Preparing to Read

My Mother Pieced Quilts / Sweater/Suéter

Literary Focus

Symbolism A **symbol** is a person, a place, a thing, or an event that stands for something beyond itself. Some symbols are traditional and common to a culture. We understand them because people have agreed on their meaning. For example, in this country a blindfolded woman holding scales has come to symbolize justice. In literature, however, symbols are created by the writers, and the meanings of the symbols are open to interpretation by readers.

Reading Focus

Reading Poetry Poetry is written in lines—some long and some very short. Some poets use punctuation in their lines, while others do not. When you read a poem that does not use punctuation, you have to look for the thought units. That means that you do not come to a stop at the end of every line. You have to see if the sense of the line carries over to the next line.

Into Action As you read each poem, fill in a chart like the one below with thought units. Add rows to your charts as needed.

My Mother Pieced Quilts

1st thought unit	they were meant as covers in winter
2nd thought unit	

Writing Focus

Think as a Reader/Writer

Find It in Your Reading Teresa Palomo Acosta, the writer of "My Mother Pieced Quilts," includes lists of things—especially types of fabrics—in her poem. As you read the poem, note in your *Reader/Writer Notebook* the lists of objects or images that are grouped together.

Reader/Writer Notebook

Use your **RWN** to complete the activities for these selections.

Vocabulary

My Mother Pieced Quilts

frayed (frayd) *adj.:* worn away; unraveled. *Frayed pieces of fabric are finished into a quilt.*

somber (SAHM buhr) *adj.* dark; melancholy. *She grew somber, thinking about the funeral.*

taut (tawt) *adj.:* pulled tight. *The taut thread holds the quilt together.*

Language Coach

Language Conventions Proper nouns name specific people, places, and things. In English, proper nouns are capitalized. Teresa Palomo Acosta, however, deliberately begins proper nouns, such as *January, October, Michigan, Santa Fe,* and *Easter,* with lowercase letters in her poem. After you've read the poem, stop to think why she made that choice.

Learn It Online

Develop your vocabulary with Word Watch:

go.hrw.com L8-689 Go

SKILLS FOCUS pp. 689–696

Literary Skills
- Understand and analyze symbolism.

Reading Skills
- Use strategies to read and analyze a poem.

Writing Skills
- Write to describe.

Preteach

Introducing Vocabulary

- Review the Vocabulary words, definitions, and sentences with students.
- Reinforce the importance of the Vocabulary words in "My Mother Pieced Quilts." Point out that the speaker admires the **taut** sewing of her mother's quilt. She wonders how her mother sewed **frayed** pieces of material together, such as a **somber** black fabric she wore to a funeral.

Language Coach

Use **Language Coach** to help English-language learners acquire word knowledge. Point out that poets are often concerned about how words look on the page. Ask students why standard capitalization might be distracting in "My Mother Pieced Quilts."

Literary Focus

As you read and discuss the selections with students, have them identify symbols and their possible meanings.

Reading Focus

Give students a copy of the Reading Focus graphic organizer (**Collection 7 Resources**). Have them use their responses to answer the questions on the Applying Your Skills page.

Writing Focus

As they read, have students use their **Reader/Writer Notebooks** to record lists of objects or images that are grouped together.

Learn It Online

Send students to **Word Watch** for audio pronunciations, synonyms and antonyms, and brief histories of word origins. Preview at **go.hrw.com**.

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Selection Introduction

More About the Writer

Teresa Palomo Acosta's interest in the role women play in culture and history is part of her nonfiction writing as well as her poetry. *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History,* a nonfiction book she co-wrote, tells about the women of Spanish Mexican descent who shaped the history of Texas.

Think About the Writers

Have students review the text to find clues to what the poets find important. Ask students how what the poets value might influence their choice of writing topics.

For Independent Reading

- fstudents are interested in reading more poems about families, recommend *Roots and Flowers: Poets and Poems on Family*, edited by Liz osenberg.
- For students interested in Latino-themed poetry, suggest *Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States*, edited by Lori Marie Carlson.

MEET THE WRITERS



Teresa Palomo Acosta

(1949–)

A Love of Poetry

Teresa Acosta grew up in McGregor, Texas, and began writing poetry when she was just sixteen. As a teenager she enjoyed European and Early American poetry. Later she was inspired by African American and Mexican American poetry, when it became available to her. She has been involved in various projects to promote Latino literature and is the co-author of the book *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History.*

Alberto Forcada

(1969–)

The Dreams of Children

The poems of Alberto Forcada that appear in *Despertar (Awaking)*—"Suéter" is one of them—describe the dreams and fantasies of children. Forcada has a degree in philosophy from the National University of Mexico. His poems have been collected in three books and have been published in magazines such as *De Polanco para Polanco,* which serves a neighborhood in Mexico City.

Think About the Writers Based on the information above, what do you think Teresa Palomo Acosta and Alberto Forcado find important?

Build Background

"My Mother Pieced Quilts"

Piecing a quilt means sewing together pieces of fabric to create a bed cover. Usually the scraps of fabric are stitched together to form a pattern. Some quilts follow a traditional pattern, while others are unique.



Wedding Ring, American quilt (detail) (c. 1930) Cotton patchwork.

Preview the Selections

In "My Mother Pieced Quilts," the speaker tells us about the associations she makes with the patchwork in her mother's quilts.

In "Sweater," the speaker asks his grandmother for more than a garment to keep himself warm.

Selection Readability	
Easily Accessible Accessible **Challenging**	These poems have symbols, varied sentence structure, and figurative language.
Lexile	**N/A**

Selection Summaries

In "My Mother Pieced Quilts," the speaker examines a quilt that her mother made. As she admires each piece, she recalls moments in her family's history.

In "Sweater / Suéter," the speakers ask his grandmother to knit him something more than a sweater.

Read with a Purpose Read these poems to discover how objects made by the hands of a loved one can take on special meaning.



MY MOTHER PIECED QUILTS

by **Teresa Palomo Acosta**

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 A

A **Literary Focus** **Symbolism** What might the different types of fabric listed here symbolize?

Differentiating Instruction

English-Language Learners

Students may have difficulty interpreting the imagery in the poem. Consider displaying an image of a quilt to guide a stanza-by-stanza interpretation of the poem.

- Point out that the quilts are compared to weapons. Ask students what the quilts protect against. [*winter winds*]
- In the second stanza, the quilts are "October ripened canvases." First, discuss the artistry involved in quilt-making; a quilt can be like a painter's canvas. Then, point out that quilts are often stored during warm weather. When temperatures drop in October, quilts "ripen," or emerge from storage.
- Ask students what is special about clothing worn at ceremonies such as communions or weddings. Why might a person include these types of fabrics in a quilt? ***Possible response:*** *to honor and remember the event*
- Explain that dime stores were budget-oriented department stores that sold fabric, among other things.

Have students continue to read the poem line-by-line, pausing to interpret each example of imagery.

Direct Teach

Think About/Talk About

Read with a Purpose Have students read the Read with a Purpose statement. Ask them to name some intentions of the people who make and give handmade items to family members.

Analysis

A Literary Focus

Possible response: *The fabrics might symbolize the events of a family's life, from everyday moments to formal ceremonies.*

? Extend the Discussion

Finding the Main Idea What did the speaker's mother intend the quilts to be used for? ***Possible response:*** *She intended the quilts to be used for warmth during cold weather.*

Symbolism How does the speaker begin to view the quilts? ***Possible responses:*** *She views them as a means of learning about and remembering her mother. She views them with wonder and admiration.*

Guided Practice

Model and Apply

- Provide students with copies of the Reading Focus graphic organizer.
- Tell students that when they **read poetry** that does not include punctuation, they can read aloud to identify thought units, which may carry over to other lines.
- Model identifying thought units in "My Mother Pieced Quilts." Explain that students should not stop reading at line 1; they should continue reading line 2 to complete the meaning: The quilts were meant to be used as covers in the winter.
- Have students add the detail to their graphic organizers.

My Mother Pieced Quilts

1st thought unit	The quilts were meant to be used as covers in winter.

- Tell students that the next thought unit is contained in lines 3 and 4. Ask students to identify the thought unit. ***Possible response:*** *The quilts protected against powerful winter winds.*
- **Send a Problem** After reading each stanza, ask a student to identify the thought unit. If the student cannot respond after eleven seconds, have him or her call on another student. Continue this process until the thought unit has been identified. (See p. T28.)

how you shaped patterns square and oblong and round
positioned
15 balanced
then cemented them
with your thread
a steel needle
a thimble
20 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 rearranged
your michigan spring faded curtain pieces
25 my father's santa fe work shirt
the summer denims, the tweeds of fall (B)

(B) **Read and Discuss** What is Acosta illustrating for us as she lists different fabrics, shapes, and clothing types?

Vocabulary **frayed** (frayd) *adj.:* worn away; unraveled.



Differentiating Instruction

Advanced Learners

Acceleration Ask students to meet in small groups and discuss the lengths of the lines in this poem. Is there a pattern? Do the lengths reflect the content in any way? ***Possible response:*** *When the mother is planning the quilt design, the lines are short. When she is sewing, the lines are longer and flow together, much like her needle.*

Learners with Diverse Needs

Provide student pairs with photocopies of the poem. Have them follow along as they listen to a reading of the poem from the **Holt Audio Library.** Play the recording a second time, and have students identify pauses with sticky notes. Have students each take a turn reading the poem aloud, using the sticky notes as a guide for pacing.

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

Vocabulary **somber** (SAHM buhr) *adj.*: dark; melancholy.

Crazy patchwork quilt (c. 1875).



Analyzing Visuals

Viewing and Interpreting
Do you think the mother's quilts looked like this one, or the ones on pages 690 and 691? Why or why not?



Think About/Talk About

Comprehension

B Read and Discuss

Possible response: *She is illustrating how the quilts literally contain parts of the speaker's family, such as their old curtains and clothing.*

? Extend the Discussion

Summarizing How does the speaker's understanding of the quilts change over the first three stanzas?

Possible response: *In the first stanza, the speaker thinks the quilts are "just meant as covers" to keep the family warm. In the second stanza, the speaker notices the different fabrics in the quilts and wonders how they were made. In the third stanza, the speaker understands the hard work involved in recycling old curtains and clothing to make the quilts.*

Analyzing Visuals

Viewing and Interpreting: *The mother's quilts would look different because they were made up of fabrics unique to the lives of the mother and her family.*

Developing Oral Fluency

Use the fourth stanza to give students practice in reading poetry. Remind students that they should not pause at the end of each line unless the line ends a thought unit. Point out the following punctuation in the stanza:

- The dash in line 28 indicates a pause.
- The colon in line 30 indicates a pause.
- The hyphens in "winter-going/into-spring" do not indicate pauses; they show that the words should be joined and said in quick succession.

Then, point out that lines 31, 33, and 35 begin with the word *whether* and that each begins a new thought unit.

Paired activity First, play a recording of the stanza from the **Holt Audio Library.** Then, have students work in mixed-ability groups to practice reading the stanza. Conclude by asking students to discuss how separating the stanza into thought units helped them in their reading.

Guided Practice

Model and Apply

- Review the concept of **symbolism**. Explain that symbols are objects, places, events, or people that stand for something beyond their basic meaning. Give students the following examples of symbols: a red cross for medicine, and a dove for peace. Ask students what a lightbulb over a cartoon character symbolizes. ***Possible response:*** *It symbolizes an idea*.
- Read aloud the first stanza on this page, and point out the image of the thread. Tell students that because thread is strong and used to bind things together, it might symbolize the strong emotional connection between the speaker and the quilts or the mother and the moments in her life. Remind students that symbols can mean different things to different readers.



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 threaded 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 thrashing of twenty-five years

stretched out they lay
armed/ready/shouting/celebrating

knotted with love
the quilts sing on ©

43. testimonies: declarations. For example, people make testimonies of faith or of love.

© **Read and Discuss** Acosta uses phrases such as "river current," "caravan master," "driving your needle," to describe her mother's quilting activities. What do these phrases tell us about the mother and the way Acosta views her?

Vocabulary **taut** (tawt) *adj.*: pulled tight.

Word-Attack Skills Mini-Lesson

Suffixes: *–ed* and *–ing*

Tell students that adding the suffixes *–ed* or *–ing* to regular verbs often creates a new, but related, word. This word can be a different tense of the verb or a different part of speech. Share the following information with students:

- When the verb ends in *e,* just add *d*: *fade* + *d* = *faded.* The sun *faded* our curtains. (verb) The *faded* curtains need to be replaced. (adjective)
- When the verb does not end in *e,* add *–ed*: *fray* + *ed* = *frayed.* Her jeans have *frayed* hems. (adjective) She *frayed* the hems of her jeans. (verb)
- Adding *–ing* to a verb can make the new word a gerund, an adjective, or a participle when used with a linking verb.
- If the verb ends in *e,* drop the *e* before adding *–ing*.

Paired activity Ask student pairs to write words from the poem that end in *–ed* and *–ing* and have a verb