



## 2020 First Saturday Sampler

### Block of the Month

# Grateful

A quilt by

*Cheran Bee*

Month Eight - Applique Handout



There are several different types of applique you can use on this project. The books directions are written for needle turn applique, but whichever method is your favorite will be just fine.

As always, this is your project. We encourage you to try different methods and find what works best for you.

If you are going to machine applique, there are a couple of things that you can do that will almost always make your sewing time more enjoyable and successful. (this goes for piecing too!)

- ♦ **Clean the bobbin area of your machine.**
- ♦ **Oil your machine**—check your machine's manual if your not sure where to put the oil. A little drop of oil can make all the difference.
- ♦ **Put in a new needle.** If you can't remember the last time you put a new needle in, your probably due. I use a Schmetz Microtex (sharp) in size 70/10 for almost everything. When I machine applique Aurifil 50wt or 80wt and a 80/12 or 70/10 needle seem to work well together.

Believe it or not, the *recommended* schedule for changing your needle is every 8 hours of stitching time!

#### **Fusible Applique:**

This is a fun and quick way to complete applique. Keep in mind that non-symmetrical shapes will be reversed, you'll need to use a window or light table to trace them from the back of the pattern page.

## Supplies needed for Fusible Applique

- ◆ Sharp scissors with a fine point
- ◆ An open-toe presser foot (or at least one you can see thru)
- ◆ Paper backed fusible web (I prefer Soft-Fuse by Shades)
- ◆ A pair of long bent tip tweezers. (optional)
- ◆ A sewing machine that will do a zig-zag, satin stitch, button hole stitch or a blind hem stitch. All of these stitches will work to sew along the edge of your fused applique, choose your favorite!
- ◆ Standard sewing thread in a complimentary neutral color or you can match your thread to the applique pieces. (Again, I prefer Aurifil 50wt or 80wt.)

Follow the manufacturers directions for the type of fusible product you have chosen to use. I am in no means telling you that you have to prewash your fabric, (I don't) but fusible products will adhere better to washed fabric. Since I don't prewash, if my applique pieces lift a little before I get the whole thing sewn down, I just press it again with an iron to get it to stick again.

IF you are using a heavier weight (thicker) type of fusible product, (like Steam-a-Seam lite) you may want to cut out the centers of the fusible product, leaving just a 1/4" around the edges. Especially in areas where there are many layers of fusible product / applique pieces.

Trace the pattern pieces (reversing if necessary) onto the paper side of your fusible product. Cut out roughly, around the drawn lines. Lay the fusible **GLUE SIDE DOWN** on the back of your fabric. Press in place. Cut out on the line. Once all the pieces are cut out, you can place them on the background.

For ALL applique backgrounds, I like to cut my background pieces 1/2" larger than the pattern recommends. I find that when appliqueing (by hand or machine) you handle the fabric so much that the edges get a little frayed. The background can also "shrink-up" a little bit, especially with hand stitching. Once the piece is completed, I'll press it and trim to the size it should be.

Remove the paper and place all of the applique pieces for the entire block in place. I like to use a pair of long tweezers to make fine adjustments in placement. Make sure you like the layout.

Carefully press up and down with a hot iron to fuse in place.

◆ Once everything is fused, you're ready to machine stitch. Using your preferred stitch, go around each piece, securing down the edges. I experimented with stitches and decided I liked the zig-zag on my machine the best. Then I used a leftover piece of binding and starting at the machine's default stitch size sewed for about an inch, then shortened the length and width and stitched again. I kept doing this until I found a combination I liked. Then, I wrote that size and length on a sticker and put it on my machine. On my older Pfaff, the width is 1.5 and the length is 0.8 or 0.7.

## Needle Turn Applique

Needle turn applique is a traditional type of handwork that many people find enjoyable. It's portable and doesn't require many special tools. It also does take some practice. I know many people who are exceptionally good at it - I am not one of them. Needle turn is covered in the book.

### Supplies needed for Needle Turn Applique:

- ◆ Smaller scissors with a sharp fine point
- ◆ Freezer paper
- ◆ Sharp paper scissors
- ◆ Fine weight thread to coordinate with your applique pieces
- ◆ Marking tools; such as a No 2 pencil, white, pink or silver marking pencil or a blue fine tip water soluble pen. (Frixion pens are NOT recommended)
- ◆ A fine medium to long length needle that you are comfortable using. (I like the #10 big eye applique needle by Tulip)
- ◆ Thimble
- ◆ Small pins or thread for basting pieces in place

You'll start by tracing the applique shapes onto the paper side of the freezer paper. Layer the piece with the tracing on it with another piece of freezer paper the same size, **PLASTIC SIDES TOGETHER**. Use a hot iron to fuse these two pieces together. Cut out the freezer paper template with sharp paper scissors.

A word about cutting... you'll get smoother edges around curves if you hold the scissors still and move the paper.

Lightly draw around the templates on the **FRONT** of the fabric for your applique. If you have a template with curves, position the curve to take advantage of the bias of the fabric. It will be easier to get the fabric to turn under on those curves later. If you are cutting more than one piece from a single piece of fabric, leave at least 1/2" between your drawn lines, to allow  the 1/4" seam allowance as you cut out your pieces.

Layout all of the pieces for the applique block to make sure you like the result. Remove all but the bottom layer of applique pieces. Pin or thread baste the applique shapes in place.

Using a single strand of thread, knot the end and take a small stitch under the applique in the background. Using your finger and thumb, fold the seam allowance under and pinch in place so that the drawn line is right along the edge of the fold. Needle should come up very close to the edge thru the applique and go down into the background, coming up again thru background, and the edge of the applique. Continue working around each applique piece. If you are working on a piece that will be under another piece, no need to turn or stitch, it will show less if you just leave it flat. Just make sure there's a 1/4" seam allowance for the other piece to cover.

## Prepared Edge Applique

This method gives you a lot of options. You can make your own freezer paper templates or use commercially available template material, that can either remain in your project or dissolve in the wash. You can stitch the applique pieces down by hand or by machine. It's all personal choice.

### Supplies needed for Prepared Edge Applique:

- ◆ Small sharp scissors with a fine tip
- ◆ Sharp paper scissors
- ◆ Chosen template material (freezer paper/applique paper product)
- ◆ Glue Stick for fabric
- ◆ Basting glue
- ◆ Stiletto or seam ripper with a sharp point
- ◆ Firm pressing surface
- ◆ Thin applique needles or sewing machine
- ◆ Thread in complimentary colors
- ◆ Thimble

If you choose to make freezer paper pieces from regular grocery store freezer paper, you'll need to trace each piece the complete number of times you'll need it. If you are using the C. Jenkins freezer paper, which has a thicker layer of plastic on it, you'll be able to re-use the paper pieces a couple of times.

Trace the designs on the paper side of the freezer paper, *reversing if necessary*. Cut out on the drawn line. Place the paper side on the back side of the applique fabric, using a small dab of glue stick to keep in place, remembering to place the bias of the fabric on the curviest part of the pattern piece. Cut out around the pattern piece, leaving approximately 1/4" seam allowance.

Using a stiletto or the point of your seam ripper and an Iron, turn the seam allowance over to the plastic side of the paper pattern piece, pressing until the fabric sticks lightly to the pattern piece. After the piece cools, you can gently lift the pressed seam allowance off the freezer paper and remove the paper piece to use again.

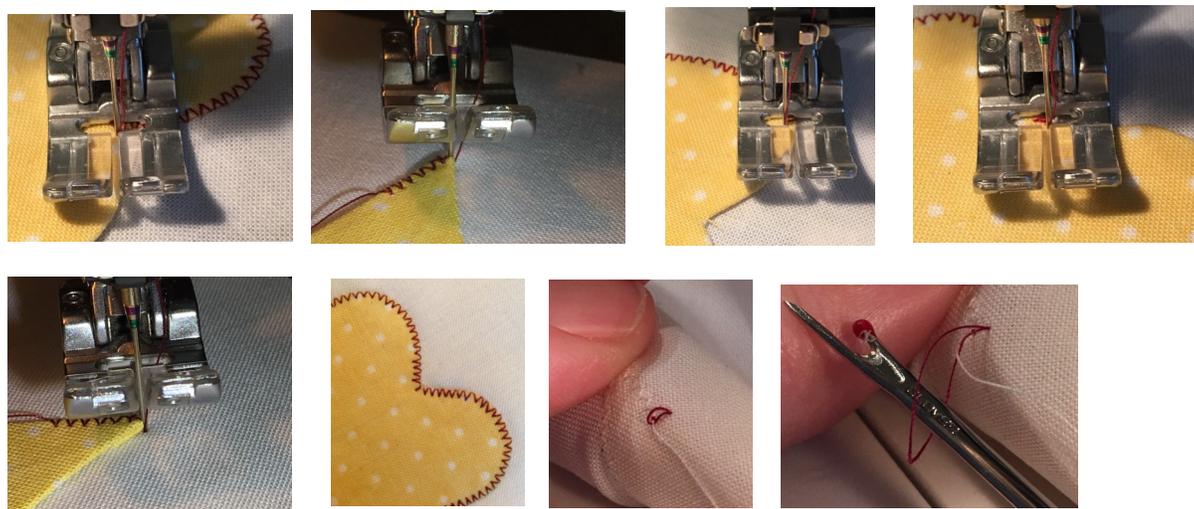
Once all pattern pieces are prepared, layout the entire block to make sure it's the way you want. At this point, you can remove all but the bottom layer and thread or glue baste those in place and begin stitching, either by hand or machine. I like to baste everything in place and do all the stitching at once.

I use a small zig-zag, which I went over under fusible applique.

A few close up pictures of prepared edge applique. Try to have a consistent scant 1/4" seam allowance to turn under. Snip into inside corners, stopping 1-2 threads before the template. It's ok to have little pleats on the back, and if you get a sharp point on a curve, you can lift up the seam allowance and re-do it.



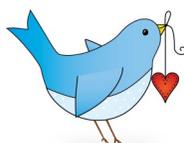
I used a high contrast thread for the demo photo's below. For the small zig-zag I prefer to use, (on raw edge fusible applique and prepared edge applique) I always start the first stitch in the background with the applique piece on the left. This way, I know I have the applique lined up. As you go around corners, stop with the needle down in the applique, lift presser foot, slightly rotate the fabric, lower presser foot and continue. The smaller the curve, the more times you will need to do this. For a point, stitch to the end, stopping in the background on the right, rotate and continue. You may need to make narrower stitches at the point.



I like to pull the top thread to the back and tie a knot, then clip the thread tails. The knot photo's above are shown with high contrast thread. Use the tip of a seam ripper or a stiletto to pull the top thread to the back. (NOT the sharp part of the seam ripper!)

This is a brief summary of some types of applique methods that you can use for this project. For more in-depth information on applique, I highly recommend the book "Simple Applique" by Kim Diehl.

Most of all - HAVE FUN!!!





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Month Eight - Working with wool

Addendum to Applique Handout.



Working with wool is very enjoyable, very portable and much easier than it looks. I am not an expert by any means, and absorb wisdom from wonderful designers like Kim Diehl, Lisa Bongean from Primitive Gatherings, Bonnie Sullivan, Kathy Cardiff among many others.

What works for me is a combination of things. I love Soft Fuse for wool as well as cotton applique. I like to prep all my pieces with the fusible, lay the pattern down on a pinable ironing surface, lay an applique pressing cloth or piece of parchment paper over the pattern.

Now you can lay all of the pieces out, where they go, because you can see the pattern. Lay them, layering the furthest back pieces first and working towards the front. Once all are in place, press all at the same time, being careful to only move the iron up and down, not side to side. I sometimes find I need to carefully turn the wool piece over and press from the back (with the pressing sheet or parchment paper protecting your iron from the glue) to heat thru all the layers.

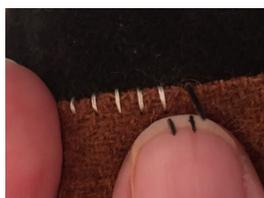
My favorite kernel of wisdom regarding what thread to use on wool applique is from Bonnie Sullivan. She says use whatever thread gives you the look that you want. It can be regular 50wt sewing thread, pearl cotton, wool thread, embroidery floss. I literally use whatever looks the best with the wool. Most often, two or three strands of embroidery floss.

My stitches are by no means perfect. For me, it's more about the space between the stitches than getting them exactly the same length. And if you match your thread well, it'll be harder to see those less than perfect stitches.



Somewhere many years ago, I found this little tip. If you are having difficulty spacing your stitches evenly, you can mark a little stitch spacer on your finger or fingernail. I used contrasting thread so you could see the stitches.

Many people choose to use a blanket stitch to applique wool. I don't personally like that line of thread around the pieces, so I use a simple whip stitch. The great thing about wool is the freedom to do what makes you happy!



For those of you looking for a truly exceptional resource for wool applique, I can highly recommend Lisa Bongean's book:

*"Wool, Needle & Thread: The go-to guide for Wool Stitchery"*