# Teaching about Aboriginal Art and the Dreaming

**Slide 1:** The books ‘Aboriginal art and the Dreaming: teaching about Aboriginal art, craft and design’ and ‘Aboriginal artists in South Australia’ were published by the Department for Education in the 1990s. They are out of print but can be found in many school libraries.

**Slide 2:** Kondoli Sculpture

At Kleinig's Hill Lookout, as you enter Victor Harbor, is a beautiful Whale sculpture. The Ngarrindjeri and Pitjantjatjara people and the local community all contributed to the project as a part of the reconciliation process.

It is made of mosaic tiling, and tells the story of Kondoli (the Ngarrindjeri whale story) as well as the Pitjantjatjara story of the seven sisters. The seven sisters story is relevant to Aboriginal people throughout Australia, as it is a dreaming story universal to most Aboriginal groups. Other artwork includes depictions of animals and plants native to Ngarrindjeri and Pitjantjatjara homelands.

**Slide 3:** Students can achieve learning outcomes in Visual arts but elsewhere too through this learning

**Slide 4:** Not only F-2

**Slide 11:** Traditional Aboriginal and TSI art – some examples

Why don’t we know much about traditional Aboriginal art from some parts of Australia – hidden from view by colonisation, few rock surfaces in many places, however many stories survive and are being revived.

**Slide 13:** Map of Aboriginal Australia

Red lines indicate boundaries between language families. They are similar to geographic drainage basins. Smaller colour patches indicate more resources for life in those locations, ie abundant fish, birds, eggs to eat.

**Slide 16:** Woman and child symbols

Why the U shape for a person. It is the ‘track’ left by a person sitting in soft sand

**Slide 17:** Dot painting protocol

Depth of stories is not apparent to the eye

**Slide 18:** Bark painting

Bark paintings include sort of realistic images of characters from Dreaming stories. This particular story is about the crocodile who lives in the Milky Way and the painting is by Nami who has her family’s permission to paint the story. In the background of bark paintings there are often lines, called ‘cross-hatching’. The pattern of these lines identifies particular groups of people, just as Scottish tartan designs do, or football guernseys.

**Slide 19:** Jillian Davey

Not all traditional art tells stories

**Slide 20:** Body paintings from Central Australia

The men here performed an emu dance and a fire dance. Their body art is symbolic, relating to the two dances and should not be copied without permission. When performing, the dancers become the ancestors. Performances must be sung and danced correctly. Children in school could create their own dances to tell their own stories or to imitate birds, kangaroos or their pets. Better still, allow opportunities to learn from an Aboriginal dancer.

**Slide 21:** Painting at Arkaroo Rock

Archaeologists have excavated the floor of the cave in which the rock art is located and dated use of the cave at several thousands of years. The rock art tells the Adnyamathanha story of the two giant snakes who surrounded people at a ceremony then laid down to die, forming the walls of Wilpena Pound, a circle of hills. You can see that the symbolism here is minimalist compared to the bark paintings of Arnhem Land.

**Slide 22:** Engraved possum skin cloak

The meaning of the symbols is not known now. This cloak would have taken a very long time to make and it would be very warm to wear. Tandanya once exhibited a new cloak with similar symbols painted on panels rather than engraved. The engraving gave the skins flexibility.

**Slide 23:** Contemporary Aboriginal art

Aboriginal people had to sit at the front in cinemas. Read about Robert Campbell Junior at <http://ia.anu.edu.au/biography/campbell-jnr-robert-25181>

**Slide 24:** Lin Onus

Research Lin Onus from many good websites including <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/onus-lin/> , <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/1394/lin-onus/>

**Slide 25:** Gordon Waye

Gordon was born in Hawker and grew up in Colebrook Children’s Home at Eden Hills then the Salvation Army boys home in Mt Barker. His landscape murals at the Palace Hotel in Broken Hill featured in the film *The Adventures of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert*. Gordon lived at times in Port Augusta and Whyalla. Read more about his family at <https://www.transcontinental.com.au/story/4282943/judys-past-goes-way-back/> . There is an interview with Gordon in the book ‘Aboriginal artists in South Australia’

**Slide 26:** Zane Saunders

See <http://zanesaunders.com/artist/#about>

Zane Saunders, a Butchulla and Goongari artist living in northern Queensland

**Slide 27:** Byron Pickett

There is an interview with Byron Pickett (senior) in the book ‘Aboriginal artists in South Australia’

**Slide 32:** Many people are shocked at seeing the image bottom right, not knowing that it is a Hindu and Buddhist symbol. Bottom left is the Hindu ‘Om’ symbol.

**Slide 33:** What can learners do?

Those of you who know the Ngarrindjeri story of Ngurunderi might recognise the symbols used to tell that story. Ngurunderi tracked his two wives who had run away. He frightened people who hid in the reeds and turned them into birds. He and his brother-in-law Nepele created all the freshwater fish in the Murray. These paintings are by Mannum High School students who asked permission of the Ngurunder storyteller, Uncle Henry Rankine.

**Slide 44:** Traumatic memories

Children (and adults) may create an artwork that represents a story in their life that is important but traumatic. This will need to be handled sensitively, perhaps with help of a school councillor. Children do not have to tell what their art conveys for them. Adults have said that though some stories are traumatic, it was therapeutic to get it out of them and onto paper or canvas.