



QUILT BLOCK POEMS

Kaleidoscope

The little time we have to call our own
be filled with gardening, feeding chickens,
mending clothes, and music making: shaking
stones in a basket, clapping hands, stomping
feet. Sometimes a banjo or fiddle be
played, or hollowed-out tree drum and washboard.
But lo, the singing! Piecing shouts here to
Bible stories there, interweaving tunes
and hollers, sing up a frenzy of
song! Be a kaleidoscope of sound: Joy.

Writing Practice - Extended Metaphor

A patchwork quilt serves as an extended metaphor for this entire collection of poetry. Each poem is named for a traditional quilt block pattern and explores that subject in relation to slavery. Then, when all taken together, the quilt metaphor allows us to understand even more about slavery, the way a whole quilt is greater than its separate blocks.

- ❖ Read aloud “Kaleidoscope.” If you have a kaleidoscope, pass it around for students to look through. Ask your students: What is a kaleidoscope? What does it do? What parts of this poem make up the kaleidoscope?
- ❖ Re-read the poem titles in this book, and have your students choose one that especially appeals to them (or any one of *hundreds* more quilt block names that you can find online and in quilt books).
- ❖ Brainstorm all of the ways the name of the block fits into the lives of your students. For example, “Birds in the Air” might yield: *migrating geese flying over the neighborhood; hummingbirds at the feeder, seagulls at the beach last summer, ducks flying down to the pond, pigeons on the roof.* List 20, 30, or 40 more ideas about birds before beginning to write.
- ❖ Next, write together, a poem comparing how birds and their actions are like something else. What two things to compare is the hard part. Start simply: *The honk of the geese is like the recess bell.*
- ❖ Now that you have the beginnings of a comparison, how else are geese and all their ways like children at recess? *The honk of the geese is like the recess bell / calling the children to gather in line.* Now keep going with this one before asking students to write one in pairs.
- ❖ The poems in *I Lay My Stitches Down* are serious, but you can get quite silly when working with metaphors!