

2015-2016 GLHQ Block of the Month Challenge

January 2016 Block of the Month Challenge Decorative Machine Stitches



Modern sewing machines are loaded with features helping us to sew better, easier and more creatively. As quilters, we have a few “go to” stitches – straight, zigzag and buttonhole stitch. Most machines have many more pre-programmed stitches and January’s flag will let us explore some of these beautiful decorative stitches.

Please read through all of the instructions first. If you don’t have a copy of the General Instructions, please download from the www.GLHQ.org website under ACTIVITIES, Block of the Month 2015-2016, BOM General Directions Link. All seam allowances are ¼” unless noted otherwise.

Materials:

- 6” x 8” fabric for front; should read as a solid
- 6” x 8” thin batting
- 9” x 9” accent fabric – needs to be high contrast to the front fabric; we’ll be applying the decorative stitches to this fabric and then ultimately cutting out the final silhouette/shape and attaching it to the front fabric.
- Two pieces of 9” x 9” medium weight stabilizer (I use Pellon 806 StitchNtear or Linda Hahn’s Foundation Quilt Block Piecing Material)
- 6” x 8” backing fabric
- Thread-- solid, variegated or metallic
- Appropriate needle for thread – recommend 90/14 topstitch or metallic

Sewing Instructions:

1. Select a silhouette/shape that pleases you, this will be the focal point of your flag. I like birds and animals, so I used a cardinal shape for the instruction example. Select a shape that is recognizable without having to draw in details. Some good shapes would be a daisy, teddy bear or a bunny.



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- Using your favorite erasable marking pencil/pen, draw parallel lines across the entire 9" x 9" accent fabric square. For the cardinal flag, I marked parallel lines ½" apart. The distance between lines will depend on the width of the stitch you select and how dense you want your design to be. If you want your design to be denser, mark your parallel lines closer together.
- Place 2 sheets of stabilizer under the accent fabric. Decorative stitches are dense and the stabilizer is going to prevent the fabric from puckering. It is okay to add another sheet of stabilizer part way through the project if you find your fabric warping. Note: the stabilizer will not be torn off.
- Review your machine's repertoire of decorative stitches and select a stitch that gives you the impression you want to convey. If you like, you can alternate a couple of decorative stitches to create a different effect. For the cardinal, I was thinking about winter and used a snowflake stitch. I recommend you stitch out a sample on a scrap piece to decide which one(s) you like, test the tension and the size you like.
- Select a high contrast thread, you want to really see the decorative stitches on the accent fabric. For the cardinal, I selected red metallic thread to make those snowflakes sparkle. In the bobbin, I recommend using a matching color to the top thread. For the cardinal, I used black thread since it seemed to make the snowflakes more defined. The bobbin thread should not show on the top, it is actually good if the top thread is pulled a bit to the back.



- Sew the selected decorative stitch along each parallel line on the accent fabric. Use an open toe or applique foot to allow you to see the stitches develop. Plus these types of feet have a cutout on the underside of the foot to allow thread build up to pass under the foot. Leave the feed dogs engaged (up). You'll need to run at a medium to slow machine speed while you sew.

- Using the silhouette/shape you selected, preview and select the orientation of the stitching lines you like – vertical, horizontal, or at some angle. Mark the shape on the accent fabric. For the cardinal, I selected a vertical orientation reminiscent of falling snow.



- Using your favorite applique method, prepare the silhouette/shape as an applique.
- Mark the flag outline on the front fabric with your favorite erasable marker. This will help you in position your silhouette/shape where you want it.

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10. Attach (fuse or sew) the decorative stitched applique to the front fabric in a pleasing place within the flag outline.
11. Make a quilt sandwich with front fabric right side up, back fabric wrong side down and batting.
12. On the backside of the quilt sandwich mark the Center Top and Center Bottom.
13. Turn the entire sandwich/backing over, so you can see the backside of the quilt sandwich. Again make sure you have marked what is the top and the bottom, because you are going to create the point at the bottom. You do not want to cut off the wrong end!
14. From the bottom, measure up 2" on each side. Draw a line from each side down to the point at the bottom.
15. Cut from the 2" side marks to the bottom of the center bottom point to make the flag point.
16. Sew around the outside (1/4" seam allowance), leaving a 2" long opening (on the top or side) for turning inside out.
17. Trim points, trim the batting close to the seam being careful not to cut the seam allowances from the front or back fabric.
18. Turn right side out. Close opening, add other decorative stitches and/or top stitch around outside of flag with a decorative stitch, if desired.
19. At the top, stitch 3/4" long buttonholes 3/8" in from top and sides of flag at the top.
20. Optional: Add beads or other embellishments to make your design unique.

