



Project English and Art

People have always used pictures to express themselves and their culture, so different parts of the world have different art traditions. This project starts with a look at some western paintings. Then you will find out about Australian Aboriginal art and give an art presentation.

STEP 1: Talk about art from your own culture

-  a) Share your ideas about these three paintings.
-  b) What do you know about the artists?

USEFUL PHRASES

- It's a portrait/self-portrait/religious painting. It shows ...
- The first thing you notice is ... The style is quite careful/free/...
- The light/colours/ ... bold¹/beautiful/unusual/...
- The atmosphere seems ... • I (don't) like the painting because ...



- ▲ Andy Warhol painted Marilyn Monroe in 1962.
- ◀ This is a Vincent van Gogh self-portrait from 1888.
- ◀◀ This Madonna was painted by Sandro Botticelli in 1485.

STEP 2: A first look at Australian Aboriginal art

- a) *Aboriginals have one of the oldest continuous art traditions in the world, with rock paintings from 20,000 years ago. Use the text an Aboriginal wrote about 'The Dreaming', by modern artist Naiura, to help you talk about what you can see in the picture.*

The Dreaming is the place of our ancestors, our past, and the place that we go to when our short time in this life has come to an end. We tell of the Dreaming in the stories in our art, on a rock, on tree bark², or most recently, on canvas³. The painting here shows many daily activities – a territory argument, hunting, fishing, cooking and different food sources⁴. It is how Naiura imagines our ancestors in the Dreaming.



-  b) Do research to find out more about the Dreaming (also called Dreamtime).

¹bold [bəʊld] = strong, powerful • ²bark [ba:k] = the 'skin' of a tree • ³canvas ['kænvəs] = the same thing a ship's sails are made of • ⁴source [sɔ:s] = where sth comes from

TIP

Understanding art from a different culture is easier if you know something about that culture.


STEP 3: A closer look at style and technique

a) Read this information about Aboriginal art.

Australian Aboriginal art can be naturalistic or abstract.

- Naturalistic pictures are of people, animals or plants. An 'X-ray'⁵ technique is often used to show the internal organs of animals.
- Typical elements in abstract designs are circles, 'U' shapes and lines. These are religious symbols. Circles represent sacred⁶ places. Lines represent the paths of ancestors or systems of water or roots⁷.
- Both styles, naturalistic and abstract, are often in the form of 'dot'⁸ paintings', pictures which are created with small dots of paint. This is a very old technique and it is still an important part of Aboriginal culture.

b) Describe the styles and techniques in the two works of art on this page.

 c) Now look again more closely at the painting in Step 2. What new or different aspects do you see now that you didn't notice or understand before?



An Aboriginal shield⁹ from the 19th century

STEP 4: Do a project

Work in pairs or groups. Choose **one** of these projects and give a presentation.

1. Find out about an Aboriginal artist and his/her work.
2. Collect information on old Aboriginal rock paintings like the ones that are mentioned in the 'Time line of Australian history' at the back of your book.
3. Create your own dot painting to show important aspects of your own culture or the world around you.

ART PRESENTATION SKILLS

These ideas can help you to give a good art presentation.

- Present pictures and information in different ways: overhead projector, handouts etc.
- Give details that put the pictures in context: artist, date, subject, style, techniques, background information etc.
- Compare and contrast pictures by the same artist or different artists; also make comparisons with pictures your audience might know.



A bark painting of a kangaroo by Dick Nguleingulei (1975)

⁵X-ray ['eksreɪ] = a 'photo' of a body that shows the bones • ⁶sacred ['seɪkrɪd] = a place with a special religious meaning • ⁷root [ru:t] = the underground part of a plant/tree • ⁸dot [dɒt] = a little point • ⁹shield [ʃi:ld] = sth used for protection in battle (a long time ago)