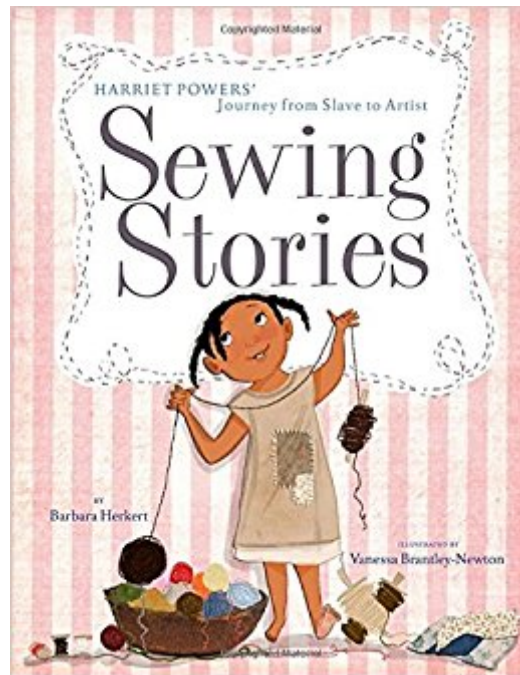




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Sewing Stories: Harriet Powers' Journey From Slave To Artist



Synopsis

An illuminating picture book biography of an artist and former slave whose patchwork quilts bring the stories of her family to life. Harriet Powers learned to sew and quilt as a young slave girl on a Georgia plantation. She lived through the Civil War and Reconstruction, and eventually owned a cotton farm with her family, all the while relying on her skills with the needle to clothe and feed her children. After she began making pictorial quilts, using each square to illustrate Bible stories and local legends. She exhibited her quilts at local cotton fairs, and though she never traveled outside of Georgia, her quilts are now priceless examples of African American folk art. Barbara Herkert's lyrical narrative and Vanessa Newton's patchwork illustrations bring this important artist to life in a moving picture-book biography.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #540,528 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #89 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > Civil War Era #167 in Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Art > History #233 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Art

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

K-Gr 3 "This picture book biography introduces readers to Harriet Powers, an African American artist who grew up as a slave and was freed by the end of the Civil War. As a young girl on a Georgia plantation, she learned how to make cloth, dye it using natural colorings, and make quilts with appliqué designs stitched on fabric. Powers married and became a wife and mother of five, using her skills as a quilter to help support her family. The story is told in a folksy, conversational tone. Multiple text boxes provide additional information in a clear, direct style, supporting the main

text. Upbeat and cheerful, the mixed-media illustrations (a combination of digital art and gouache) present Powers in a positive light and provide details of her daily life. The endpapers feature reproductions of Powers's two existing quilts, and back matter includes an author's note, a photograph of the artist, and an explanation of each of the story quilts. Overall, this is an illuminating introduction to a largely unknown artist. However, teachers and librarians should be aware that there is a considerable amount of fictionalized dialogue: no sources are provided for the quotes from the subject. VERDICT Despite some limitations, this is a much-needed introduction to the life of a little known African American artist, with many possible curriculum connections: artists, quilters, women's history, and the Civil War.â "Myra Zarnowski, City University of New York

"A much-needed introduction to the life of a little known African American artist, with many possible curriculum connections: artists, quilters, women's history, and the Civil War."--School Library Journal
"As a picture-book introduction to an unsung artist, it inspires. Harriet Powers: an artist worth knowing."--Kirkus Reviews

Good book for pre-teen children, especially as part of African-American history.

met expectations.

Came as described...quite happy. Very interesting story since as an adult, I read "The Invention of Wings."

Wonderful story of a inspiring quilter.

great price fast service !

Summary: Harriet Powers was born into slavery in Athens, Georgia. She grew up on a cotton plantation, watching women spin, dye, and weave cloth. She participated in quilting bees, where slave women were given a few hours to sew their own creations instead of having to follow directions of the mistress of the house. At one of those bees, she met the man who would become her husband. They married and had five children; when the children were still young, the family received word of the Emancipation Proclamation and were free. Harriet and her husband worked hard and saved enough money to buy a small farm. When the price of cotton dropped, Harriet was

forced to sell two of her beautiful story quilts. One of them was purchased by an art teacher who wrote down the stories pictured in the different quilt panels. An author's note explains that those two quilts still exist today, in the National Museum of American History in Washington, DC and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Other back matter includes a bibliography, photos of the two quilts with a list of the stories portrayed on each, and the only known photograph of Harriet in existence. Pros: The beautiful quilts are evidence that art can flourish in any environment. The illustrations capture Harriet's spirit as well as her works of art. Cons: I hesitate to enter into the controversy over the depiction of slavery in *A Fine Dessert*, but two of the criticisms I have seen—that the portrayal of a slave girl living with her mother is unrealistic, and that the slave girl shouldn't be pictured with a smile—are present in this book as well. So far, I'm not aware of similar criticisms for *Sewing Stories*.

Sewing Stories follows Harriet Powers' journey from child slave to adult quilting artist. The illustrations drew me in immediately, with tender facial expressions that reveal the innocence and dedication of Harriet's family. A mixture of hand crafted and vintage fabric patterns boast a time honored feel. I connected emotionally with the main story line, especially since Harriet's family met their struggles with determination and love. Some of the side panel facts are listed as things that *may* have happened, which held me back from fully trusting the validity of the suggestions. Still, the story sparks interest in this historical figure. The factual information in the Author's Note and Back Matter show support for the main highlighted facts from the story and delve further into the meaning behind Harriet's story quilts.

As a quilter I appreciated the story behind the first ever quilt to be on display and what a gloriously rich quilt it was. I never knew the story of the woman who made it but I do now. Harriet Powers was a rich woman but not in the monetary sense. She was gifted in a way that not only warmed many with stories of each quilt but in the warmth it gave from the stories. A truly beautiful book with a rich story to boot. Written by Barbara Herket, illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton and published by Alfred A. Knopf. #PB #biography #quilt #heart #diversity

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