

A Light and Dark Block with Setting Variations

by Carole Carter for MadamSew.com

Making a classic block with a light side and a dark side gives you so many different quilts. Quilters have been doing this with the log cabin block since the beginning of quilting. For today, I want to show you a much simpler and faster block to achieve the same look. A classic block called Perkiomen Valley has three half square triangles cutting across the center of the block diagonally. In 2017, Scott Griffin, VP of Ventura Modern Quilt Guild redesigned the block to simplify it and add a bit more interest by leaving the center as a square. This block has been used for charity quilt drives for several years. I found it when making a quilt for fire victims in California, used it again in a charity drive for hurricane victims in my home state of North Carolina and again when my local guild was making quilts for the local domestic violence center. It is very forgiving for many quilters making blocks to be used together, and fast for charity quilt drives.



Cutting and sewing these pieces will make two blocks at one time so you can mix the half square triangles between the blocks. Mix up colors, and have a high contrast between lights and darks. Lights should be white, ecru or very light beiges with subtle prints or tone on tone. Medium-Darks should be mixed colors in each block, or you can use lots of prints in the same color. If you have trouble deciding if a print is light or dark, you may wish to choose another print. Tip, cut generously and sew scantily.

Cutting Instructions for two 12-inch finished blocks.

Multiply by the number you need for your size quilt. Yes, this block works in any size you wish to make, just make your squares the appropriate size for the finished size block you need.

Scrappy darks

4-1/2-inch squares - cut 8

5-1/4-inch squares - cut 2

Scrappy Lights

4-1/2-inch squares - cut 6

5-1/4-inch squares - cut 2

Match the 5-1/4-inch scrappy darks to the same size lights, and mark diagonal lines on the back of the lights. Sew scant 1/4-inch seams on either side of the line, cut apart and press to make 4 half square triangles. If you need a refresher on how to do this, see my MadamSew article [Making Half Square Triangles](#). Use one of each print for each block. Assemble the blocks as shown. Measure the final block to be sure it is 12-1/2-inches.



I think this block works so beautifully in scraps, but it also is amazing with controlled scraps. Scrappy blues with white is so pretty and a classic color combination.



Or try red and white.



The stronger you make the contrast in dark and light, the more dramatic your final quilt will be.



But it also works nicely in a lower volume print selection like these medium value floral prints.



How these blocks are set in the final quilt design makes a variety of quilt designs possible. To experiment with setting designs, I put the block into my computer program for quilt designing and had some fun playing with possibilities. Here are just a few of the ways you can put these blocks together. First, making zigzag rows will produce a type of bargello look that is one of my favorites.



Placing all the blocks with pairs creating triangle peaks creates the setting I call Mountain Peaks.



Playing with the blocks a bit more, I made this design I call Fracture.



Changing the orientation from horizontal to vertical, the same essential arrangement looks just a bit different.



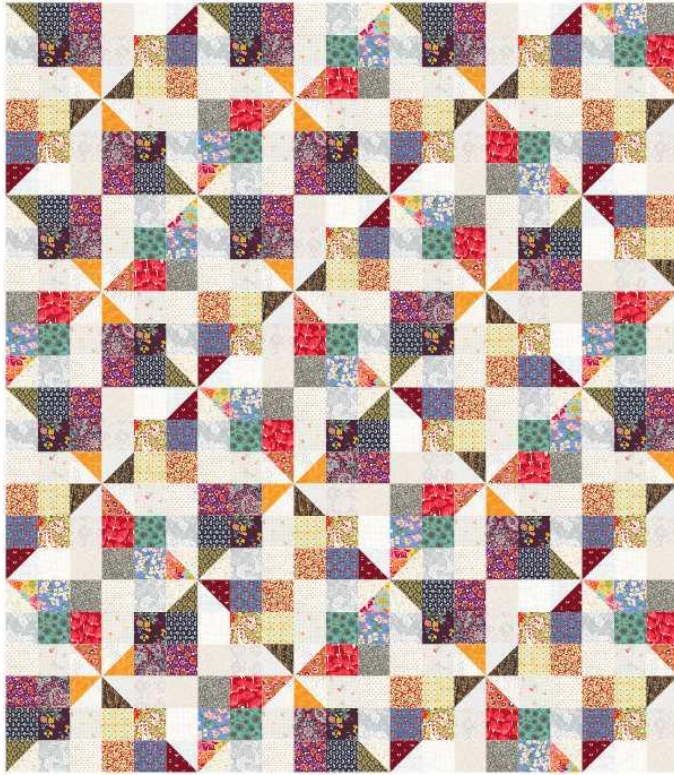
Orienting the points to the center in groups of four produces this look of on-point squares, reminiscent of flowers. I had an odd number of blocks for this one, so I alternated where the half flower blocks went for a bit more interest. If you didn't want that, add or subtract from the total to get rows a bit bigger or smaller.



Creating diagonal stripes gives you another design.



Lastly, orienting points toward each other creates an hourglass look.



Now that you have the idea of how these blocks can go together, here is a virtual quilt show of some of the quilts I've put together from blocks I made myself, or blocks made by groups I've worked with. Here is the zigzag in scrappy colors.



And the same design with the more pastel floral prints gives you this quilt.



Red and white looks wonderful on a quilt. Here are two with those colors, first in a Trip Around the World design. You could move the center towards one edge for an Offset Diamond look.



Here is the Mountain Peaks design in red and white.



Using the stripes design with bars of color gives you a Rainbow quilt.



So there you are, lots and lots of different quilts all from the same light and dark block. Your only limit is your imagination as far as color choices, setting design and finishing. This quilt looks great without borders, but you could add those as well. What can you make?



Have fun quilting!
Carole

I'll be doing more articles to advance your quilting skills on Madam Sew. Subscribe to the Madam Sew blog so you don't miss a thing!