As a child I was frequently sick with asthma. While I was recuperating in bed, my mother would give me crayons and pastes to make pictures, and pieces of cloth to make sewn things. I loved to copy the beautiful engravings of presidents from my brother and sister's history books. I never liked the things I made from cloth because they looked like I made them. Today I love the masks, soft sculptures, dolls and quilts I make, for exactly that reason.
Plate (folio 16) from Seven Passages to a Flight

Today I make murals that are painted and sewn quilts. Some of them are installed in public places. The Crown Heights Children’s History Project is in the Library at Public School 12 in Crown Heights. My first mural, Harlem Martin and Harriett, is installed on the platforms of the 125th Street IRT subway in Harlem. It depicts Paul Robeson, Marian Anderson and many other great people who have lived and worked in Harlem.

Plate (folio 20) from Seven Passages to a Flight

My husband Birdie and I now live just over the George Washington Bridge in Englewood, New Jersey. Like Cassie and The Be of Dr. Rock, we flew over the bridge.
**Step 1**

**Look closely**

**Questions**

1. What is happening in these pictures?
2. These are scenes from the artist’s life - what can you learn about the artist from the images and text?
3. What other details do you notice?

**Step 2**

**Learn more**

These are three scenes from Faith Ringgold’s *Seven Passages to a Flight*, a book of nine etchings, paired with text, that depict the story of Faith Ringgold’s life, career and family, as well as Black history. Inside the book, she depicts key moments in her life, with fantastical elements such as people flying, a common theme in Ringgold’s work. The scenes included in this lesson represent:

- Ringgold as a child drawing and painting on pieces of fabric while recuperating from illness
- A mural of prominent Harlem figures, Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson, which she made for New York City’s 125th Street subway station.
- Ringgold and her husband against the background of the Washington Bridge and their home in New Jersey. Ringgold often incorporated quilting into her work, a skill she learned from the women in her family. The colorful triangles that make up the border are inspired by quilts as well as Central African motifs. Other museum collections have editions of these etchings in a quilt format.

**Step 3**

**Illustrate key events from your life**

**Materials:** several sheets of paper, pencils, colored pencils or markers, *(optional)* staples or thread

1. Choose 3-4 important events in your life
2. Illustrate these life events, adding imaginary elements if you like.
3. Think of decorative elements, such as borders, that you might want to add to unify all your drawings.
4. Write a couple of sentences about each image that explain why this life event was important to you.
5. *(Optional)* Bind the pages of your story together in a book, by stapling or punching holes and sewing together with thread. Or you can arrange the images into a quilt format.

**Step 4**

**Share!**

Share your illustrated autobiography with a friend, classmate, or family member. Or, you can email photos to us at MoMA: schoolprograms@moma.org

**Teaching Tip:** Learn more about this work from the San Diego Museum of Art: youtu.be/t4_elY1KNHk

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