Minna Block with Carolyn Friedlander

Chapter 1 - Introduction
Overview
(ethereal music) - Hi, I'm Carolyn Friedlander, pattern designer, fabric designer, quilter. In this block of the month, we're gonna be using two different techniques, merging them together in the same block. We're gonna be paper piecing to start, and then we're going to be applying some hand-appliqued pieces on top. (ethereal music)

Materials
- The supplies that you'll need are: some hand applique needles, quilting needles for your sewing machine, you'll need a small pair of scissors, small applique pens, you will need your template, which is a PDF for paper piecing, you also need your template for the applique, which is also in a PDF. I've transferred mine on to some template plastic which just makes it a little bit more durable but you can also just use the cut out piece of paper as well. You'll want a cutting mat, a ruler, and a rotary cutter, as well as an iron and ironing mat. I'm going to use some Thread Heaven to condition the thread. You'll need some thread, I'm using 50 weight cotton for both the applique and the machine piecing. You'll want a neutral color for the machine piecing and then you'll want a contrasting color for the hand applique, as well as a matching color for the hand applique. You'll want some fabric scraps for your smaller appliqued pieces in a few different colors. I've got three colors here. You'll want a one inch strip of fabric for your stems to the block and then you also want a three and a quarter strip of fabric for your background. You'll also need your sewing machine and extension table if you have it.

Chapter 2 - Create Block
Paper-piece background and applique foreground
- I printed out the template onto a thin office paper. This is usually what I prefer to paper piece with. I find that it adds really good stability to the block but it's also thin enough that you can see through it. Looking at the block you'll notice a few things. We've got a series of solid lines. As you can see the template is numbered one through 14. There are also two different font styles. There's kind of a darker numbering system and then the lighter fonts. For the darker numbers you'll want to use your green fabric, or darker fabric, and then for your lighter numbers you'll want to use your background fabric. Paper piecing is worked in order, so we're gonna start with numbers one and two. Number one is our darker fabric. So, I usually like to paper piece from just a strip, so I've cut my one-inch strips. And then number two is gonna be my background, so I'm getting these pieces ready. One thing about paper piecing is it's worked on both sides of the paper, so you're gonna get used to flipping it back and forth. Starting from the back of our block, I'm kind of looking through the paper and identifying the different areas. So number two is this area, number one is this thin area. Position it so that one's towards me, and number two is away. I'm gonna take my first strip. I'm laying this over area number one using the length, the long edge of my first piece, bringing that up to the shared line that's between number one and two. It's going to be our first sewing line. So I'm making sure that I have enough fabric on this end. You'll see the edge of the area, first area, is right here, so I want to make sure to come to that, and then push it over like half of an inch to make sure I have plenty of fabric for my seam allowance. I will leave the strip long on this side. Like that, and I'm

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gonna push it up a quarter of an inch to create my seam allowance. For number two, I'm gonna do the same thing. I've got my strip of fabric, and I am going to lay it over area two, which goes from here to here. Making sure I've got plenty of fabric on either side. That looks great, now I'm gonna flip it right sides together. Since I am using a light piece of fabric that's covering the dark piece of fabric, I want to make sure that it's fully covering the fabric, so I wouldn't want it to be aligned like this because once you open it up then there's a chance that you could see the darker fabric behind it. So to prevent that we're going to make sure that not only are our raw edges even but none of the darker fabric is peaking out. It's great to work near a window or a light source so that you can hold the paper up and see through to make sure you've got everything aligned in place. Here I'm double checking that my quarter of an inch seam allowance is in place. So we're gonna flip to the other side. Slide that into our sewing machine, and you're gonna adjust your stitch length to 1.5. I like using a smaller stitch when I'm paper piecing because it makes for a good tight seam and it perforates the paper more so that makes it easier to remove later. I'm gonna drop the needle down at the very beginning of the sewing line. I like to use the hand wheel for this to make sure I'm right at the very beginning. Then I'll drop the presser foot, and I'm going to backstitch at the beginning and end of the line, sewing the full length. Got everything sewed, got our quarter-inch seam which is perfect. Now I'm going to press this background fabric out. Now it's time to trim. First, we left our strips long so I'm gonna go ahead and just clip those off. I'm gonna go by a generous, I'm cutting it about 3/8 of an inch from this outer sew line. Same with this side. If you were starting with a smaller piece that wasn't hanging off the side you don't have to worry about this, but since I worked with the whole strip, I'm just gonna get rid of that, so that it's not in our way. Now, we can see we did one and two. We're gonna move on to number three. Number three is a lighter colored number, so we are going to use our background fabric for that. And our next sewing line is going to be the shared line between one and three, so this one right here. So if I bring it up you can see we've got extra fabric here. Our seam allowance isn't super obvious so in order to trim for our new seam allowance at that line, we're going to fold the paper back along this sewing line. I do it by just kind of looking through the paper to find that line, but if you're having a hard time seeing the line, you can always take an index card and slide it up against the line and then fold your paper against it. Grab your ruler, trim the excess fabric quarter of an inch from that fold which will create your quarter-inch seam allowance. Now we're gonna flip that guy open, and I'm looking at area three through the paper, and I'm seeing that the edge of the block is kind of here where my thumb is, and then it goes all the way down to like here where my other thumb is. So I want to use my fabric, and actually since I have this angled piece, it looks like that'll work. I'm just kind of auditioning it over the area. Looking at the area here, I've got this piece of fabric laid over the area. It's always great to audition your fabrics where they're going to be. One of the frustrations with paper piecing is that it can often be a surprise when you flip that fabric open, if it doesn't cover the area that you were trying to cover. I find that the way to resolve that problem is to audition it over the area that you're actually going to cover, and then when you flip it, don't move it. Don't second guess how it flips, if you flip it right onto your fabrics, your trimmed fabrics below, you shouldn't have any problems. So I've got that flipped. Again I've got a dark fabric underneath a light fabric, so I'm making sure I'm covering that edge. All right I'm gonna bring this to the sewing machine, and you can always just double-check by, I'm holding my paper flat with my left hand and I'm flipping up at the fold to make sure that I've got plenty of background covering that edge. Drop your needle down at the very beginning of the sewing line. Backstitch at the beginning and the end. Go ahead and press your fabric out, and now we are going to trim for our next piece, but first since I've got this long tail our

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next trim would actually be along this sewing line. But to kind of maximize fabric, I'm gonna, eventually this would be a sewing line so I'm gonna fold back along it, and this is very similar to what I did at the last stage when we had the strip going long way that way. I'm just gonna trim it very generously past this fold, like 3/8 of an inch, half an inch, whichever. You just want enough fabric there that when you go to trim it at a quarter-inch you have plenty to cut from to get a nice clean edge. So now I'm gonna go ahead and trim at my next sewing line. One, two, three, four. This one I'll trim a quarter of an inch because it's the line I'm sewing at. And, number four is gonna be my darker fabric. Even though it's hard to see because it's just a thin line, I know that it's back there, and it's going to need to go half of an inch from here, and half over here. I'm just gonna do a rough cut, like that. Flip your fabrics together, turn it over, go to the sewing machine and just continue paper piecing your block until it's all full. I have one piece left to add, so this is done and I've gotten my clean trim a quarter of an inch from the next sewing line. For this last piece it's just gonna go across the top. So now I'm going to lay my fabric right side up, auditioning it where it's going to be. I've got extra fabric on this side. I'm kind of looking through, I can see the edge of the paper is here, so I'm gonna cut a generous bit there. And now I'm going to flip it right sides together. I'm gonna sew this line. Again dropping my needle down. Press that piece out. Now you'll kind of notice that the fabric wants to flap away from the paper. In order to make it easier and hold those pieces together, I like to use a long basting stitch. Turn your stitch length to five. Make sure your fabric is nice and flat against the paper, and I just like to use about three or four stitches to hold it in place. Just kind of along the edges. And at the corner, and you'll notice I'm not stitching on this black line, I'm kind of about a quarter of an inch in from that. Now that we've covered all of our areas on the block, I'm gonna flip to the back and we're going to trim the outside. Here the basting stitches help hold that paper so that when we trim we get a nice even trim all the way around the block. I'm gonna use my ruler and get a quarter-inch trim around all of those outside solid edges. Now that we're all trimmed up it's ready for the next step. Normally if I'm paper piecing I'll leave the paper on the back of the block as long as possible, but since we're doing some hand applique on top of this block it's time to remove it so that it doesn't get into our way. Super simple. Paper removal shouldn't be a problem. First, get rid of those basting stitches. You'll see that we used the long stitch and only doing a couple stitches of them made it very easy to remove. When removing the paper after you've paper pieced, you almost want to work in reverse order, so you'll notice I'm gonna start with number 14. The reason for that is that it's just so much easier, so fold the paper back, apply just a little pressure and it should just rip right off. Always be careful not to distort or stretch your pieces while you're doing this. Now we're gonna be adding the last pieces to the block which are appliqued on. So we've got our block here. I gave it a good press so it's nice and flat. I've got three different fabrics that I'm gonna use for these kind of crescenty flowers, and they're going to be layered on this block. So the first step is to take your template and cut three different pieces. Although you could probably layer more if you really wanted to. All you'd want to do is keep in mind your seam allowances, that you're not gonna be extending past what's going to be seen in the finished block. To cut out your applique, I usually like to trace from the back, especially if it's a really dark fabric, it might be easier to see. Grab your marking tool, just trace out your shape. Now we're going to cut it out. I'm going to cut out two more shapes. One more from my A and one from my B. You can mix up the shapes. Basically the A has a sharp point coming up and the B has a small point coming in. Great thing about template plastic is it will allow you to fussy cut a motif if you have something that you really want to showcase. So let's say I'm using this fabric, and I want to get as much gold in the shape as possible. I can look through my clear template and audition different

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areas to see which one has the look I'm going for. You can see if I have it here, kind of the gold is around the edge, and the center is nice and clear. Or if I move it down here then I have a little bit more line work and definitely more gold. So in this case you'd want to trace it from the front. And then cut it out. There we go. I'm gonna cut out my next piece. I'm gonna use this fabric here, and since I've traced my template onto the template plastic it's kind of a great opportunity to use that to kind of play around with and audition the direction that you want your fabric to go, or if you have a special motif. So if I didn't want my print to be kind of printed on the bias like this, I could kind of play with what it would look like at different angles. Just going to go for it like this. Trace and cut it out. Cut out your third piece from your B template. Once everything is cut out, we're going to position our appliques onto the background, so I've got my block facing up, and I am going to place them, they're gonna be layered, that was kind of the look I wanted to go for, so you can keep that in mind. I think I'll have this one kind of in the back, little ways up. Just keep in mind you're gonna have a quarter of an inch seam allowance on your block, so you kind of want to keep everything within that. I mean you'll lose an eighth of an inch seam allowance around all of the edges of your applique so you could keep that in mind too that you'll lose that, and then you've got your block seam allowance. I think this looks pretty good. So I've got some that have come down onto my piecing here, and I've got this one piece that's not gonna be affected by any of the seam allowances under it. I'm gonna pin everything in place, using my applique pins. These applique pins are really great, because they're super small and they don't get in your way, but yet they hold your project in place. So you'll notice I'm gonna pin these pieces. These two pieces are on top of this piece in the back. So I'm gonna be appliqueing this one first but I want to make sure to have these positioned so I can come back to it later. So I'm kind of pinning on two sides, so that I have the position marked, and then, I like how that looks. I'm just gonna flip this side away, pin it out of the way, like that. Same with this one. Like that. And now I will finish pinning this guy. Actually think I'm gonna do like that, and then one on either side. Start your basting. Grab a seam gauge, and we're gonna be basting a quarter of an inch from the raw edges of this entire piece. You really want your basting stitch to be an even quarter-inch. So, you'll notice with my basting thread I didn't knot it. You do not need to knot your basting thread. And you're just going to continue around. I am to the point where I just eyeball my quarter-inch, but if you're just starting out, go ahead and just check in every few stitches with your seam gauge to make sure you're at a quarter of an inch. When I was first getting into applique I used my seam gauge to double-check myself for a long time before I stopped using it and felt comfortable that I was doing a good even quarter of an inch. You're just gonna go all the way around. You can see I'm rocking the needle back up and down for a few stitches at a time. This can really get to be quite a speedy part. But if you don't want to do it by hand and would rather use your machine to baste these on, you can. It's not usually what I recommend. I find that doing it by hand just allows you to be much more agile around different shapes. Plus it doesn't mark the fabric as much, so if you are going to use your machine to do it, then make sure you have a super sharp needle and you're not marring the fabric at all. So with these shapes, the difference between A and B is that A kind of has this upward slope on either side so we've got a little bit of a point here. I'm gonna make sure to baste a stitch right at that point, so you see I put my needle in in line with that corner, so I know where it is. You can take out your pins as you come to them. We're almost all the way around. All right so I finished out the shape. Go ahead and cut my thread, leaving my tails long and not knotted. And just since this is, these other two pieces are layered on top of this one, I'm going to go ahead and fully applique this one. If they were three separate shapes then I would baste all three and applique them together, but because of the layering, I'm gonna fully finish this one first.

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I'm now going to switch over to a thread that matches my applique. For this first one, since it has a cream background, that's the thread that's really going to work best. If I were going to choose a darker thread it would show up a little bit. The white is really better. If you're using a thread conditioner it's pretty simple. Just hold it up against the conditioner and pull it through. I usually pull it through a couple times from one direction, and then the other. Knot the end of thread that you cut from. That will make sure that you're using the thread in the same direction that it came off of the spool. This will result in fewer knots. So now it's time to applique. This applique has an outside curve, a couple straight lines and kind of a subtle point coming up here. You always want to start at a place where it's not changing too much, so I wouldn't want to start on a corner basically in this block. I'm gonna start along this top straight side right in the middle. To do the applique stitch, bring your raw edge in to meet your basting stitch. This will give you a perfect 1/8 inch seam allowance and that's why you really want a good accurate basting stitch. After you're done basting that's really the hardest part. Bring your needle up through the fold of the fabric. You'll see I'm right here in the middle of what I folded under. And I've knotted my fabric, or knotted my thread. And now you're just going to continue to fold your fabric under, and make a stitch by going straight down, right next to where you came up, but only through the background fabric, and then up through the fold of the applique. I usually like to make a stitch that's about 3/16 of an inch, so not yet a quarter of an inch, but a little more than 1/8 of an inch. Somewhere in the middle there. I've also got this point here, and because I basted, put a stitch right here in the corner, I know that's where I want the corner to be. So I'm going to stitch to it. Stopping right in line with that stitch that's supposed to be at the point. So it's going to be like right there. To get that nice little point, now I'm going to fold under this next side. Now this is a very subtle point but you can get a little bit of one, do that one, by folding it over. Actually I think I need to make one more stitch, like that. And now fold under your next straight edge. Making that nice little point. Now you're gonna give a couple more stitches into that point, and then continue down the side. This next corner right here will be a little more prominent, noticeable than this first one that we did. But I'm gonna do the same thing. I'll stitch until I get to that next row of basting stitches. A couple stitches away. All right, so I'm gonna do one more stitch and line it up with this next row of basting stitches, like that. Now you're going to fold, this side under, and if you have any extra threads or anything hanging out to the side you can just use your needle to help pull everything in nice and clean. Do a couple stitches here at the corner. These will help pull any loose pieces in nice and tight. And so now you're just going to continue along this bottom edge, and the trick to getting a smooth outside curve is to first have smooth basting stitches, but then the next trick is to be folding and stitching in tandem, so rather than folding this whole circle and then stitching to catch up, you're folding and stitching, folding and stitching. So I've stitched all the way around, and I just have a couple more stitches to go. Well just one more will finish me out. And so, made that stitch and now I'm going to go to the back of my piece, and I'll grab up just a couple threads from the backing fabric. Make a knot, and do just a couple more of those and then trim my thread. All right, so that's done. Because this piece is layered behind these other two I'm gonna go ahead and remove the basting stitch. To do that all you need to do, slip your scissors in and pull it out. To finish your last two pieces, simply unpin them. Lay them nice and flat. Like that. And now we're going to go ahead and baste quarter of an inch from the raw edge of both of them and then switch over to a matching thread and applique them in place. I'm now to the third piece, the third and final piece, and from this piece I cut it from the B template. The difference with the B template is that we have a slight indentation here. Want it to come to a point. In order to come to that point, once I reach this stage, about to round that corner,

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I'm just going to clip into the seam allowance, right at the point, a little less than 1/16 of an inch. Remember you only have an 1/8 of an inch seam allowance so I'm gonna go shy of half of that. And just that little clip will allow you to get that nice indent, so I'm gonna finish my corner. Okay. I'm actually gonna go ahead and clip this little bit of excess fabric there. And now, turn it under just as before. Get your stitches in there to hold it in place and this should be a nice smooth flat line. If you notice that your fabric is pulling and it's puckering a little bit then that means your tension is too tight. It's not a problem. All you have to do is just kind of massage that thread back into place to smooth it out. All right, so I'm right here at this point. I'm gonna flip to the other side. And use the needle to kind of work in that point to make it nice and pointy. I'm gonna stitch closer. Now that I'm at the point, you can use a stitch to really pull it in nice and tight, like that. Continue along the upward slope and finish the rest of your shape. Give your block a good press and now you can sit back and enjoy your completed block. In this block we did two techniques. It was really fun to combine them because the paper piecing allowed us to create a cool background that's nice and linear, and clean and flat, and then on top of that we used hand applique to give us some curves as well as some layering.

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