



The Connection:

Egungun and Freedom Quilts

Egungun Mask

An **Egungun Mask** is worn by a special person who puts on the mask or **regalia** (an outfit used for special occasions in Africa). Egunguns are used among the Yoruba people, one of the largest ethnic groups who live in **Nigeria, West Africa**. The Egungun masquerader is a person who will come to the center in the village (community) and perform a dance that is normally used to honor ancestors or those who have passed away. The most important part of an Egungun is the cloth or fabric. The best fabric is used to make an Egungun Mask and to make it more beautiful, different designs are added to the fabric along with shiny objects.

Freedom Quilts

It is believed that quilts were designed and used to communicate information to enslaved Africans about how to escape to freedom using the Underground Railroad. The enslaved named these quilts... **Freedom Quilts**.

When making their way to freedom, they used their memory of the quilts **as a way to guide them safely along their journey**.

The symbol that you are creating is called the **North Star**. The symbol has two messages--one to prepare to escape and the other to follow the North Star to freedom in Canada. North was the direction of traffic on the **Underground Railroad**. This signal was often used in conjunction with the song, "**Follow the Drinking Gourd**", which contains a reference to the **Big Dipper constellation**. Two of the Big Dipper's points lead to the North Star.

Similarities in the Pattern

Take a look at this picture of the Egungun and its bright and beautiful colors and patterns. If you look closely you can see a triangle pattern. This triangle pattern may be similar to other patterns you may see in the Freedom Quilts that were made. People still make these kind of quilts today. You may even find one at your grandmother's home or on your bed.

Words to Highlight

Egungun

Nigeria, West Africa

Yoruba

Regalia

Freedom Quilts

North Star

Underground Railroad

The Big Dipper Constellation



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