



From Rock Art to Dot Art

By Melinda Grose PIT Cohort W

VAKT: Create a boomerang decorated with dot art. Equipment:

- • Dot art pens (or Q-tips and acrylic paints)
- • Stencil of a boomerang shape (attached at end of lesson)
- • Scissors to cut out the boomerang shape.



ABORIGINAL art can be understood as the paintings, carvings and ENGRAVINGS DEPICTING (showing, illustrating) nature, created by Aboriginal people, who are the indigenous or FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES of AUSTRALIA. These people are a vast community of many different and distinct language groups, who have lived in Australia for over 60,000 years and are the oldest living CULTURE in the world. Something all Aboriginal groups have in common is their strong relationship to the natural LANDSCAPE – deserts, rocks and caves, coastlines and beaches, water sources, valleys and grasslands

Spell: ART COMMUNITY CUSTOMS

What kind of art are we talking about today? ABORIGINAL

Name one kind of art that Aboriginal people do. PAINTINGS, CARVINGS, ENGRAVINGS

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT

1



Depicting means illustrating or _____. SHOWING

-OR- Tell me one word from the text that means depicting. SHOWING, ILLUSTRATING.

Aboriginal art depicts (or shows) _____. NATURE

Aboriginal people are the _____ peoples of Australia. FIRST NATIONS

How long have Aboriginal people lived in Australia? OVER 60,000 YEARS The First Nations Peoples of Australia are the oldest living _____ in the world?

CULTURE

Name two kinds of natural landscape features referenced in Aboriginal art.

DESERTS, ROCKS, CAVES, COASTLINES, BEACHES, WATER SOURCES, VALLEYS, GRASSLANDS

Aboriginal art depicts the CULTURAL PRACTICES, myths and TRADITIONAL stories they call the DREAMING, which include all those natural features of the landscape we mentioned. Sometimes these features are INDICATED through SYMBOLS.

These are a few of the SYMBOLIC meanings behind the natural desert colours found in traditional Aboriginal art: white is the spirit colour; black is the colour of night and represents the Aboriginal people; red is the colour of the land or of blood; yellow is the colour of the sun and sacred.

Spell: CAVES LANDSCAPE TRADITIONAL

Aboriginal people's cultural practices, myths and traditional stories are called the _____. DREAMING

The natural landscape features are sometimes indicated through _____. SYMBOLS

The colour yellow in Aboriginal art symbolises the _____. SUN What is the spirit colour in Aboriginal art? WHITE

Name one thing represented by the colour red. LAND, BLOOD

Name one thing represented by the colour black. ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, NIGHT

Look at the Aboriginal Flag: How many symbolic colours can you see there? Look at the Aboriginal Flag: What do you think the yellow circle represents? THE SUN

What colours are the American/Australian Flag? RED, WHITE and BLUE



Symbolic colours in the Aboriginal Flag

As well as using colours as symbols, Aboriginal artists use PICTOGRAPHIC symbols to depict real objects or living beings. Because Australia’s first nations peoples have no WRITTEN form of their LANGUAGES they have relied on signs, symbols and art to relay messages and pass on knowledge through the GENERATIONS (all of the people born and living at around the same time). A circle, for example, could SYMBOLISE/SYMBOLIZE a campfire, digging hole or water hole, and the BOOMERANG – a symbol as old as CREATION – represents the enduring strength of Aboriginal culture.

SPELL: CIRCLE GENERATION DIGGING

Aboriginal artists also use _____ symbols to depict real objects and living beings. PICTOGRAPHIC

Australia’s first nation peoples have no _____ form of their languages. WRITTEN

Aboriginal people have used signs, symbols and art to relay messages and _____. PASS ON KNOWLEDGE

Name one thing a circle can symbolise in Aboriginal Art? CAMPFIRE, DIGGING HOLE, WATER HOLE.

The enduring strength of the Aboriginal people is represented by the _____. BOOMERANG

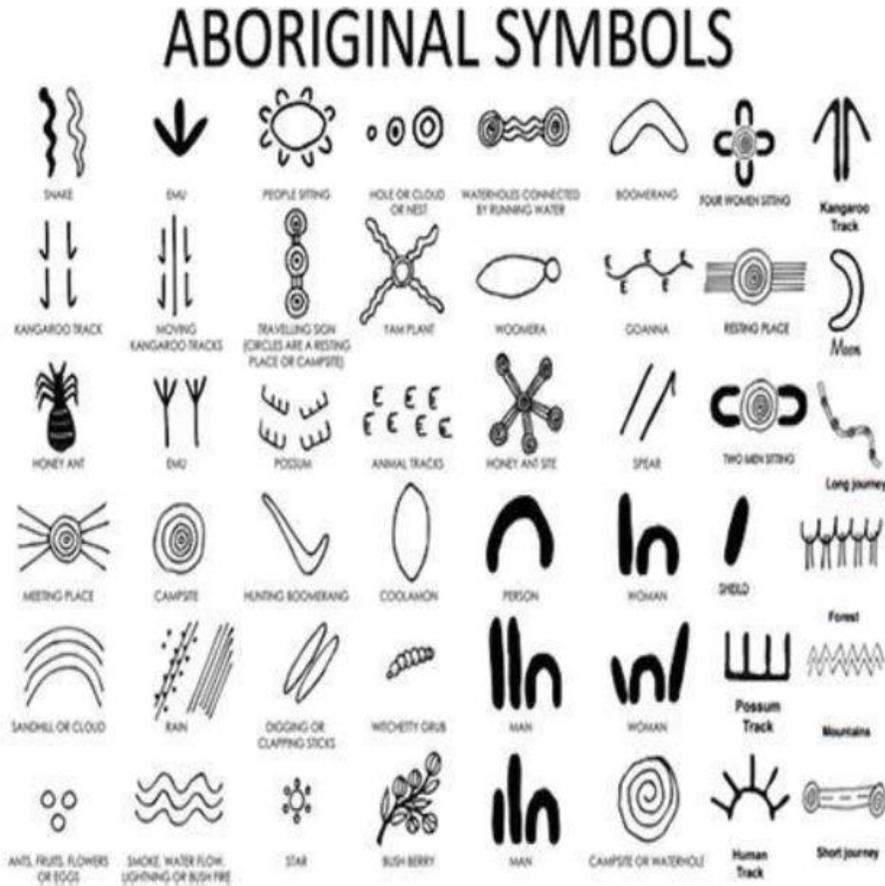
Can you tell me something else you might know about boomerangs? THEY COME BACK / RETURN TO THE THROWER; THEY ARE USED TO HUNT ANIMALS; THEY ARE A COMMON SOUVENIR



Look at the Aboriginal Symbols picture: Can you tell me how many symbols are there? 48

-OR-

Look at the Aboriginal Symbols picture: There are 8 items/columns across the page and 6 items/rows down the page. Can you make an equation that will tell us how many items are in the picture altogether? $8 \times 6 = 48$



Symbols used in Aboriginal art

Traditional Aboriginal art is also ENTWINED (linked) with nature through its use of natural materials such as CHARCOAL, bark from trees, and soft rocks and clay to create artworks. OCHRE, a soft rock that contains clay was one of the first PIGMENTS (natural colouring) to be used by humankind. It was ground up into a fine red-, brown- or yellow-coloured powder and mixed with water to create one

Question Type Key

4

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN – VAKT



of the world's first paints. The reddish colour of the ochre comes from IRON OXIDE in the sand and soil. Ochre is very common in the Australian OUTBACK, or bush – a hot landscape with red soil and rocks.

SPELL: PAINT PIGMENTS HUMANKIND

What is the word from the text that means linked? ENTWINED -OR- What does entwined mean? LINKED

Name one natural material Aboriginal artists use to create their artworks.

CHARCOAL, BARK, SOFT ROCKS, OCHRE, CLAY

What colour is charcoal? BLACK

Pigment is defined in the text as _____ . NATURAL COLOURING /COLORING

The colour of ochre comes from _____ in the sand and soil. IRON OXIDE

Name one colour that ochre powder is. RED, BROWN YELLOW

Ochre is very common in the _____ AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK, BUSH

Can you name a place in the Australian outback? Alice Springs, Uluru (Ayers Rock), Kakadu National Park, Katherine Gorge, Kings Canyon, Northern Territory, Arnhem Land.



Colours of the Australian Outback

The main kinds of Aboriginal art are rock art, tree bark painting, sand painting and dot painting. Rock art includes painting and engraving (or carving). It can be found at SITES throughout AUSTRALIA but is difficult to DATE. The oldest dated rock art

Question Type Key

5

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT



painting in Australia is a charcoal image, drawn 28,000 years ago. It can be seen in a rock shelter in south-western ARNHEM (ah-nem) LAND in the NORTHERN TERRITORY. Some rock art shows EXTINCT (no longer in existence) animals. Other paintings show the arrival of BRITISH ships in Australia, which occurred in 1788.

SPELL: SHELTER AUSTRALIA IMAGE Another word for engraving is _____.
CARVING

What in another word for sites? PLACES

Rock art is difficult to _____. DATE

The oldest dated rock art painting was drawn _____ years ago. 28,000

Where can the oldest rock art painting be seen? ARNHEM LAND / NORTHERN TERRITORY

What kind of animals do some rock art pictures show? EXTINCT

Can you tell me the name of an animal that is extinct? DINOSAUR, DODO, BLACK RHINOCEROS, WHITE DOLPHIN, TASMANIAN TIGER, WOOLLY MAMMOTH etc.

Other rock art paintings show _____. THE ARRIVAL OF BRITISH SHIPS IN AUSTRALIA

-OR- Other rock art paintings show the arrival of _____ in Australia. BRITISH SHIPS

Which country would you expect British ships to come from? GREAT BRITAIN / ENGLAND / BRITAIN

How long ago did British ships arrive in Australia? $2022 - 1788 = 234$ YEARS AGO.



Rock paintings from Namadgi National Park showing a Kangaroo, Dingoes, Echidna and a Turtle.

The tree BARK paintings of Arnhem Land were responsible for shaping many people's visual experience of Aboriginal art prior to 1970. Coastal Arnhem Land had a PLENTIFUL supply of STRINGYBARK trees, and in the right season, large sheets of bark could be cut from the tree trunks and then CURED (dried) and FLATTENED over a fire. Once they were scraped back, the inner SURFACE of the bark made a beautiful surface for the artists to paint on with the natural ochre pigments.

SPELL: VISUAL SEASON COASTAL

What kind of Aboriginal art are we talking about in this section? (TREE) BARK PAINTINGS

Tree bark painting shaped many people's experience of Aboriginal art prior to what year? 1970

1970 was how many years ago? $2022 - 1970 = 52$; or in a sentence: 1970 WAS 52 YEARS AGO.

What kind of trees does the bark for the bark paintings come from?

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT

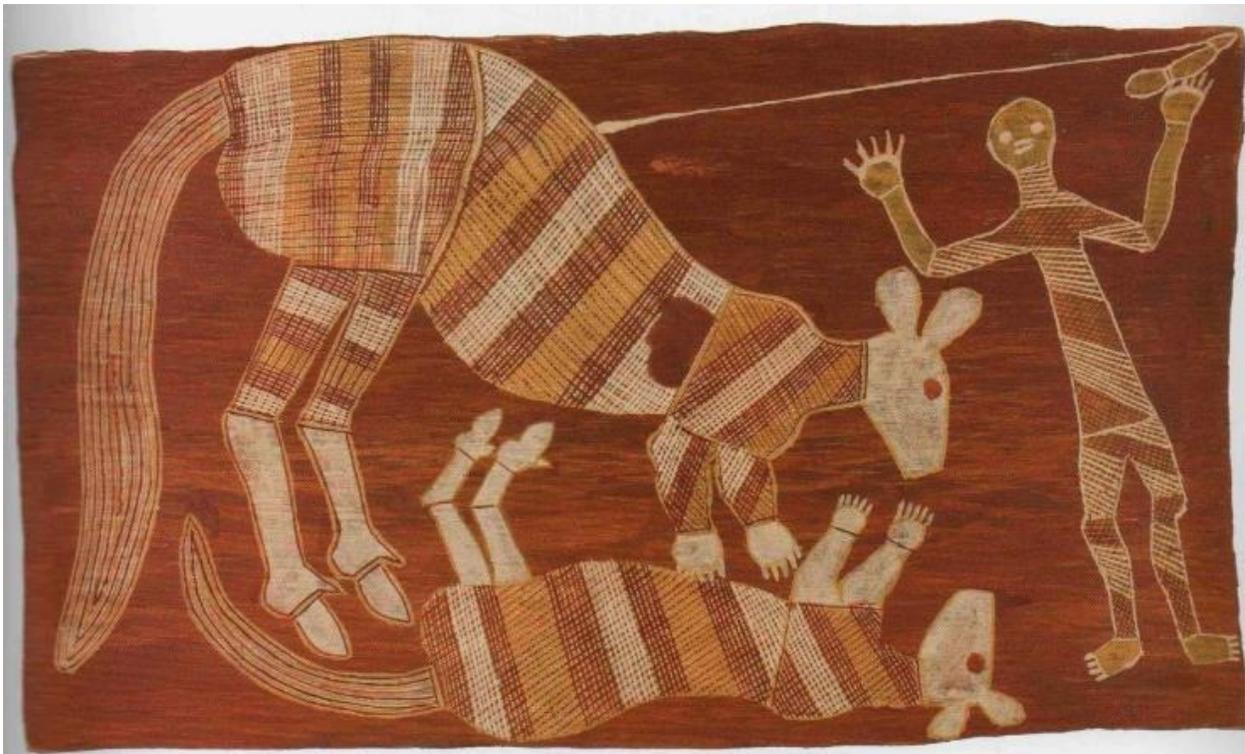
STRINGYBARK

Coastal Arnhem Land had a _____ supply of Stringybark trees. PLENTIFUL

Can you name one thing done to the bark to prepare it to paint on? CURED, DRIED, FLATTENED, SCRAPED (BACK)

Do you know of another thing that can be made from bark? CANOE, MULCH, CLOTH, ROPES, MAPS, SPICES, MEDICINES

What different types of material have you painted on? What was the most unusual? What was the experience like? What did you paint?



Bark Painting

Before Aboriginal art was ever put onto canvas the Aboriginal people drew images and SACRED (worthy or respect; dedicated to some religious purpose) designs in the sand or soil. These sand paintings or ground SCULPTURES, which are created in SECRET, consist of CONCENTRIC CIRCLES (circles within circles that share a common centre), which are used to provide the means for ANCESTRAL POWER to surface and also to return to the ground. The ALTERNATELY (continually one after

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN – VAKT

8



the other) coloured red and white concentric circles mark the exact spot in the desert where the Great Ancestor spirit energy is believed to have first EMANATED (come out) from the ground.

SPELL: CANVAS SPIRIT MESSAGES

What word from the text means worthy or respect or dedicated to some religious purpose? SACRED

Sand paintings are also known as _____ . GROUND SCULPTURES

Sand paintings are created in _____. SECRET

What do sand painting consist of? CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

Can you point to the concentric circles in the picture below?

Can you think of something else that consists of concentric circles? A DART BOARD, THE AGE RINGS ON A TREE STUMP, THE TRACKS ON A VINYL RECORD OR COMPACT DISC, etc

Sand paintings provide the means for _____ to surface.

ANCESTRAL POWER

What words from the text have the meaning of emanated? COME OUT FROM

What word from the text means continually, one after the other? ALTERNATELY



Sand painting

Sand painting is an INITIATION CEREMONY (special ceremony that signals someone's acceptance into the group) of great POWER, in which an ELDER, or

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT

9



SHAMAN, initiates the others into the PRIMAL MYSTERIES of Aboriginal life. In the past, UNINITIATED people, for example WESTERNERS, never got to see these sacred designs since the sand or soil would be smoothed over again, leaving no trace of the messages the sand paintings had contained.

SPELL: SAND SIGNALS TRACE

What special ceremony signals someone's acceptance into the group? INITIATION
Sand painting is an initiation ceremony of great _____ . POWER

Who conducts the initiation ceremony? AN ELDER / A SHAMAN

Who never got to see the sacred designs of the sand paintings? UNINITIATED PEOPLE, WESTERNERS

What happens to the sand paintings after the initiation ceremony? THEY ARE SMOOTHED OVER.

Have you ever drawn something or created a sculpture in the sand? Where were you? What was the occasion and what did you draw/sculpt?



DOT painting originated in 1971 in PAPUNYA (pa-'poon-yah), near ALICE SPRINGS, as a way of permanently recording the sacred designs and stories of the sand

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT

10



paintings. GEOFFREY BARDON, an art teacher assigned to the primary (elementary) school in Papunya is credited with ENCOURAGING the Aboriginal elders of Papunya to record their sand painting stories PERMANENTLY (in a way that continues without changing or ending) by painting them onto CANVAS, board, and even the school walls as a way of PRESERVING (protect; maintain) the culture for future generations.

SPELL: TEACHER DESIGN FUTURE

What kind of art are we talking about in this paragraph? DOT PAINTING **When did dot painting originate?** 1971

Where did dot painting originate? PAPUNYA / NEAR ALICE SPRINGS

Who encouraged the Aboriginal elders of Papunya to paint their sand painting stories? GEOFFREY BARDON

Where did Geoffrey Bardon work? AT THE PRIMARY/ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN PAPUNYA; IN PAPUNYA; NEAR ALICE SPRINGS

What word from the text means 'in a way that continues without changing or ending'? PERMANENTLY

Name two things the Aboriginal elders painted their sand painting stories onto? CANVAS, BOARD, THE SCHOOL WALLS

What do we call art today that is painted on walls in public places? PUBLIC ART, MURALS, GRAFFITI.

Why did Geoffrey Bardon encourage the Aboriginal elders to record their sand art stories permanently in this way? AS A WAY OF PRESERVING THE CULTURE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS; TO HELP THEM PRESERVE THEIR CULTURE.

What do you think of public art? Can you tell me about a time when you saw a piece of public art that captured your attention? Where was it and what did the artwork depict?

However, the Aboriginal elders did not want the uninitiated people to understand or learn the sacred RESTRICTED (not allowed to be seen by all) parts of their stories, so they began to IN-FILL their designs with dots, to DISGUISE the designs so the real meanings could not be understood by Westerners. Originally dots in dot art paintings were restricted to VARIATIONS of the colours red, yellow, black



and white produced from ochre, charcoal and pipe clay. Later ACRYLIC mediums were introduced allowing for more VIVID colourful paintings.

SPELL: DOTS LEARN STORIES

What word from the text means not allowed to be seen by all? RESTRICTED The Aboriginal elders used dots to _____ their designs for the real meanings could not be understood by Westerners. DISGUISE

What is another words that means disguise? HIDE, MASK, CONCEAL

What were the original colours of dot paintings? VARIATIONS OF RED, YELLOW, BLACK AND WHITE

What do you think the word acrylic in the text refers to? PAINT, A KIND OF PAINT, OF SYNTHETIC RESIN/FIBRE

What does vivid mean? BRIGHT AND DISTINCT, INTENSLY BRIGHT, BRILLIANT



Papunya Tula artist

Today the defining CRITERION for a dot painting is the TECHNIQUE used – that it is produced by REPEATED IMPRINTS of a paint covered brush, dotting stick or other implement onto the surface of the painting and that in doing so, there are

Question Type Key

12

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT



recognisable dot marks on the canvas. The paint used may be highly TEXTURED with a very raised surface or flat. Perhaps the most PROFICIENT (competent or skilled) dot work is done by using well mixed acrylic paint with a high level of VISCOSITY (thickness / cohesiveness). When this dries, it forms a raised profile. From the side, this makes a curved shape on the canvas – a bit like the curved side of an egg but much, much smaller.

SPELL: BRUSH PROFILE CURVED

The defining criterion for a dot painting is the _____ used. TECHNIQUE

Name one thing the dots of a dot painting can be made with? A PAINT COVERED BRUSH, DOTTING STICK, OTHER IMPLEMENT

Highly textured paint produces a very _____ surface. RAISED

What word in the text mean competent or skilled? PROFICIENT

What is another word for viscosity? THICKNESS, COHESIVENESS

The raised profile of a dot is like the curved side of _____. AN EGG

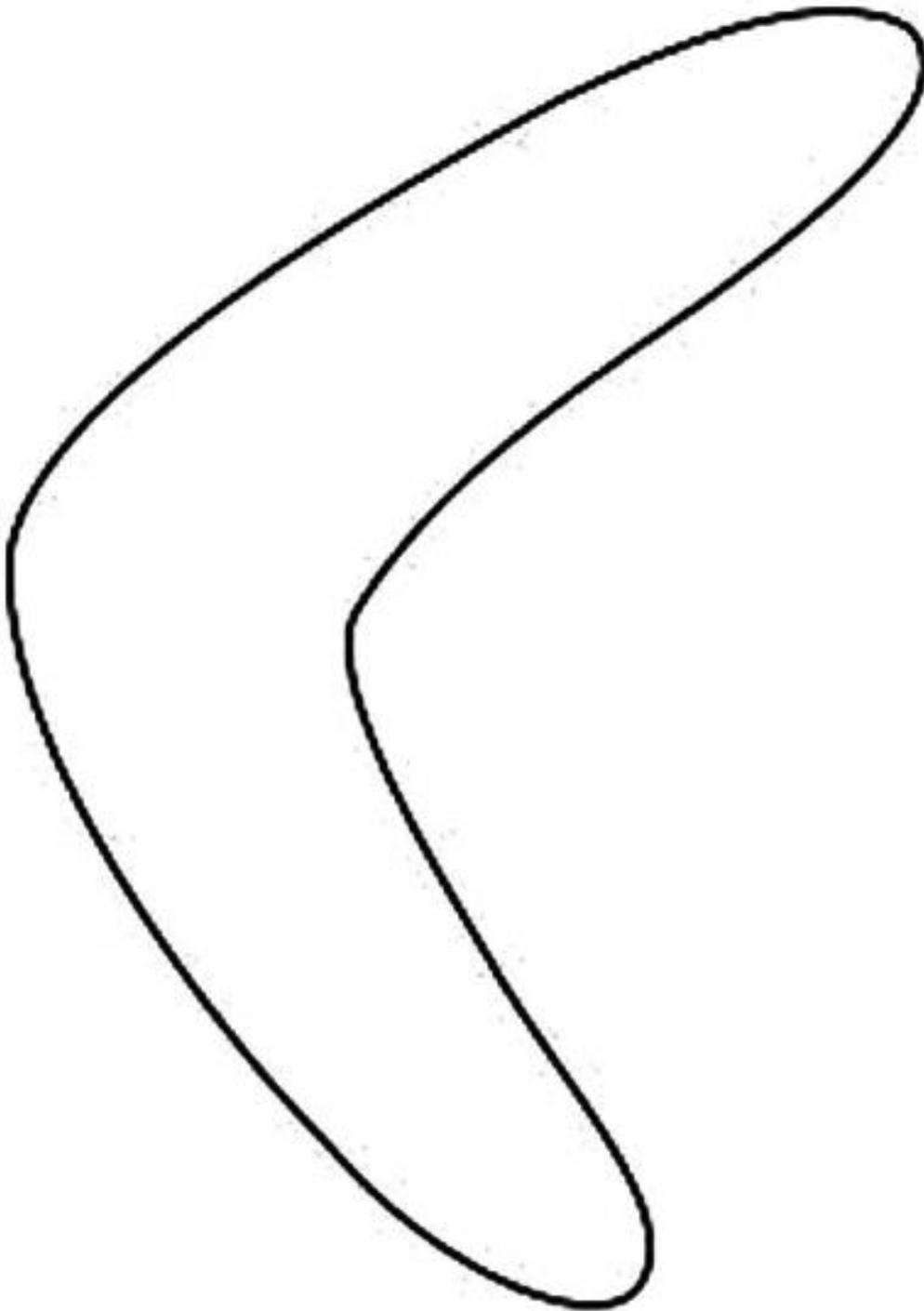
Look at the picture above of an Aboriginal person doing dot art. Do you think it is a traditional dot painting or a more contemporary (recent) dot painting? Why?

VAKT: Create the boomerang above using dot art pens or Q-tips and acrylic paint. On the next page is a stencil that you can dot paint and then cut out.



Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN – VAKT



Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN – VAKT



CREATIVE WRITING:

1. Imagine you have a friend who is a First Nations / Aboriginal artist living in Arnhem Land or Papunya in the Northern Territory of Australia.
Write me a letter describing your friend and how they came to be an artist; what personal qualities and artistic skills they have; what kind of art they do; and what materials they use.

One of more of the videos links below might give you inspiration for your writing.

2. (For a younger speller). You are starting your own art movement what colours would you start your movement with?



Melinda is a PIT who lives in Sydney, Australia. When not on the letterboards with her teen son, or passionately advocating for S2C among the parents of her son's friends and classmates (and trying to co-opt them into becoming her practice students!), she enjoys doing coastal walks, ocean swimming and sunrise yoga at her local, Bondi Beach. Working towards becoming an S2C Practitioner has put a pause on her bucket list adventure plans, possibly forever!

VIDEOS

Papunya Tula Art Movement <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfZjOjgrvBU>
Aboriginal Dot Painting <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZL6XL7tSAJg>

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT

16



Aboriginal Artist Judy Watson Napangardi – Hair String 1437

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZL6XL7tSAJg>

SOURCES

<https://mulapa.com.au>

<https://www.ecopsychology.org>

<https://www.redbubble.com>

<https://papunyatula.com.au/>

<https://japingkaaboriginalart.com>

<https://somethingcurated.com/2021/11/19/stories-in-the-sand-a-history-of-the-indigenous-painting-form/>

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN – VAKT

17