

Aboriginal animal and dot art 'feat. Year 3 and Year 4'

The Aboriginal people of Australia have a deep relationship with the natural landscape. This is why they often use Australian animals as a source of inspiration in their art and Dreamtime stories. The Aboriginal people also place great value in natural materials such as ochre, a soft rock containing clay.

To the Aboriginal people, animals are a necessary means of survival as they are a vital food source. They are part of the Aboriginal culture represented as images of totemic power and are a part of the Dreamtime Creation stories that link the people, the land and the animals. Illustrations of Aboriginal animal art were often used as Dreamtime stories for initiates, during a ceremony. Dreamtime stories represent oral histories of religious importance and are more than just 'tales'.

Our Year 3 students carefully selected an Australian animal (kangaroo, turtle, koala, platypus, geko lizard) for their artwork, using the dot technique and ochre paint.



The Aboriginal people consider **kangaroos** of cultural and spiritual significance. They are part of a hunting or Dreamtime story in traditional Aboriginal art. Kangaroo meat has always been and continues to be, a staple source of protein in the diet of the Aboriginal people; the kangaroo pelts were made into clothing and rugs; and the kangaroo skin was made into sturdy water bags.



Turtles are part of Dreamtime and Creation stories and have totemic value, as they are a favoured food source for Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people always respect the food resources that help to sustain them and this is why they have rituals to increase the bounty of the turtle species.

The **koalas** in Aboriginal art are used as totems defining the relationship of the Aboriginal people with each other and with Country. Koalas are sacred because they help define the roles and responsibilities of the clan, the family or the individual.



To the Aboriginal people, the **platypus** signifies spiritual cleansing, restoring and connecting with spirit through nature, the water and river-ways within Country. Platypi or platypuses are animals special to the Aboriginal people, as they are a sign that the waterways are healthy, because platypi or platypuses will not live in dirty or murky waters.

In the Aboriginal culture, Adnoartina is a religious deity who takes the form of a **gecko lizard** and is therefore considered to be a sacred ancestral being. Adnoartina provides us with an Indigenous understanding to the creation of Uluru, the historical Australian landmark.

Symbols in Aboriginal art are used by the Aboriginal people to preserve their culture and tradition. The use of symbols in Aboriginal art is an alternate way to write stories of cultural significance, teach survival and educate others on the use of the land. Symbols are still used today in modern Aboriginal art.

Dots in Aboriginal art were used to fill-in designs that were created. Dots were also a useful way to disguise particular information and connections that lay under the dotting. It was during this time that Aboriginal artists were in the process of negotiating what features of their stories were secret or sacred, and what features were open to the public.

Our Year 4 students learned about indigenous symbolism in art and then created their own artwork using symbols and dotting techniques, with ochre paint.



You will be surprised to learn that dot painting on canvas appeared in central Australia only in the early 1970s, when the Aboriginal people worked together with a non-Indigenous art school teacher, named Geoffrey Bardon.

Aboriginal art inspires us as Australians and helps us to express ourselves to other people. Our art creations play a central role in initiating and maintaining culture within Australian society.

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