
Quilting: Dresden Plates with Kathy Doughty

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- Today we're going to do something really fun. What we're going to do is talk about a Dresden Plate. The Dresden Plate was most commonly found in the 1930s where they used small prints and made sort of flower images, but now we've got all these fantastic fabrics that we can play with. So it's quite fun to use this to experiment and audition and build up your skills, not only using the Dresden Plate, but also using a variety of different fabric combinations. (light music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- When we're considering the materials that we need to make a Dresden Plate block, the first thing I wanna talk about would be the fabrics that we're going to use. There's an incredible array of fabrics out there now. We've got really fantastic contemporary fabrics. I mean, the ones that are in this particular block are made by Kaffe Fassett, he's got very strong stripes and spots, so there's a lot of energy in this block just using graphics all from the same range. So that's quite simple, you can collect them in a range, put them together, and create a really fun looking block. I know a lot of people really like to use pretty fabrics in pinks and pastel colors, so you can easily adapt your color scheme within the confines of this block as well. And lots, and lots, and lots of us have a very traditional stash. We've collected the fabrics that resemble the fabrics that our quilting sisters of the past might have used, but now that we live in a contemporary time we look at these fabrics and we may want to adapt them and make them more suitable for the day that we live in. So here, I've got a really fantastic graphic print, large print, and I've used some very contemporary checks and spots to enhance that block and make it look more like something that I might have wanted to make today instead of yesterday. 'Cause I like to believe that the quilting sisters of yesterday, if they'd had the options in fabric that we have today, that they would have certainly been using them. So we take full advantage of that. Collecting the fabric is the fun part, but it's also great when you're quilting to have the right supplies. Of course for this project you'll need your rotary cutter, your mat, and your straight-edge ruler. You'll also need a Dresden Plate ruler, and if you don't have a Dresden Plate ruler, it's quite fine to make a paper version of that from the downloadable PDF, using your paper scissors. You'll need your fabric scissors. We always need a little seam ripper, sewing machine thread and your sewing machine, and then for the applique we'll probably be using a chalk pencil. Circle templates, one size of the cut version of the circle and one the size of the finished version. I love these little applique pins, they're really easy to manage and handle, they don't get in the way when you're sewing. When you're sewing curved surfaces, it's quite nice to have a toothpick handy. And I'm gonna show you another quick method for making circles that uses a bit of foil. Of course, your pins for when we're sewing the blades together, an iron, and the sewing machine.

Chapter 3 - Creating A Dresden Plate

Selecting fabrics

- This is my favorite part. For me, there isn't anything more fun than gathering fabric to make a project. I like to shop for fabric, I like to stack it up in my studio, I like to lay it all out and envisage what might happen when I start putting that fabric together. The thing about it is that, as you

progress through a project, fabric always changes, so it's very important to learn how to audition, and it's also very important to assume a position in your mind where you might change the direction that you're going in as the fabric starts to evolve into a project. So, when we have that sort of looming out ahead of us, and we wanna think about what to do, it can be very confusing, and I've noticed that quilters often get confused, and the most frequently made comment in my shop is, "I'm no good with color, I don't know what to do." However, the only reason why I stand here and talk about color is that I do this every day. I've done it every day for 10 years, and I work with a variety of different kinds of customers that have a variety of different kinds of tastes, and I think there's so much out there that we can break it down into groups to make it more easily understood how we want to work with the fabric and the outcome that we want to achieve. When most of us were first taught how to quilt, the traditional method is to, say, select a light fabric, a medium fabric, and a dark fabric. It's easy to do when you're using traditional fabrics, but with today's fabrics, sometimes the lines between light, medium, and dark are blurred, because, for example, we might have a fabric that has a great, big graphic on it, or we might have a fabric that has reds and blues in it, or lights and darks, for example, like this one, light and dark fabrics working in the same thing, and I think this can be very confusing when you read a pattern if it says, "Put your dark fabric here "or put your light fabric in this position." So, one way that we organize our fabric piles in our stash to create a little bit of order is to separate them into warm and cool colors. So, by cool colors, I mean colors that remind you of the sky, perhaps, or the sea, or grass. And by warm colors, I look for colors that remind me of the sun, or the beach. Now, these colors, they're fairly obviously very cool and very warm. Sometimes the lines between warm and cool can be just as confusing as between light, medium, and dark. For example, with a fabric like this, it has some cool colors and some warm colors. The general overall feeling of this fabric is that it's warm, so I would put that in the warm pile. I would also put that very orange color in the warm pile. This one is reading more warm to me, as is this one. That's obviously a cool, that's a cool. Well, that's actually repeating that one. That's sort of cool. Then, in the middle of those, we might wanna put our neutrals, which would be the grays. I'm gonna put that in my neutral. Now, I group my fabrics very loosely, because that, to me, is very exciting. I quite like to use a fabric that has a lot of colors in it, because when I cut this fabric, sometimes it's going to read in the green area, sometimes it's going to read in the red area. But what it will do is, using that same fabric throughout my quilt will give it a sense of continuity and a sense of understanding, but also that element of chance and surprise that we're all looking for. I mean, if we're to look at a project and understand it completely in the first glance, just like a pop song when you learn the words in one go, it's not that interesting the next time you hear it. But if you discover more as you go along, it's a much more interesting project for you. So I've just very loosely, I'm not gonna waste a whole lot of time doing this because I think you could spend too much time working on it. But anyway, there, we've just sorted those out into warm and cool piles, with a few neutrals. The most important piece in this neutral pile would be the black and white. When you're using a lot of contemporary fabrics, that black and white fabric will give your eye a place to sit down and rest in your quilt, and it will give structure and order to the project that you're working on. The other thing that you might notice in this pile is that I've got a lot of different kinds of patterns going on. For example, this one, this is a fantastic piece of fabric. It gives you lots and lots of options in the graphic area. We have lots of different kinds of spots, and lots of different kinds of stripes. Those can be very useful. We could use them working across the stripe, or we could use them working as a stripe, a more understandable stripe. It's particularly fun when we're working with hexagons with a fabric like that. These fabrics, the spot and this little check, and perhaps the

plaid, they're more graphic-oriented in their design nature. Like this one is, I mean, I would call that a stripe. And a spot. So, when we first started looking at contemporary fabrics, we very often went straight for spotty fabrics and stripped fabrics to give us a little bit of break from the large graphics, but now the line and the definition of those specific graphic prints has changed and includes a lot of different kinds of ideas. So, fabrics like these with lots of big motion, they add a lot of excitement and a lot of interest for your quilt. If you don't already break up your fabrics in your stash into piles like this, it's a great new practice to start working, because when you go to actually make the block, you can start pulling from your cool pile and your warm pile and create contrast in the project that you're working on. And contrast is actually visual excitement, and that's what we're looking for. So, particularly in a block as exciting as this one, it's fantastic if you can figure out how you can create contrast between the two fabrics that you're using in your blades or your wedges, so that you make an exciting looking block.

Cutting blades or wedges

- Okay, now we're gonna talk about actually putting a Dresden plate together. We've organized our fabric, we've got a little bit of an idea about the combinations that we might wanna use. And what we're going to need to do is cut two blades in alternating fabrics that will work in contrast to create an interesting block. We'll also need to pick a third fabric for the center, but we're going to do that later. One step at a time. So we've got our fabrics in two separate piles now, and what we're going to do is select one from each of these piles. Now, we can spend a lot of time auditioning these fabrics, but I think I might just pull out this one, 'cause I like the fact that it's spotty and sort of quiet. I could pull that one, or maybe go for something that's playing off the orange rose, there's a lot of contrast in that one, and the white gives it a little bit of a lift. Let's see what this one looks like. What I'm waiting for is when I actually look at a fabric in combination like that, and I think, wow, that's really exciting, so that's one that I'm going to go for. And I think a lot of times what happens when we're making these selections we pick a fabric because we think it's going to look alright, but we haven't examined other possibilities. But once I've examined a lot and I find one that actually really screams out at me, that's the one that I'm gonna use. Maybe that's not your choice, but it's my choice and this is my quilt, so that's why I choose that fabric. Now the first thing that I'm gonna do to be able to make this quilt. Is the full length of the wedge ruler that I'm using today. I can easily measure on my mat to see that it's nine inches long. So I'll need at least nine inches of fabric. This one is actually nine inches of fabric, but if it wasn't, all I would do would be bring in my straight edge ruler, line it up and what I'll do is just trim the little bits of fuzz off there. And check to see, it fits perfectly. So what I'm gonna do now is open this up. Now I'm a very confident cutter. I've cut a lot of fabric, so I don't mind cutting two layers at one time, but if you're still timid about cutting fabric, then you might wanna just cut one layer at a time. So, I've lined this up so that the wide edge is at the top of the fabric and the narrow edge is at the bottom. I'm gonna hold the template. My hands are firmly on there and I've got one finger that's sitting on the fabric and my thumb is at the base so that it's very stable and I'm gonna just slide the rotary cutter right up the side of the wedge and remove it. Now, it's a bit of an awkward situation to try and cut towards yourself. You never want to do that, these are very dangerous and very sharp. So in that situation what I would recommend you do is bring in your second ruler. Line it up right next to the first one, then move that one away and then it's quite simple to cut. I now have two wedges, and because that's an 18 degree ruler, I know that I need 20 blades, so I need 10 of each one. So now I'm going to open up my strip of fabric, position the ruler so now the short end is at the top and the wide end is at the

bottom and the long edge is flush with the edge of the fabric and I'm gonna cut. And I'll continue to cut until I have 10 blades of this fabric. So, I've got two, four, six, eight, ten blades cut. Easy. In order to finish that block we'll need to cut the alternate fabric in the same size, but before we move on to that I just wanna show you what would happen if you wanted to cut a smaller block to work with that. I'm just gonna take a piece of fabric and open it up, that's half of the selvage width. Let's flatten that out. Now if I want to make short and wide wedges, I would wanna cut from the top end of the ruler. So what I'll do first is establish a straight edge. And without moving my fabric, I'm just gonna move the ruler over and I've got this, on this particular ruler, I've got it on the five, it's going to give me, it's going to give me a strip of fabric, that's one, two, three, four inches wide. So I'll just check to make it sure that it's four inches at the bottom and four inches at the top and it is. So I'll move that away and cut the strip. Now I'm gonna open this strip out and in the exact same way that I did the last one and I'm gonna use the wedge with the wide end at the top. I'm gonna cut on the right hand side and then on the left hand side. And now what I have are two wedges that are short and fat, like that. What will happen, well I'll show you what will happen with that later, but you can see that that's how you cut, and the other way that we could cut that with the same strip, is cut it with the narrow end of the wedge at the top. And then I have two thin and short ones, the difference would be, these would be the outside of the circle, so they'll make a very large circle with a hole in the middle. These are very small, so they'll make a very small circle with a smaller hole in the middle. And I'll show you what happens when you use those a little bit later. Cut as many blades as you need to complete your circles. And we'll cover the cutting of the circles for the center a little bit later.

Assembling plate blades

- We've had a little bit of a look at how to pick the fabrics and how to cut them, and now we're gonna talk about how to sew them. So we've got all of our blades cut for this particular event, and in order to make this cute little pointy bit on the end, we're gonna do something that's really complicated. Just kidding, this is really easy. We're gonna take one of these blades and fold it right sides together against itself, and then take it to the machine. So now that I've taken it out of the machine, you can see it's got the quarter inch seam across the top, and all I'll do is flip that bit into the middle, inside out. I've got the point. Then I'm gonna take a little toothpick and just push the inside a little bit so that it's nice and pointy. Now, I want that seam to come straight down the middle, and then I'll take that to the ironing board. I'll take the iron and just press that flat. So you can see, it's a straight line across the top of the wedge, and when we turn it over, we've got a nice, crisp point at the top. That one's finished, so now we're gonna speed things up, and we're going to chain stitch the rest of these. So, we'll just continue in that exact same manner. Fold them in half, right sides together, put them into the machine, drop the needle down, and just sew. Now I'm going to leave that in the machine and pick up my next one. Repeat the process, fold the right sides together, lift up the foot, drop it down, sew my quarter inch seam. And just continuing in that manner with both combinations of fabric, with both fabrics. When you've chain stitched the number that you need for the project, you can just release each one of the wedges from the chain and continue to press them all together. It's a very methodical process and quite relaxing. If you're making a big quilt with a lot of them, it could take you a long time, but there's nothing difficult about this so far. We'll just sew them all together. This is quite a handy little setup that we have here, with the ironing board placed right next to the sewing machine, because sometimes we get a little bit lazy when we're sewing. We wanna stay sitting in our seats, so if everything is right there, it

makes you more likely to do everything that you need to do. When all of the blades are pressed, we'll then start to join them together in pairs, 'cause you can see, I've joined some together already, it's quite easy to break it down into sets of two, and then we'll join those sets of two to four, until we have enough to make the entire circle. One thing about sewing pairs together is that you wanna make sure that the same fabric is always on top. In this one, the gray fabric is on top of the animal print, and I'm gonna sew along the right side seam. If I were to sew on the left side seam, and I opened it up, I would have the wrong combination in the circle. Now, sometimes, if chance is your creative director, that would make an interesting design, but for the purposes of this exercise, we want them to be right, so I'm going to put the animal print on the bottom, the gray on the top, and sew on the right side. When we go to sew them together, I've got the gray on top. What I wanna do is match the top of the blades, because the bottom is gonna be covered by a circle anyway, so that seam's not as important. But I do want the blades to meet in the same point. So I'm gonna slide that under the presser foot, drop the needle down. And because this bit's gonna show, I might just hit the reverse button once to secure that stitch. Sew all the way down the length. And I open that up. I've got a good pair. Now I can take the second pair. And in this case, I'm sewing the left hand side of the gray so that the leopard skin's on top, but it's still alternating. Now I'll sew these two together, again, with a quarter inch seam starting at the top with the folds aligning. So, it's quite easy. You'll notice that I didn't use any pins, and when I get to the end, I'm just going to secure the two bits of fabric, making sure that the long edges are in alignment and running through the presser foot at the same distance. And now I've got a set of four. This set of four will join on. Continue sewing all of the blades into pairs, pairs into sets, until you have enough, 10 of each one of your alternating fabrics, to complete the full circle of this block. We've got the block sewn together now, so we need to give it a press to make it nice and flat. Now, I generally like to press the top bit first, just to make sure that it all goes flat. And then, flip it over to the back, because the way that we press these seams at the back will determine how this quilt will look when I go to quilt it. So, if you're using a really dark and a really light fabric, you'd wanna press to the dark side. So now that I've turn this over to the back side, and what I've decided to do is that I'm gonna press all the animal prints onto the rose print, because then, when I turn it back around to the other side, it'll give that rose print just a little bit of a lift. See how it lifts up off the background and the animal print recedes? So, in some ways it means it looks almost as if it's sitting on top of those, the animal print, and I quite like that effect. So if I were to press it the other way, the animal print would come up on top and the flowers would be in the back. So that's just one more thing to look at and to consider. Now that it's pressed, we're gonna look at a couple of different options in fabric for the center, and then how we might want to apply that center to the block to finish it off.

Completing the Dresden Plate

- To complete the block, once you've sewn all of your blades together and pressed it flat, we need to address this situation of the circle. In this one, I chose one that was similar in color to the other fabrics but had the interest factor that it had a different kind of a shape in it. So I had the circles in one, the stripes in the other, and this one has the little flower image, which I thought looks really cute with that. With this one, we could look at a couple of different kinds of options. One thing we might wanna look at is using something that is sort of sitting right in the same kinds of colors. So we've got a bit of gray with a bit of orange and a little bit of black. This one is sort of falling into the category where it's, in a way, matching. I mean, you can loosely define matching. It could be exactly the same kinds of colors. These are very similar, and they sit very comfortably together. But for me,

matching is not always the best option. This one looks exciting. It's picking up on the sort of African influence that we have in the animal print and it's got that paisley and a little bit of white so it's giving it a nice, strong jolt, as well as the aqua colors are relating really well to the little hints of aqua that we see in the pattern. Let's try this one that's playing on the blue, again, but it's not quite as exciting, because it's not linking on as many areas as perhaps that one. So I'm gonna keep that one in an option pile and continue to audition a few others. One fabric that almost always works when you're working with contemporary fabrics is a black and white. That's a nice, strong neutral. And you can see, I mean, that would look very nice in the center of that, either small or even in a bigger circle. I can put that in the pile. Here's another one that picks up a little bit on those green-y kinds of colors in there, so that's another one that could work. It's quite a small print, so it's not going to make a very dramatic statement. For me, I always go for massive drama. That's the kind of impact I like to make with my quilts. I'm quite happy with this one, but let's just look at a few other options and see what happens. For example, what about this? This is a great fabric in and of itself. It's got lots of good color on it, but when I put it on there, it's just a little bit too much. I think we have to draw the line someplace, and even somebody who likes a lot of busyness might draw the line with that one. That green almost hits the mark, but the color's a little bit off. What if we picked one like this? Well, that one sort of works, working from the orange levels. Maybe if we used a little bit more of the blue area, but it's not exactly magic. I'm looking for something that's magic. Here's something that would be really interesting. Here's a really big floral print. So this is the kind of fabric that we look for. If we really wanted to make this look like a flower, we could fussy-cut a print off of this, for example, like that, and then put that right smack in the middle of that block. That would work really well also. There are lots of images. This is an Alexander Henry print, and he's fantastic for giving us great, big, beautiful flowers that we can use for fussy-cutting and adding interesting to our project. So those are good options. Here's one that's a reproduction fabric. That could also work, but it's probably not as exciting. It tends to dull it down. I probably wouldn't go for things that take this any quieter than it already is. I think it needs just a bit of excitement, and that's why I think we'd probably end up going with this one. So now, the next thing that we'll need to do is cut this circle. Now, there are lots of different ways that you can applique. This particular template gives you an inside circle that is the finished size of the circle and the outside is the cut size of the circle. So what I would do in a situation like that is find another circle that fits inside. That's my finished size. I'm going to cut with the template, and then I'm going to use this, and I'll show you that in a second. Since we brought up that term fussy-cutting, what that means is capturing a part of the design in the fabric and using it as a feature. So immediately, my eye is drawn to this little flower. Now, I might want to center that in middle, but often, I think, when you fussy-cut, it's much more interesting to have part of the design running off the circle 'cause it takes your mind away from exactly what you're seeing, and your imagination kicks in, and you start to play a little bit there. And I could just keep moving this around until I find a spot that I think is absolutely perfect. There are too many to choose from, in this case. So I'm just gonna stop right here and get a little bit of that curving action there, get a little bit of that white highlight, and get a lot of the blue. Then I'm going to use my chalk pencil. And you're perfectly, it's perfectly acceptable at this time to use a rotary to cut around the acrylic template. However, when I'm cutting a circle, I sometimes feel that's a bit awkward. So I use the template, and then I bring in a pair of scissors to cut along my chalk line. This is allowing for a quarter of an inch seam allowance. It's going to be turned in before we applique this onto the flower. When I'm working with projects, I always think of it in terms of using the fabric, using the tools, but the third and very most important part of a project for me is using my

imagination to turn it into something beyond what it is. And when I'm making these Dresden plate blocks, for me, it's often about imagining that they're flowers. So I tend to slip into referring to them as flowers, and that way, I can take them into a garden situation or see how it looks when it's cut. So now I've cut this circle, and I've put it on the top, and you know what? I'm not perfectly happy with it. So I'm going to take the time and find something else. And what I can see happening here is that I've chosen something that's too busy and isn't supported by the rest of the block. It's completely distracting, and it's disappearing into the flower. So what I'm going to do for the purposes of this particular project is go to something I know will work and pick the black and white. Because this will be very simple, it will show up, it's nice and strong, and it will definitely work. So we'll go through that process again where I'll just take my template, and on this one, because there's not a specific design that I'm trying to capture, I'll just place it anywhere on the fabric. That's just proof, and I think it's important that everybody think about that. You make these decisions, but it's not until you actually start putting them together that the complete picture becomes obvious. And when you get to that point, it's always good to look at other options. The last thing you want to have happen is sew your whole quilt together, then look at it and go, that was the wrong choice. Because then it's too late, and it'll haunt you for the rest of your life. I know I've done it. Okay. So that's a much stronger circle. It adds a little bit of life and a little bit of zest, so I'm happy with that. The next thing that I'm going to do is take my template that's the finished size, and here's a little trick. I have the benefit of working with a lot of fabulous teachers, and one of them taught me this trick a long time ago. I refer to her as a needle woman because she knows all the secret tricks of the trade. So I've cut a piece of foil, and I'm going to put this piece of fabric face-down on the foil, and I'm going to take the perfect size, finished size, of the template, and put it on top of the fabric. And from there, I'm just going to crunch the foil using my finger and pressing down, all around the outside edge of the circle. And then I just make sure that it's nice and smooth and flat all around the outside, and what we're going to do now is take it to the iron. And the heat of the iron is going to cement that crease into that circle and make it really super easy to applique down. And I'm just going to take a hot iron, and I'm going to sit it on there for a couple of seconds. Now, when I take the iron off, it's actually going to be really hot. So we'll just be very careful about that. But the iron turns the foil into a super hot element. If you were making a lot of these circles, you might wanna do this all at one stage, do all of your circles at the same time. I might just turn it over and go around the outside edge just a bit more. Now, I can leave this in the foil as long as I want, and when I take it out... Here's one that I did before. The crease around the outside edge is perfectly set, and I can just place that wherever I want it to go. Let's just test. It's okay now. Okay. I think that's safe to take out. So now we've got a great circle. I'm gonna pop that template out of there, and I'm going to place that. Now, here, we have another room for variation or interpretation. We could place that right in the middle, or we could slide it up to one side, slide it down. With the smaller circles, I tend to try to get it in the middle. So I'm just gonna put a little bit of a crease in that circle and line it up to the straight edge of some of these blades so I know that it's in the right spot. Now I'm going to take my applique pins. I'm holding that in place. I'm just going to pin it down. If you've never done applique before, and I know this because I was like this before, you might think that applique is for those needle women, the people that grew up at their grandmother's knee learning how to sew. But I didn't. When everybody was sewing when I was a kid, I was swinging upside-down on a tree. So when I finally figured out that this was something I could do and achieve with a bit of ease, it's become a regular part of my sewing projects. I love applique, and it's not half as difficult and you think it's going to be. So, once I've pinned all the way around this circle, I'm ready to sew. I've selected a neutral thread

here. If you decide you wanna match your thread, you would match it to the piece that you're appliqueing down. So in this case, you might wanna use black, but I'm going to use a neutral thread. I've also selected a milliners needle, because it's long and it's quite a strong needle. I find that if I use anything lighter than that, I tend to bend it very quickly. To start stitching, gather up a bit of the block. Come up from underneath with your needle until you get right straight through the fold. And you bring the needle up and you return to the back of the fabric where your stitch is made, returning to right back in the fold. So I'm pinching the fabric. My middle finger on my underneath hand is right under here. My thumb is here and that's holding it quite firm. So I'm quite able to use the needle to move into the right position. And here, let's just take that pin out so we can see what we're doing. So the needle goes straight down right next to where the stitch came up. It slides under the back and comes up through the fold. This is a great way to practice your applique stitches 'cause the fold is so nicely creased from the foil. If you prefer, and you don't think you'd want to sew this by hand, you can always use your machine and buttonhole stitch the circles in place. That pin's getting in the way, so I'll move it. We get in the habit of doing everything really quickly as quilters, and we think, oh, we can use our machine and we can get this all done, but I think you'll find that we'll have this finished in a couple of minutes, and it'll look really nice and tidy having been done by hand. And every single little bit of extra effort that you put into doing something by hand actually adds to your satisfaction at the end. You look back at that project, and especially with something like this. If you've done something you never tried before, you'll just be really pleased, because you've learned something new, and you've done a good job. So sometimes when you see the stitch, if you just give it a little tug, it'll disappear. When you're doing circles, it's important to just do that one stitch... Oh, no, see, that one shows. So I think what I'll do is just pull that one out and start again with the stitch right before it. So, again, I wanna just flip that bit under. Straight down. You feel the needle. As soon as it goes through to the back side, you can feel it with your finger underneath, and that's when you know it's time to bring it back up. So lots of little tiny stitches. If you can see your stitches, it's probably because you're bringing the needle back and dropping it down, or you're moving the needle forward. So just always concentrate on putting the needle in straight right next to where it's come up. There. Surprise! It's finished. If you've never tried it before and you've just done that with us today, then I think you'll find that's a really achievable result. It means that you've got another skill under your belt, and you can start looking at more quilts and actualizing more ideas of what you see. It's not always for somebody else out there. It can be for you as well. So, congratulations. Thanks for trying that, and let's move on to the next stage of this project.

Chapter 4 - Composition and Variations

Applique Dresden Plate to block

- Okay, we've put together our Dresden Plate block, but the fun's not over yet. Now we need to figure out where we're going to place this. So in some cases we might be appliqueing this onto a quilt that already exists, or we might be appliqueing it onto a block, onto a square, which would then become a block in a quilt, or we might be making a cushion, or something else of that description. Where this ends up is completely up to you. But for the purposes of this exercise, what we'll do now, is we'll applique it onto a square piece of fabric which, if you decide by the end of that that you've had enough, you can quickly and easily make it into a cushion, but if you'd like, you can carry on and make it into a quilt. That will be up to you in the end. So in order to get started, what we're going to do is select a background fabric, which we have already done. I chose a really light

background with a bit of pattern on it. I don't very often use plain white fabrics because I quite like the play of pattern and color on white with whatever I'm using, but for the purposes of making this a really clear practice for you, I've put it on the white. But what's really nice is that the same tones of green and blues in the background play really nicely with the colors that are in the blades of this particular Dresden Plate block. If I knew exactly where I was going with this project, I would know what size I wanna cut this square, but because I don't, I'm going to try and make it as big as I can so that if I need to I can trim it back later. So I'm gonna fold that in half and neaten up the edges, which are quite frayed and messy, by lining up my ruler with the fold of the fabric, stabilizing the ruler, and then trimming off those edges. That way I know I've got all four pieces of fabric and that fold cut straight. So now I wanna make this square big enough for the flower, and even though this is the back of the fabric we can do it this way. So I want it to be a bit of a square, and the an easy way to do that is to just fold that corner up, and I'm just going to check it again to be sure. If I run that along the diagonal of the flower, I can see I'm gonna have plenty of room at the top and on the side in order to applique this down. So I'll remove that piece, I'm gonna turn this slightly at an angle, and cut along the folded edge. And now I want to get rid of this selvedge as well, and I'll just cut along that long edge, and now we've got a piece ready to work with. Now, because I want this Dresden Plate to be squared, or in the middle of the square, I need to be able to find some markers for that. So what I'm gonna do is fold that up, and just finger press the creases through the width. And also through the length. If you like you can take that to the iron, but finger pressing will last long enough for us to be able to center this project. So now if I line up the seam at the top between two blades and the seam at the bottom, I know that that's going to be centered through the width of the fabric. And then I'll just bring that up to where the folded line, the folded crease is. If I want, I can just measure to be sure that that's right. So that's $3\frac{1}{2}$, $3\frac{5}{8}$ from the top, and near enough to $3\frac{5}{8}$ on the bottom. And on that side. This one needs a tiny bit of an adjustment. There. Now I can square up the rest of that quilt, or the rest of that block later when I decide what size I want it to be, but for now I'm going to pin this in place. I'm pinning through each one of the blades because in the next step, we need this block to stay exactly where we positioned it so that it ends up nicely squared. But I'm putting the pins away from the end so that it holds it all securely. And there are a couple of ways that we could applique this piece to the background. We could continue, or applique it onto the background the same way we did the circles in the middle. And what's really nice about this is because we've already pressed the raw edges to the background, it would be quite simple to follow along all of those edges. If I were going to do that, I would want to pin more closely to the edge of each one of the blades so that it wouldn't move during the sewing process. Another way that you might want to attach this to the background would be to use your blanket stitch on your machine if you have that, or even if you like to blanket stich by hand you could use that. So whatever your preferred method of applique is, this is a time when you can engage that in this process. There. It's all pinned in place and we're ready to go to sewing. We've decided we're going to do this one by machine. It still leaves us several different options. One way that we could approach this would be to line up the folded-over seam edge of the point, and use a blanket stitch or a buttonhole stitch along the raw edge, but I wanna try something a little bit different today so I'm going to drop my needle right down in the join, drop the presser foot down, and sew straight across to the next point. I'm gonna drop my needle down and just adjust that slightly for the curve. Now you'll notice that the pins are well out of the way, so I don't actually have to move them to sew. And I'll just start sewing again from one point to the next. Now, traditionally, this would have been appliqued all along the points as we discussed before, but by doing it the way that we're doing, we're letting the points,

and I'll show you in one second when I get a few done... Just remember, every time leave your needle down so that you can look at your work without moving it. So now we can go back and look. We've got these great little points that add a little bit of texture to the quilt. So this would be a great opportunity, if you like using decorative stitches, you could use any of the number of stitches on your machine if you have them, you can sew it straight, you could double-up that line, you could use different sized stitches, there's a whole bunch of things that you can do, but let's just finish sewing around this circle and see if we can... And see what we like. If the pins get in the way, it's easy to just pull them out, but make sure that you hold the fabric flat in the position that it started. Okay, I'm almost to the end now. This one I want to end up exactly where I was and do a little bit of a back stitch, so I'm just gonna go very slowly, so that it matches perfectly at the end. And just do a little reverse stitch to secure it in place. And we're done. Okay. So now we've finish piecing the block, we've attached it to a piece of fabric with a really quick and simple applique method so we can remove all these pins, and now is a good time for us to look at some other options that we can use with this particular block both in how we construct it, and also how we set it. Whether if this is a finish for a cushion, or if we want to built it into a quilt.

Composition and variations

- I get really enthusiastic about quilting. What I love the most is there's something for everybody. So, if you want a really simple project, you can consider yourself just about done now. You've made a block. You can turn it into a cushion. You can finish it off. You can do whatever you like with that. However, if there's the slightest chance that any of you have decided that you're really excited by this and you wanna start making more, we've got a couple of ideas for how you might turn this into a bigger project. Here behind me, we have a quilt called garden party that was in my book, "Making Quilts." This uses dresden plates appliqued onto a background that is fairly busy, but you can see I've used the colors, the warm colors against the cool colors to make it show. Cool colors to lift up some of the warmer colors off the background. I've applied some of the techniques that we've talked about today. In some cases, I've raw edged the circle onto the flower. Or, in some other cases, I've blanket stitched, which we didn't do today, but here's a good example. Using the machine to applique that onto the background. One of the fun things that I did on this quilt was flip the dresden plate flower around to the background. Because one of the things I think is really interesting in a quilt is when part of it disappears or when the design element takes you away from what you're actually looking at, because I think that's a way that we become more involved with quilts. But just to show you sort of the process of how we actually put this together, we have a background here that has portions that are cool and very light. We have a very mixed up color background. It's sort of shady. There are areas of light and areas of dark. Then, we have another bit at the bottom that's quite moody. It's very rich in color and very shadowy. So, if we were dealing with a background that had a lot of different kinds of colors and shades and values in it, we'd wanna know how to make sure that the work that we've put into our dresden plate flowers actually shows up. So, I've made a couple of samples. I'm just gonna start with this one. It's a happy little pink. So that means that's going to be predominantly reading as a warm color. It's sitting in a very light blue sky-like background so that you can see that that would show up. If I were to move that into the middle of the quilt it doesn't show up quite as much. It still does show up because it's a lighter color than most of the colors in the background. And, certainly down at the bottom, that color will show up very well against the dark moodier colors that we have. So, when I get to the point where I wanna applique this down onto a quilt, I'll just find a place where I'm really happy to have it sit and

I'll just sorta secure it there. This little one has very dark blades and very light blades. So, there's a lot of strong contrast within this quilt. So, if I put it up in the sky, what you're going to see are the dark values. The purples are going to stand out and the whites are going to disappear into the background. So, it almost looks as if, and from a distance it might even look, as if there was nothing but the purple standing out against that background. Then, the opposite would be true. See it gets a little bit muddled in the middle. That's the more difficult part, but when we get down to the bottom, the opposite happens. The whites pop out and the purples sink into the background. So, that might be an effect that you'd like to employ in your project. I like that, so I'm gonna put that down there. I like the way that looks, really white and it's coming out of that very shadowy corner of the ground. I showed you this one before. And, some of you might have thought, "Oh that's a bit bold," but you can see that would stand out really nicely against the light background. The strong graphic really allows it to even continue to stand out as it moves through the quilt. But, let's just for purposes put this one up here. Some people need to see a lot of clear definition in their quilts, and if that's you, you need to concentrate on the contrast. Make sure that the elements of contrast that you're working with are very clear. To review that part from before, here we're working with warm colors sitting against a cool background. They're both very light, but because one is warm and one is cool, that one is going to stand out. Here, the contrast element in this particular block is really using two different kinds of graphics that work against each other. A stripe and a spot will always create interest and an element of electricity in the quilt. We touched on fussy cutting. Here's one where we chose instead of fussy cutting specifically, what we did fussy cut for the center of this block, but we also used the blades in the wedge ruler to capture a piece of the design and use that by placing it amongst the stripes. So, you can see that little heart shaped emblem pops right out of the background. This one, again, if we were to put it up here, would blend into the sky. But, it also works really well against that mixed medium background in the middle. And, also looks really good down there against the purple. So, I'll just pin that one down there. We've made a lot of different examples and a lot of different samples using one simple technique with the dresden plate ruler. This is just the tip of the iceberg. I think what would happen if you were to spend a little time and then shop the next time you go and pick one of these tools up, you'll find that you will be able to turn the stash of fabric that you've collected over time into really super creative projects that help you to express yourself with quilting. It's about stepping out of the box and trying something new, but it's very simple as you can see from the techniques. I think you'll get a lot of satisfaction about this and you'll be looking for more soon. Have fun with your wedge rulers.