

# STITCHING BOOK CLUB



January 2024

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## What's In the Hoop?

I don't have a lot of winter themed stitches, but this was one of my earliest designs and I still love the way it turned out. For this one, I designed the pattern in a square shape but tilted it during the finishing so that it sits as more of a diamond. This allowed for crisper lines because stitching on a diagonal is always going to be more disconnected than stitching in straight lines.

This pattern is one sale in my Etsy shop for the remainder of January for 20% off!

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## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR HOST

Welcome to a new year! Let's take a moment to give ourselves a pat on the back for making it this far.

I hope you all made it through the holiday season rather unscathed. I took a lot of time to give my body the rest that it needed and focused on bringing peace to my mind and calm to my heart.

I've teased you for the last couple of newsletters about a big project that I have been working on. Although it still isn't ready—*why do things always take so much longer than planned for?*—I am close enough that I am ready to reveal to you that the new and improved Stitching Book Club is on its way!

For years I have been toying with the idea of creating a website and over the past several months I have been working very hard to make it a reality. In fact, that's why I've been so silent over the past several months, because this work has consumed every hour of every day, and I am so pleased to see that is nearly finished. I've packed a lot into the website including reference material, tutorials, all our past newsletters, and plenty more. The one thing to note is that my shop will still be exclusively on Etsy. There will be a "Shop" page on the website with everything listed and links to purchase, but all transactions will still be placed through Etsy which is just easier for me and you, I think. I'm not quite ready to announce the opening date for the site yet, but I will make sure to send a special edition of the newsletter with all of the juicy details when it is ready.

As for this month, I have two freebies for you! There is a small stitch like has been provided in all past newsletters entitled Snowflake Blossom (which I could not get to photograph well at all! Sigh...), but there is also another pattern that is part of a yearlong SAL! I've wanted to do a freebie SAL for a long time and the start of a new year seems like the perfect time to begin.

You might notice that the center of Snowflake Blossom, is the same as the first block of the Little Moments yearlong SAL. I will admit that I designed Snowflake Blossom first and had actually finished stitching the model before the idea for the yearlong SAL came to me. I realized that the middle motif of Snowflake Blossom would be perfect for the January block of the SAL, too. So, I decided to go with it! I hope some of you will join me for this SAL which is a choose-your-own-materials SAL. Being able to use materials from your stash will hopefully be helpful for you as I know after the holiday season we are all keen to stitch-from-stash for a while.

Overall, I am wishing you all a happy bookish/stitchy January and I look forward to sharing so many new things with you soon!



*Winter at Grand Canyon National Park (2023).*

Happy stitching! Love, Kristin Ashley

Cornflower Blue is such a soothing color. The darker tones in particular are my favorite. Is it blue? Is it purple? It is both and it is delicious!

I think this is the perfect winter color to stitch with because there is something rather cold in its appearance, but rather than stitch with icy blues (which are also lovely), I think cornflower blue reflects the true darkness of a dreary winter which has a beauty all its own.

# Color of the Month

“Cornflower Blue - medium”  
DMC 793



## WHAT I'M READING

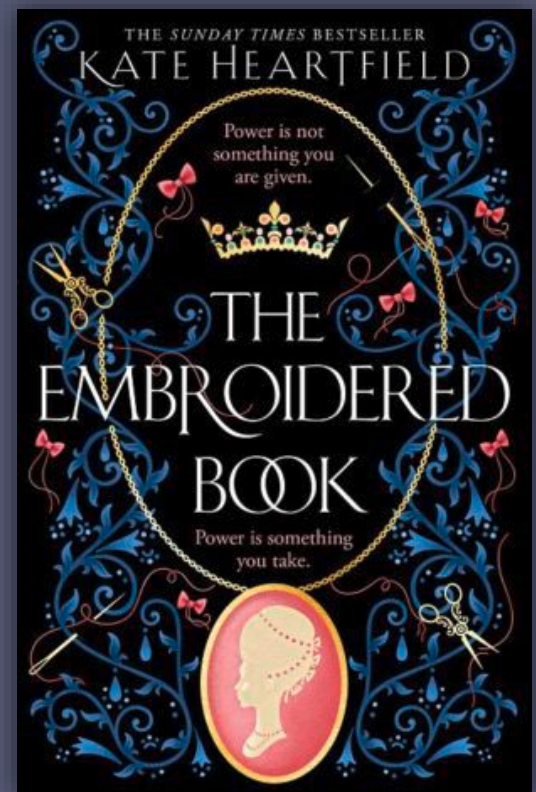
This year I have compiled a list of 12 books that I intend to read—one for each month. I welcome you to join me on this literary journey. But keep in mind, I have not read any of these selections, so I am unaware if there is any questionable content or if they are even good books.

For my first selection I chose *The Embroidered Book* by Kate Heartfield. The provided synopsis for this novel is as follows:

“1768. Princess Charlotte, daughter of the Habsburg empress, arrives in Naples to marry a man she has never met. Her sister Marie Antoinette is sent to the mirrored corridors of Versailles.

Alone, but not powerless, as children, they discovered a book of spells—spells with dark and unpredictable consequences.

For every spell requires a sacrifice. And as love between the sisters turns to rivalry, they will send Europe spiraling into revolution.”





COMING SOON  
the  
Stitching Book Club Website

Curated pages, reference guides, new  
merchandise, and more!

A special edition newsletter will be sent out with more information once  
everything is set, and all release dates have been decided.

Opening date TBD

# SETTING GOALS FOR THE NEW YEAR

It's that time of year when everyone is making resolutions and setting goals for themselves to hopefully be achieved throughout this new chapter of our lives. While these can be fun things to do and can help keep us motivated, it can also lead to a lot of stress and self-pressure. So, let's take a moment to chat about setting healthy goals for ourselves in this new year.

Hobbies are supposed to be our fun time. So why give ourselves goals that we have to work toward meeting rather than simply enjoying our past times?

Obviously, many people do not set hobby goals for themselves, and that is perfectly fine. But, for many, setting goals or to-do lists is the best way to keep ourselves motivated and our hectic minds in line. I don't know about you, but sometimes I spend more time trying to decide what to read or stitch than I do actually reading or stitching, and having a pre-determined list can help minimize that indecision. It's also a sad fact that many of us are so over-worked and overwhelmed that we often forget to even think of our hobbies. So, having a set goal or list can remind us that, "oh yeah, I need to make time for that."

Making and completing lists also has a unique side effect on our bodies and minds. It's undeniable that there is something incredibly satisfying about having a to-do list and getting to check things off as they are completed. We all know what it's like to walk around daily feeling the weight of everything that needs to be accomplished in the day's hours sitting heavily on our shoulders. The thrill of completing a task is known to have a positive effect within our bodies, both in releasing our physical tension and releasing endorphins that give us that warm, tingly feeling in our brains. And the bigger the task, the bigger the emotional reward. I mean, there is hardly anything better than that feeling of relief after we finally submit our taxes each spring and we don't have to think about it anymore. Oh happy day! Am I right?

Well, we get that same feeling of relief, perhaps at a much smaller level, from completing our daily tasks too. The more you get done, the more these little moments of relief add up, again, thanks to those endorphins that flood us when we get to put that little x in the box marked complete. So, even if reading a book or completing a piece of cross stitch is not something that HAS to be done, you can still experience the same effect of satisfaction by completing these non-essential tasks. Therefore, setting personal goals (reading or stitching) allows us to experience that sense of completion, that endorphin burst, whilst doing something that is already enjoyable to us. It's sort of a win-win! In a way, setting goals and making to-do lists is a pleasurable hobby in its own.

How did I pick my goals for the year?

I'm not usually one for setting goals for myself, at least not when it comes to my hobbies. Sure, I have a list of projects that I would like to get done and books that I would like to read. But I never usually put them to a timeline. This year, however, I decided to make myself a reading list—one book for each month of the year. I will admit, I did the same thing last year and epically failed. I only read three of the twelve books that I had planned. But that's okay! I took my book list down off my corkboard on January 1<sup>st</sup>, with a little bit of a sigh, but all-in-all I didn't feel disappointed in myself because hobbies should never be about pressure. I wish that I had made more time for reading, but I'm not going to beat myself up for not doing it.

This year, however, I am a little more determined to get through my reading list, not because I am trying to force myself to read more for the mere sake of saying I've read more, but because I have recognized that over the past several years I have taken less and less time to enjoy my hobbies, hence why I only read three books last year. I have been burying myself in work and stress and the constant need to be doing something "productive", and I'm realizing that this is contributing to my overall poor health. We as living beings need time each and every day to relax, do something enjoyable, and stop feeling like if we aren't doing something "productive", we are wasting our time. Rest is never a waste of time.

That being said, I am still not going to force myself to read. If there are nights when my brain is feeling wrung out, I will put on the TV instead. This is a no pressure zone. But I'm hoping that if I can get myself into the habit of reading again, I will eventually find myself eagerly grabbing my book and escaping to different worlds the way I used to when I was younger.

My stitching goals are a little bit less structured than my reading list but more organized than they have been in the past. I really don't have time to stitch anything other than my own designs anymore which is unfortunate, so firstly I made the goal of stitching at least one small design by another designer. I have not selected the design yet, but it should be enjoyable working on something that is not mine so that I am not spending the whole time knit picking whether each stitch of the design is right or should be changed. Again, this is about taking away stress and doing something purely for enjoyment.

As for my own designs, I have a horrible habit of not doing holiday/seasonal stitching or designing until the season is already upon us. I have such a hard time looking ahead, so when Spring rolls around, for example, a bunch of Spring designs will pop into my head. But by the time I design and stitch models, the season is nearly gone which isn't good for those of you that would like to stitch the designs yourself for the season. So, I have several designs that I started "too late" last year that I have scheduled to be completed and ready to go before their seasons this year. I'm

sure I will find things to distract myself with along the way, but having things prepped before they are needed will also reduce the amount of stress that I put upon myself. And, as you can see, that is the entire purpose of my goals this year...goals and schedules that at the end of the day help to lessen my stress. I'm hoping that when combined with those happy endorphins I spoke of earlier, I'm in for a much more Zen and relaxed year.

So, what got me thinking about all of this to begin with and why did I say that there are negative aspects to setting goals?

I recently joined a bunch of Facebook groups that focus on different genres of novels in an attempt to find some good book recommendations to add to my list. What I found there was utterly shocking to me.

Did you know that there are people who read over 300 books a year? To say that my mind was boggled is an understatement. How? I mean...how? I was so intrigued that I started conversations with several of these people and kept a close eye on conversations others were having about their reading habits.

The first thing that I learned is that I am a slow reader. I always assumed I was a fast reader because when I get really invested in a book, I can knock out a hundred pages before I even noticed. But apparently, I was wrong in this assumption. There are far more speed readers out there than I ever thought. I was under the impression that that was a rather rare talent, but it seems it is not. So, reading a book in a day is not a problem for a lot of people. And to that I say kudos! That is not something I could ever do or that I could even fathom doing every single day of the year, but I absolutely tip my hat to those who are able to pull it off.

I also found that many of them admitted to not necessarily liking many of the books they read but reading them anyway. Let's face it, there are a lot of very poorly written books out there. Finding those literary gems that are truly good, is extremely hard and it takes a lot of work to locate them because everyone's tastes are different. Overall, I am not the type of person that can force myself to continue on with a novel if it is not grasping my attention. I am an incredibly picky reader and if a book is written poorly or if it is moving at too slow of a pace, I have no problem calling it quits. The time I do spend reading, I want to enjoy, so pushing through a book that I'm not enjoying is not something I am likely to do. But, I suppose if you have the ability to read an entire book in the matter of a couple of hours, it takes much less commitment to finish something that isn't necessarily your cup of tea, then you can move onto something that suits you better.

So, in all it was very interesting to me to learn just how different reading habits can be. There's no wrong way or right way, it's very much up to the individual. However, what I also found in these groups was some rather alarming behavior involving reading goals and these mass book counts.

As you can imagine, I was not the only one in these groups astounded by the amount of literature some members claim to consume each year. And, Facebook being Facebook, fights started breaking out over these intense book counts. Now, if you have the ability and want to read a book a day, by all means, go for it! If that is what makes you happy, it is no one else's concern. But, in these groups there were people gleefully sharing that the way they accomplish it is by "not sleeping" and "not spending any time with friends or family". Things were said like, "I literally do nothing else but read." Again, if that's what floats your boat, who am I to say it's wrong. But I think the problem occurs when a lot of these habits are being flamed by social media.

Social media is known to have negative effects on our lives in a lot of ways but none more so than how it has exponentially increased the way we judge ourselves against others on the internet. From pristine houses to lavish vacation photos, we can't help but feel down on ourselves from time to time even if we know that the majority of what we see online isn't necessarily true to reality. So, when we see people on TikTok or Instagram with entire bookcases of books that they have read in a year, when they hold up entire stacks and say that this is their reading list for January, they may not have the intention of influencing other people's reading habits, but it inadvertently does. It's not their fault, it's not that they shouldn't share their reading habits with the world. But whether we mean to or not, it breeds an atmosphere of competition. Pretty soon we see people in these online book groups putting themselves down because they "only read 50 books this year," and commenting on how they are going to "have to try harder next year." I also saw people in absolute panics because they didn't reach their goal for the year and were trying to cram it all in at the last minute. Again, it's not the fault of the person sharing their large accomplishments, but just an unfortunate side effect of online communities and human nature. And it's important to note that when we set goals and don't reach them, those little endorphin bursts don't happen, and instead we can feel anxiety and a sense of failure.

Maybe we can trace things like this back to our school days where we used to be able to win a personal pan pizza from Pizza Hut by reading a certain number of books each quarter. But I did notice that the extreme book counts were much more prevalent in the book groups that involved more young people. Whereas the book groups that had mostly older members were pleased to have read maybe 20 books in a year. Again, this points toward social media and things like BookTok that are primarily attended by the younger generations for being a bit more of a driving force behind this phenomenon. We see this happening in so many different ways, like the recent Stanley cup pursuit. We are social creatures, we thrive on being a part of something and sharing in an activity or interest. So, if your favorite book influencer is showing you the 30 books that they



are going to read next month, it's so easy to decide that you want to do that too. And that's fine! But changing sleeping patterns and the like to reach a goal that is unnatural to you, is not going to have the positive effect that you may hope for.

And that's the key to it. Personal goals should never be based on other people's habits.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that reading 365 books in a year is an impressive feat and if that is the type of reading that comes natural to you, that's brilliant. But no one should feel like they are "less than" because they can't chart those kinds of numbers. Did you know that if you only read one book last year, that put you ahead of 48 percent of the population in America? And the thing is we're not in school anymore, at least most of us aren't. We're not going to get a failing grade, we're not going to be the only person that doesn't get a golden star, literally no one is going to think less of us because we didn't read as many books or stitch as many things as we said we were going to in a year or as much as others have done. So, let's take it easy on ourselves.

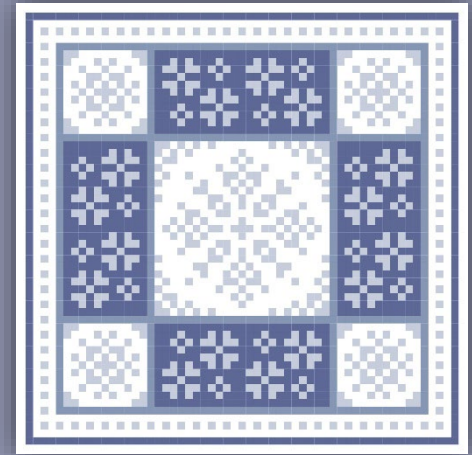
I've focused mostly on books so far, but the same can be said for cross stitch. One of the many reasons I stopped making Flosstube videos is because in comparison to some other stitchers, I felt like I had nothing to show. How could I make a video that anyone would want to sit and watch when all I had completed was a small section of the same design that I had shown the week before and there are other stitchers who had multiple finishes every week? These thoughts, of course, stem from my own personal demons. But I think a lot of people share those with me.

That's why I gave myself goals this year that I think are very achievable for me. They're not based on "improving" anything or pushing myself outside my regular limits. They are more of nudges, to remind myself to take time to enjoy my hobbies. We have enough stress in our daily lives that our hobbies do not need to add to that stress.

Whether you read 1 book or 100, complete 5 cross stitch pieces or 50, you should be proud of yourselves for finding time throughout the year to do something that you love. Not everyone manages that. I think it's oh-so important that we never let our hobbies turn into stressful or guilt-riddled activity. That strips the enjoyment from it, and I think you'll find that a hobby can quickly turn into just another daily chore that you do out of obligation rather than desire. Please don't let that happen to you.

So, no matter what your goals are for the year, how about we set an overarching goal of, "I am going to enjoy every book and every stitch that I complete." After all, that is one goal that we should all be able to achieve if we are being true to ourselves.

# Snowflake Blossom



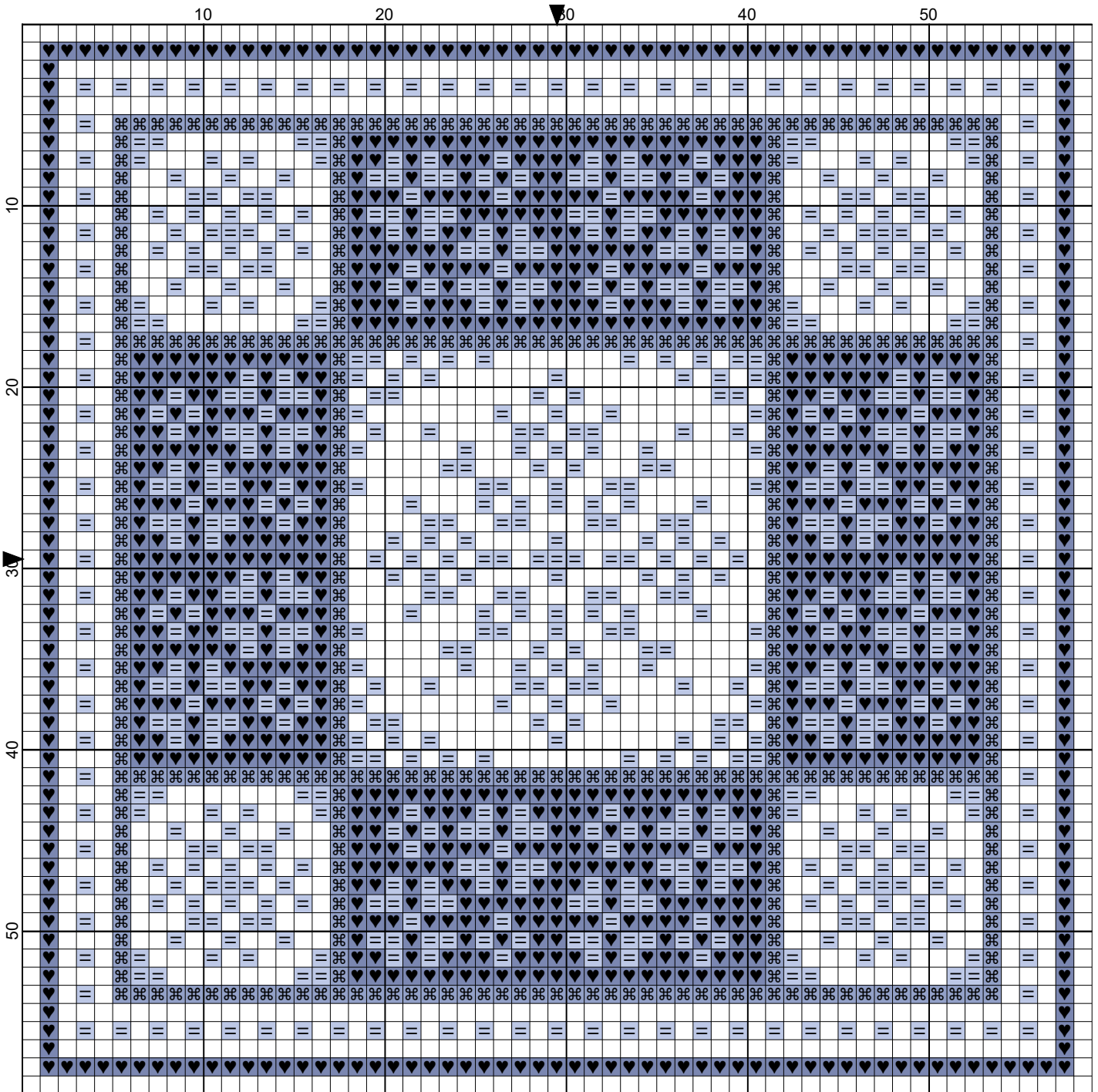
## Materials:

**Fabric:** 8 inch X 8 inch for 14 count or 28 count 2 over 2. Model is stitched on 14 count White Opal Aida by Zweigart. The design area for this design is 59 X 59 stitches.

### Legend (2 strands of floss):

♥	♥	DMC Cotton 793	cornflower blue - md
⌘	⌘	DMC Cotton 794	cornflower blue - lt
=	=	DMC Cotton 157	cornflower blue - vy lt

# January Block by Sapphire Mountain Handcrafts



©Sapphire Mountain Handcrafts

Legend:  
 DMC-793  
  DMC-794  
  DMC-157



# Monthly Stitch-A-Long

## Join me for a year-long freebie stitch-a-long!

Want to participate in a year-long stitch-a-long but worried about committing to such a large project? I have the perfect SAL for you! While this SAL will extend for the entire length of the year, the monthly stitching requirement is minimal. This means that you will be able to fit it into your stitching schedule with ease. What's even better is that it is a **stitch-from-stash** SAL. While I will be providing the floss colors that I am using each month, I encourage you to use what you have on hand to make this piece entirely your own!

The design features a small motif that represents each month. For example, January is a snowflake. February will be geared towards Valentine's Day. I think you get the idea...

## What you will need:

### Fabric:

One piece of fabric measuring 11 X 13 inches for 14 or 28 count (2 over 2). It will be stitched in portrait orientation (taller than it is wider) and allows for a 2 inch margin on all sides.

I chose to work with my hand-dyed fabric Garden Gate (not yet available for purchase but coming soon!). I think this design will look particularly fabulous on dark fabrics, especially when paired with bright flosses. However, I also love the appearance of white fabric with more muted colors.

But the choice is entirely up to you!

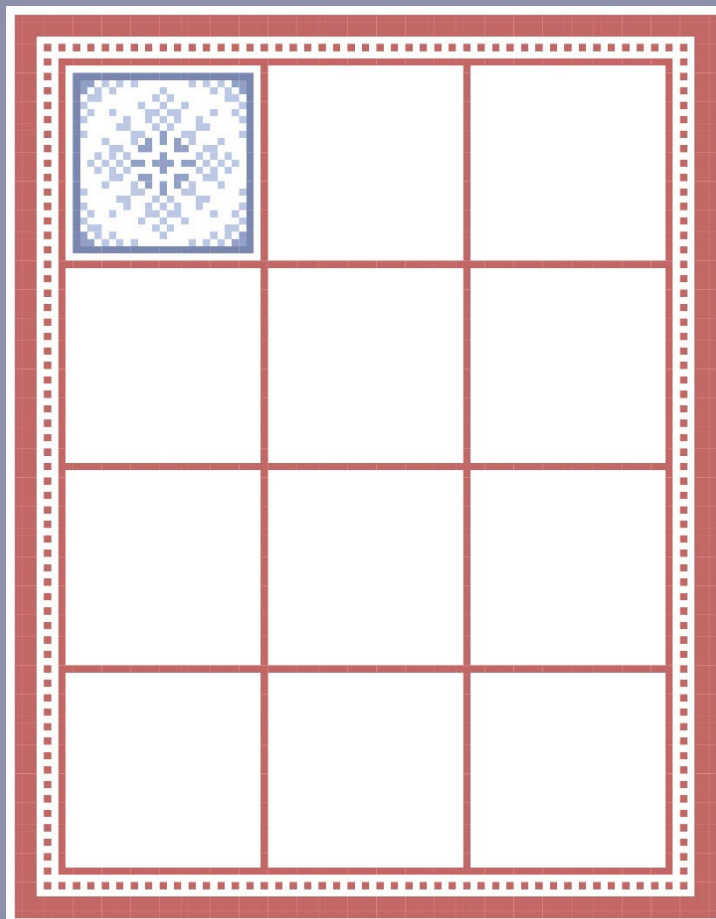
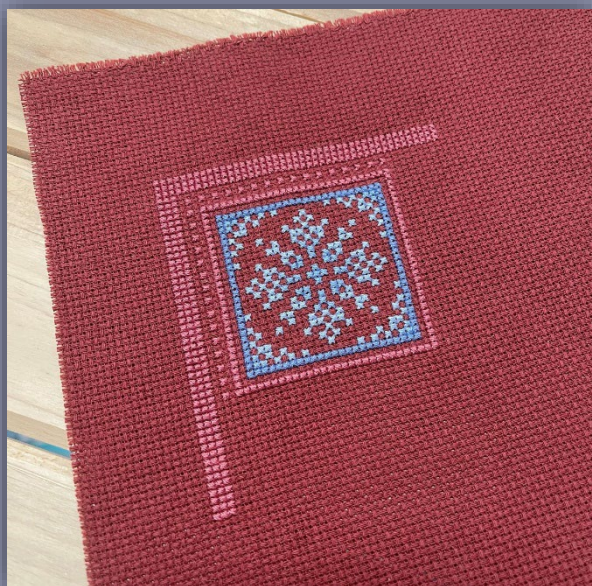
### Floss:

The only color of floss that requires a significant amount will be the border color. You will need 2 skeins of whatever color you choose.

The rest of the floss colors are minimal and change each month but will feature a full rainbow of colors including blues, pinks, greens, purples, and oranges.

While I have provided the entire border, do not feel required to stitch the entire border as we begin. I will be stitching the border as I go along each month. If you would like to stitch the entire border as we get started, please make sure to triple count all those stitches so that the boxes are the proper size. I don't want the frog visiting you all later in the year!

# Little Moments



This is a stitch-from-stash SAL, please feel free to choose your own materials for this design. Listed below are the colors I am using.

## *Legend (2 strands of floss):*

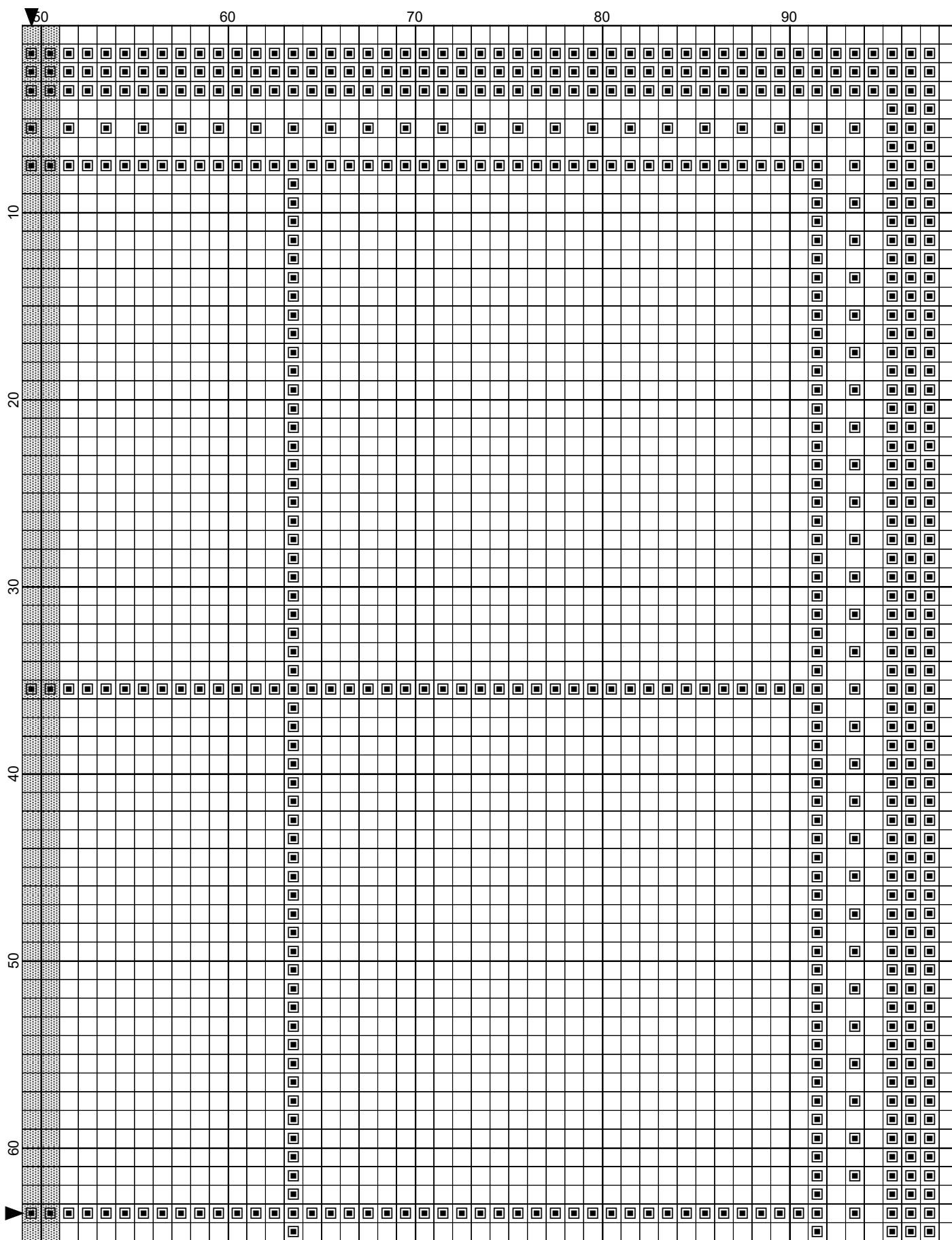
▣	DMC Cotton 3722	shell pink - md
★	DMC Cotton 793	cornflower blue - md
≡	DMC Cotton 794	cornflower blue - lt
✓	DMC Cotton 157	cornflower blue - vy lt

Little Moments by Sapphire Mountain Handcrafts

10 20 30 40 50 60

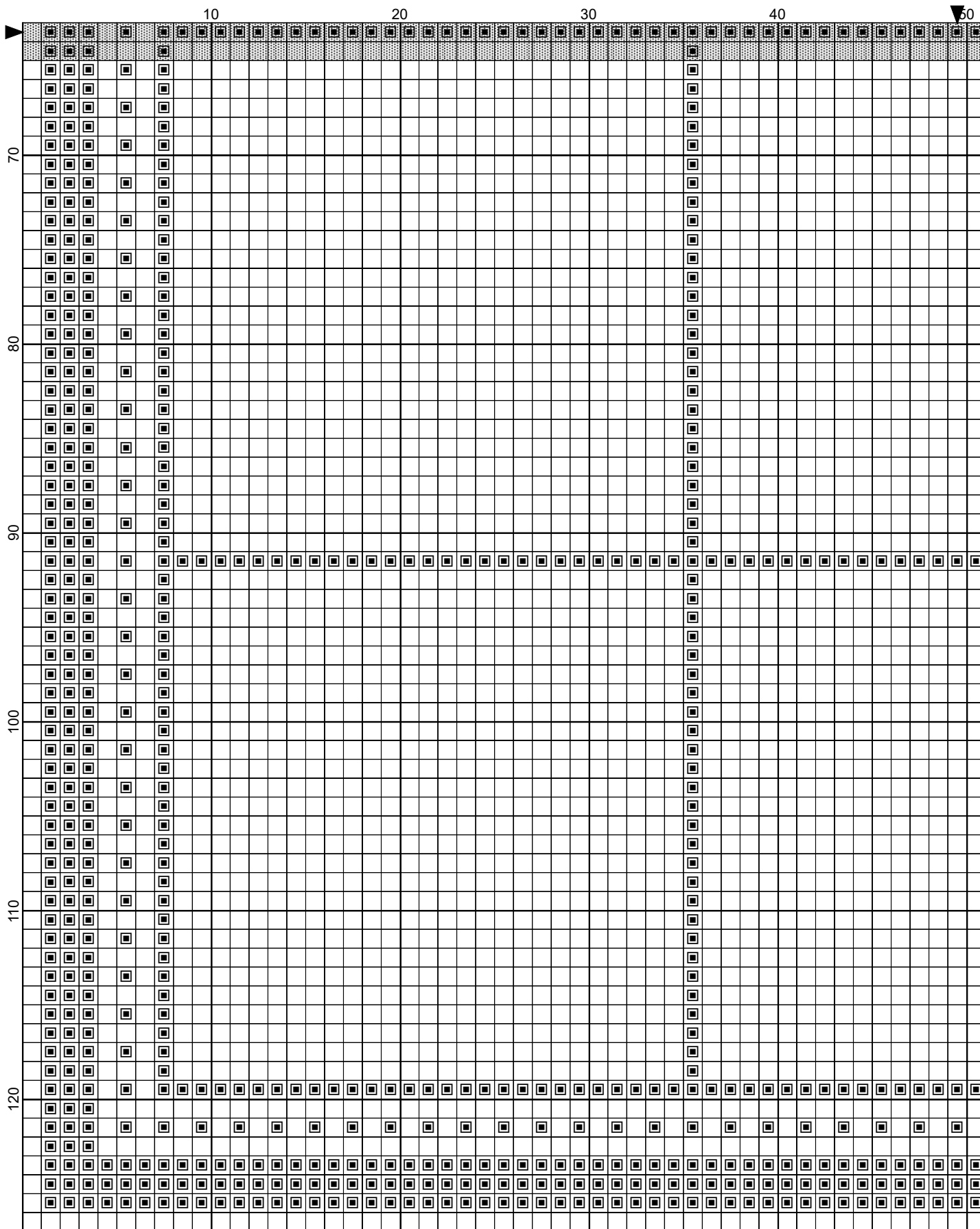
60

Little Moments by Sapphire Mountain Handcrafts





Little Moments by Sapphire Mountain Handcrafts



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