

# DIGITAL AGNES

Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University  
agnes.queensu.ca

## Stories and symmetry

AGNES Learns

2021

### SPEAKERS

Charlotte Gagnier

### KEYWORDS

Canadian Artist, Fibre Arts, Quilting, Grade 1-3, Agnes Learns, School Resource, Children's Education

### TRANSCRIPT

**Charlotte Gagnier:** This beautiful quilt was made by Canadian artist Doris Waddell. Waddell has made many quilts but I think this one is extra special to her, because it's covered in memories of her family! It's titled *Family Album Quilt*, and it contains memories precious to Waddell just as a photo album would. Do you have a family photo album?

This type of quilt is called a Baltimore Album quilt. Traditionally, each square is made and signed by a different artist. This exact quilt, however, was made completely by Waddell alone, and she spent a total of 4000 hours making it. I can't imagine doing anything for 4000 hours, can you?

Something that Waddell's quilt has in common with traditional quilts is the symmetry found in many of the designs. Symmetry is when one side of an image mirrors the other. This square, for example, is horizontally symmetrical, vertically symmetrical, and diagonally symmetrical. It reminds me of a snowflake!

Let's take a look at the squares with family members now, and see what we can learn about them. Here, it looks like a boy is playing basketball. I wonder if this is one of Waddell's sons. Basketball must be really important to this person, since the artist chose to depict them playing it. If you had a square on a family album quilt, how would depict yourself? What would you be doing?

Let's look at this one, now. Here, it seems like somebody is quilting. I bet that this is Waddell depicting herself. If so, this square would be a self-portrait. Do you notice anything else in this square that might tell us more about the artist? I see a tennis racket, and a cat! I wonder if this cat often keeps her company while she quilts.

Quilting like this is such a wonderful way to preserve memories of the people closest to you. What would you depict your family doing if you made a family album quilt?