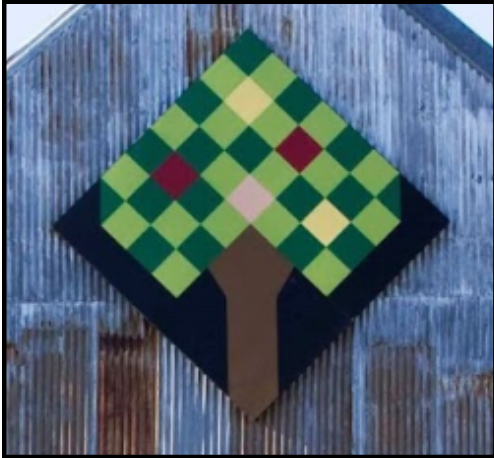
1. For grades 3 - 4 using technology (under supervision), direct students to the Quilt Barn Trail of Oregon's Tualatin Valley website to research the barn quilt trail:
<https://quiltbarnswc.blogspot.com/p/maps-of-trail.html>
2. Research questions and prompts may include:
 - a. Find 2 barn quilts that depict the same kind of crop and write the name of the farms.
 - i. What are the visual differences between the two quilts?
 - ii. What do these differences tell us about the crops or practices of the farms where they are on display?
 - b. Where is the oldest barn you can locate on the map and what is its quilt about?
 - c. Find 2 barn quilts that are at businesses or community centers and write about how those two places might be important for agriculture and the community.



Extension Activity 1: Barn Quilt Profile: Jossy Farm Worksheet

Directions:

Work as a group to answer the questions about the Jossy Farm barn quilt in Hillsboro, Oregon.



Questions:

- What do you see in this photo? Write everything!
- What does the picture on the barn quilt make you think of?
- What does the picture on the barn quilt tell us about what is important to the Jossy family?
- Why do you think there are different colors on the barn quilt tree? What could they mean?