

# Quilts: Pieces of Art

Quilts keep us warm. Layers of cloth in different patterns and colors are stitched together to form a blanket. However, while quilts were first made to keep



us warm, they are also a form of art.

The history of quilts is long. A statue from about 3400 BCE shows an Egyptian ruler wearing quilted clothing. In Asia, a quilted rug was dated to the first century BCE. In the 11th century, European knights brought quilting techniques from the Middle East. They wore quilted clothing under their armor to stay warm. The oldest known bed quilt was found in Italy and dates to the late 1300s.

In the United States, bed quilts tell about women in American history. When the earliest European immigrants came to America, there were few or no stores. Women cut up old clothes and used them to make new clothes or blankets. Quilting kept families alive in the harsh, cold environment.

During the 1700s and 1800s, pioneer women made quilts. Some were used as play mats for children or as curtains. Women met for quilting bees, or parties, to help each other finish quilts and to exchange news.

Quilting may also have played a role in helping some African Americans escape slavery. Some stories tell of slaves sewing codes into their quilts to show others the way to freedom.

In addition to their many uses, quilts are also a form of art. Every quilt is an expression of the artist. Each one uses different patterns and colors. Each one also uses different techniques for sewing the pieces together. Originally, the layers of material were simply tied together with small crossed stitches. Later, though, quilters stitched designs, such as feathers, or flowers, into quilts.

So the next time you climb into bed with a nice warm quilt, look at it carefully. Notice the care that someone took to make a beautiful blanket that can also keep you nice and warm.



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