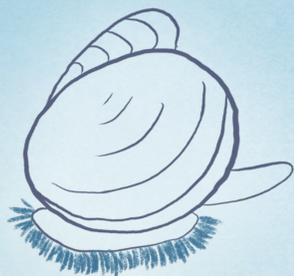
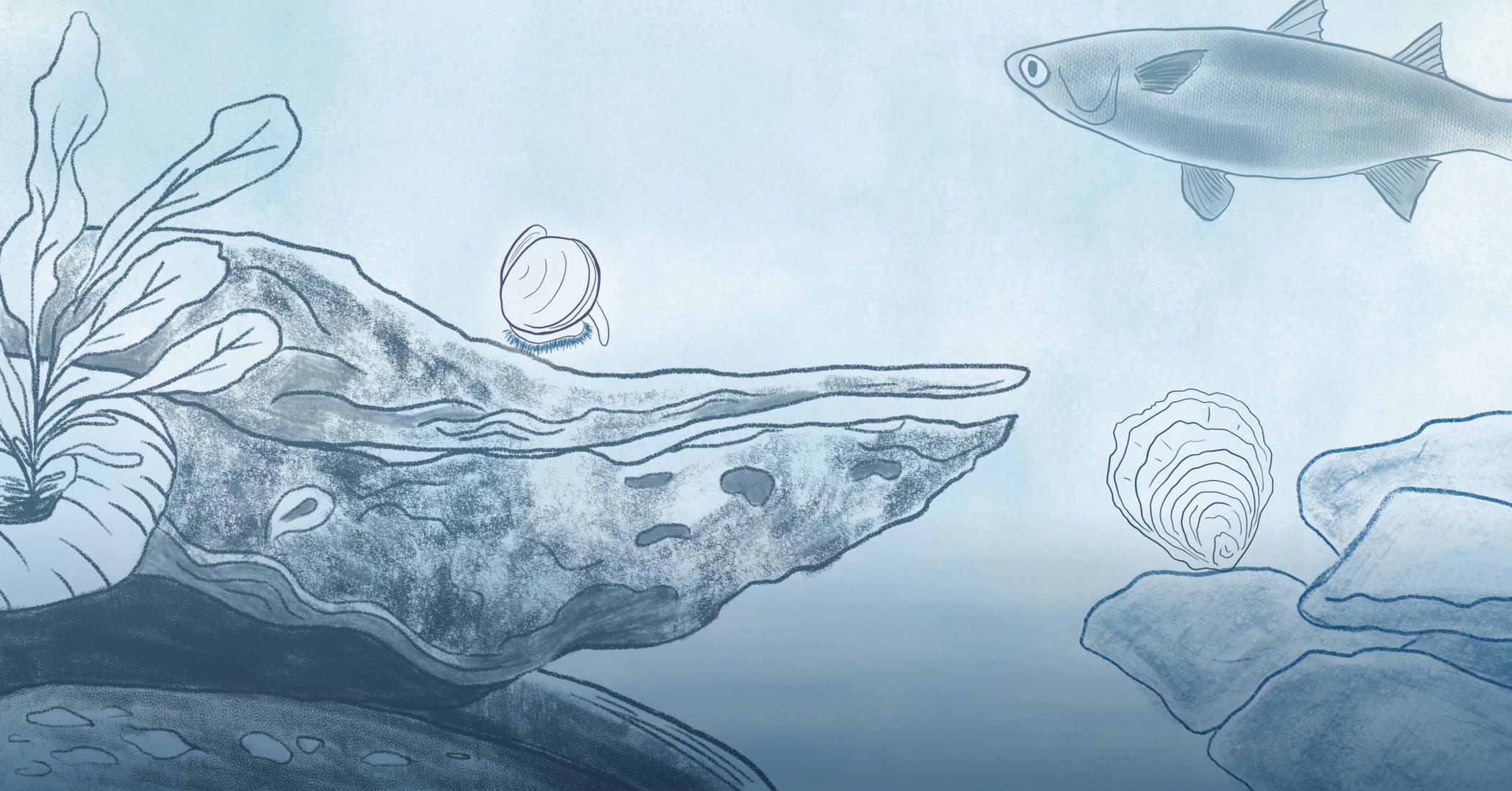


THE OYSTER GARDENER



Connecting to Country through art
Year 9 and 10 art lesson

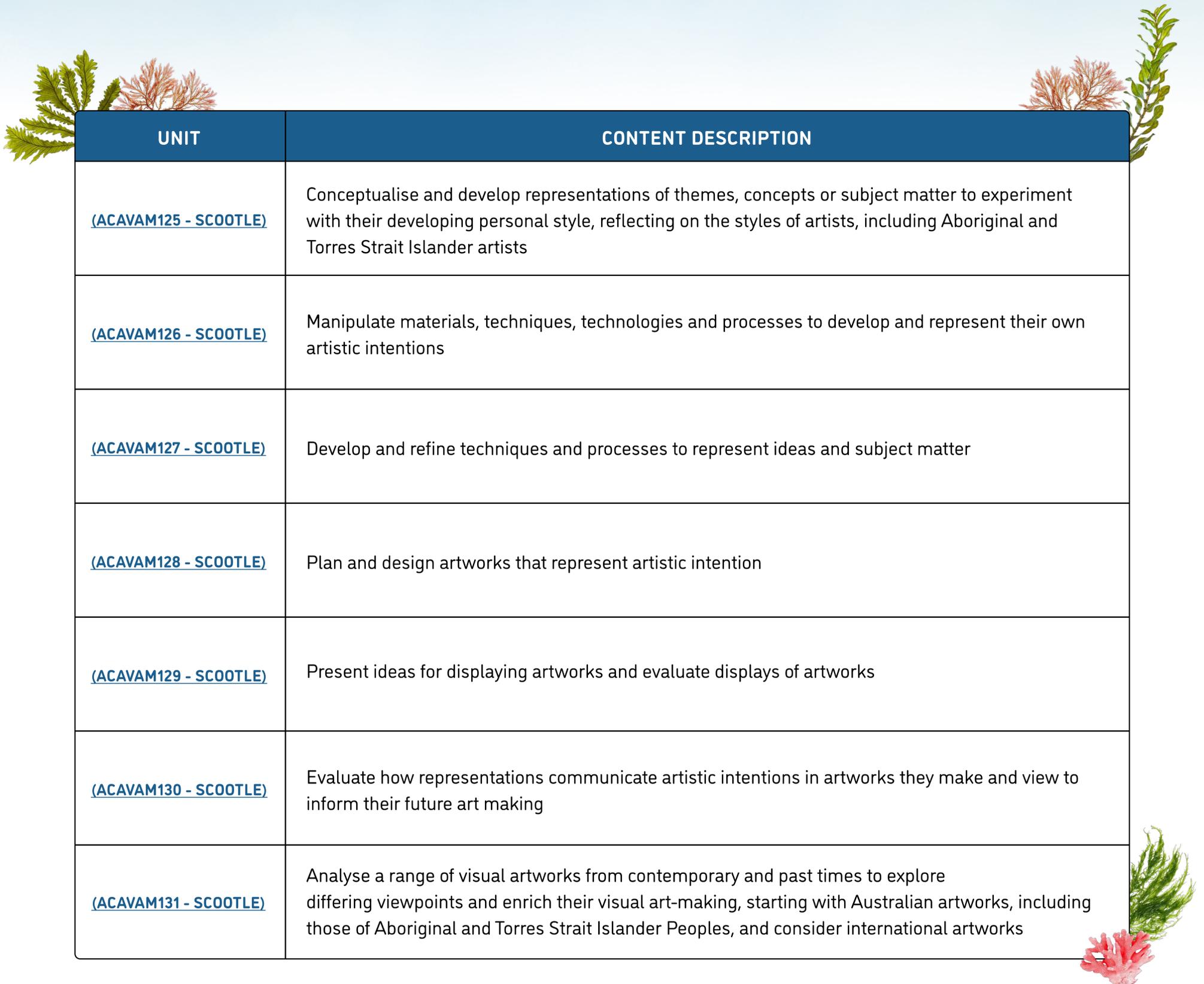


Australian Curriculum Mapping

BAND DESCRIPTION

In Visual Arts, students:

- build on their awareness of how and why artists, craftspeople and designers realise their ideas through different visual representations, practices, processes and viewpoints
- refine their personal aesthetic through working and responding perceptively and conceptually as an artist, craftsperson, designer or audience
- identify and explain, using appropriate visual language, how artists and audiences interpret artworks through explorations of different viewpoints
- research and analyse the characteristics, qualities, properties and constraints of materials, technologies and processes across a range of forms, styles, practices and viewpoints
- adapt, manipulate, deconstruct and reinvent techniques, styles and processes to make visual artworks that are cross-media or cross-form
- draw on artworks from a range of cultures, times and locations as they experience visual arts
- explore the influences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and those of the Asia region
- learn that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have converted oral records to other technologies
- reflect on the development of different traditional and contemporary styles and how artists can be identified through the style of their artworks as they explore different forms in visual arts
- identify the social relationships that have developed between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other cultures in Australia, and explore how these are reflected in developments of forms and styles in visual arts
- use historical and conceptual explanations to critically reflect on the contribution of visual arts practitioners as they make and respond to visual artworks
- adapt ideas, representations and practices from selected artists and use them to inform their own personal aesthetic when producing a series of artworks that are conceptually linked, and present their series to an audience
- extend their understanding of safe visual arts practices and choose to use sustainable materials, techniques and technologies
- build on their experience from the previous band to develop their understanding of the roles of artists and audiences.



UNIT	CONTENT DESCRIPTION
(ACAVAM125 - SCOOTLE)	Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists
(ACAVAM126 - SCOOTLE)	Manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and represent their own artistic intentions
(ACAVAM127 - SCOOTLE)	Develop and refine techniques and processes to represent ideas and subject matter
(ACAVAM128 - SCOOTLE)	Plan and design artworks that represent artistic intention
(ACAVAM129 - SCOOTLE)	Present ideas for displaying artworks and evaluate displays of artworks
(ACAVAM130 - SCOOTLE)	Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making
(ACAVAM131 - SCOOTLE)	Analyse a range of visual artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their visual art-making, starting with Australian artworks, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider international artworks

Connecting to Country through art

LESSON PLAN OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will watch the short documentary *The Oyster Gardener* – a film about oyster reef restoration in the Noosa River. Students will engage in a class discussion to reflect on the themes in the film before being invited to explore the concept of Country and what it means to First Nations people. There is an option in Part B to learn more about oyster reef restoration in Australia.

Students will then analyse a range of visual artworks from historic to contemporary pieces and will explore differing viewpoints starting with Australian artworks, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Students will then create an artwork expressing their own personal Connection to Country.

Topics explored

- How our relationship to our environment and ecosystems has been expressed through art, both by First Nations Peoples and non-Indigenous artists.
- Exploring the concept of Connection to Country both through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective, and for students themselves.
- Understanding Custodianship from a First Nations perspective.

PART A: Watch *The Oyster Gardener* (11 mins)



About the film

Can a functionally extinct reef system be brought back to life? Jolie, a year 12 student and aspiring marine biologist, joins forces with her community to bring back the lost oyster reefs of the Noosa river.

The Oyster Gardener is a short film that follows Jolie on a journey of discovery to see if restoring biodiversity and reversing the impacts of climate change in her local river system is possible. This year, she's part of a specifically-designed curriculum program that has been engaging young people in this ambitious local restoration project through real-world learning and citizen science.

Post film reflection

- What themes do you feel this film explores?
- What role do oysters play in the marine ecosystem?
- Why do you think the filmmakers made this film?
- What feeling did it leave you with?
- What are the challenges Jolie is facing?
- How is she addressing them?
- What of Jolie's experience do you relate to?
- Did anything surprise, delight, or confuse you?
- What have you learned from Jolie and the project that you could apply to yourself?
- What would you ask Jolie about the project?
- Does the film inspire you to do something?

How to watch the film with your class

If your school or institution has a ClickView subscription, you can watch *The Oyster Gardener* on the [ClickView](#) platform. If you do not have access to ClickView, you can purchase an educational licence to screen the film to your class and request a streaming link to share with your students. Please complete the [Host a Screening](#) form on our website and our team will be in touch to assist you.

PART B: Oysters and Shellfish Reef Restoration (Optional)

For more context or to dive deeper into the top of shellfish restoration, refer to The Oyster Gardener Resource included in the downloadable materials provided for in this lesson. This resource provides further information about ecosystem restoration, the Reef Builder Project, and the importance of shellfish to our marine ecosystems.

Art has long been used as a medium to convey information, emotions, feelings and stories of place. Aboriginal Art was used to portray stories of place and respect of the LORE of the land which governed all their interactions with the flora and fauna around them. Early Colonisation artworks often portrayed the struggle with these ecosystems.

PART C: Explore Visual Representation of Connection to Country Through Art.

Analyse a range of visual artworks from historic to contemporary pieces and explore differing viewpoints starting with Australian artworks. Include those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider choosing some international artists as well.

Below you will find some examples to get you started. You could invite your students to find their own artworks to explore and encourage them to seek out local artists, where possible, that have depicted the local environment in their artworks.

Invite students to reflect on the artworks by responding to some of the following questions. These questions have been designed to encourage students to analyse the art through the lens of the artist's relationship to, expression of, and connection with, the landscape.

Reflective questions

- Reflect on the methods of artistic expression. i.e. What do you think the artist is trying to show? What stories does the artist tell through the works?
- Do you think the artwork is trying to teach us something?
- What does the artwork make you feel? Ease, harmony, comfort, difficulty, challenge? Something else?
- What does it suggest about the artist's relationship with the landscape or ecosystem?
- How is the ecosystem depicted?
- What types of mediums and techniques have been used?
- Do they use natural pigments or nature in their art in any way?
- Is there anything else about the artwork that stands out to you?

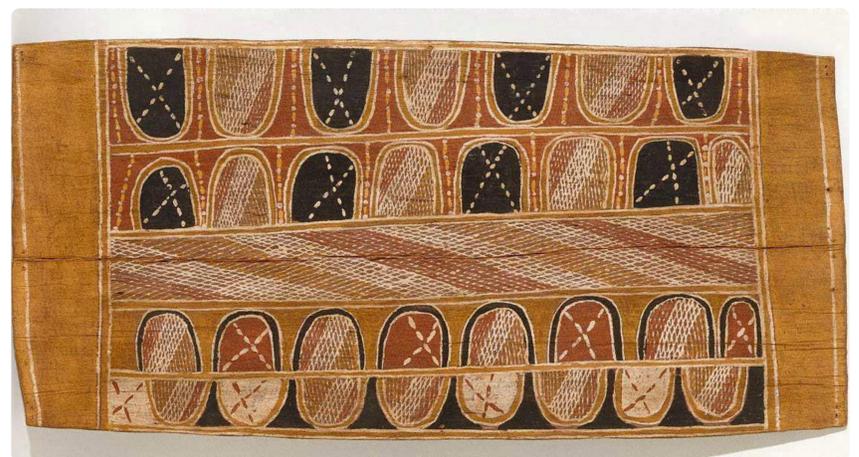
Here are some examples to get you started



Linda Namiyal Bopirri, 1990, Yolngu Matha (Durrurna clan, Dhuwa moiety), Oyster ('Oyster Dreaming', 'Wayanaka') Bark, Ochre on Bark, 64x95cm.

<http://www.oysterfilm.com/blog/oyster-dreaming>

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Natural Pigments on Bark – Oysters growing on rocks at Guruwana Circa 1960

<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/IA52.1960>



Megan Cope, Quandamooka people Australia b.1982
RE FORMATION 2019 / 12 000 pieces of cast-concrete, ilmenite.

Megan Cope is an accomplished contemporary artist who recently completed several installations on Shellfish restoration with an installation on Quandamooka (Stradbroke Island QLD).

<https://blog.qagoma.qld.gov.au/megan-cope-reformation-takes-the-oyster-shell-as-its-subject-water-australia/>

Purchased 2019 with funds from the Contemporary Patrons through the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Foundation
Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © Megan Cope



Installation in Quandamooka Sea Country, Kinyingarra Guwinyanba (which means 'place of oyster rocks' in Jandai & Gowar language).

<https://www.megancope.com.au/works/kinyingarra-guwinyanba>



Representations of Aboriginal interactions with Oyster reefs. Isaac Walter Jenner Queensland natives, the Currigee Oyster Company's Station, Stradbroke Island, Moreton Bay 1897



Giant Clam with Mulkun Wirrpanda's larrakitj
— John Wolsey <https://johnwolseley.net/home>

"My work over the last 45 years has been a search to discover how we dwell and move within landscape. I have lived and worked all over the continent from the mountains of Tasmania to the floodplains of Arnhem land. I see myself as a hybrid mix of artist and scientist; one who tries to relate the minutiae of the natural world - leaf, feather and beetle wing to the abstract dimensions of the earth's dynamic systems. Using techniques of watercolour, collage, frottage, nature printing and other methods of direct physical or kinetic contact I am finding ways of collaborating with the actual plants, birds, trees, rocks and earth of a particular place.

Over 15 years I spent a lot of time in the company of the great Yolngu artist Mulkun Wirrpanda painting the floodplains and flora of the Blue Mud Bay region of North East Arnhem Land. In 2017, the results of this collaboration were exhibited at the National Museum of Australia as Midawarr Harvest: The Art of Mulkun Wirrpanda and John Wolseley and formed the basis of a book of the same name."

[Here is a list of Aboriginal Art Centres](#) that are First Nations owned organisations promoting and supporting First Nations contemporary artists from around Australia (map and list at the bottom of the webpage).

Encourage students to choose an Art Centre and explore their website, look at the art and to learn about what and how it might be expressing connection to landscape and culture.

PART D: Connection to Country

Ask students to provide some examples and concepts they saw in *The Oyster Gardener* that pertains to the importance of connecting to land and Country.

"Caring for Country is not exclusive and it's not elusive. It is not just for First Nations people, and we see this in this film. Jolie really stands out to me because she talks about having one memory of the Great Barrier Reef. And how that memory with that reef has created a whole life for her to do the gardening of the oysters in the river and to now go on to do a university degree and to find a career in this. So one memory with Country is all it takes to develop your relationship." — Marlikka Perdrisat, Director of *Babanil*

As a class, discuss the meaning of Country and why it is essential to know and acknowledge the traditional land, language group, clan or nation, our home/school is located on. You can also share with them the following quotes about understanding Custodianship and what 'Country' means for First Nations people.

Understanding Custodianship from a First Nations perspective

In this article in *The Conversation*, Aunty Munya Andrews explains that, "Many Indigenous peoples the world over generally do not believe that anyone or anything can be 'owned', especially the land." Rather than 'owning' the land, she says, "we believe that we belong to the land, in which there is no concept of individual ownership but rather one of joint belonging, collaboration and care of the land." For more learning about connection to Country, explore [Culture is Life's Back to Nature resources](#).

Understanding what 'Country' means for First Nations people

"When Aboriginal people use the English word 'Country' it is meant in a special way. For Aboriginal people; culture, nature and land are all linked. Aboriginal communities have a cultural connection to the land, which is based on each community's distinct culture, traditions and laws. Country takes in everything within the landscape - landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. Community connections include cultural practices, knowledge, songs, stories and art, as well as all people: past, present and future. People have custodial responsibilities to care for their Country, to ensure that it continues in proper order and provides physical sustenance and spiritual nourishment. These custodial relationships may determine who can speak for a particular Country." Source: [Share Mungo Culture](#).

PART E: Create an artwork expressing your own Connection to Country

Reflect on your own Connection to Country and the places that you know and love. What interactions do you have with this ecosystem? Can you think of a special memory that you have? Do you have a favourite tree? What memories do you have of spending time near, or swimming in, your local creek, river system, or beach? What birds wake you up in the morning? What are your favourite native animals that live in your area?

You could encourage students to spend some time learning about their local environment by doing a [Regeneration Scavenger Hunt](#) activity. These are 10 questions that will help them connect deeper to their local area and see it through a new lens.



Invite students to create a piece of art that expresses the way they appreciate and connect with their local environment. Ask them to think about what feeling they want the image to convey? i.e. Harmony, struggle or curiosity? Invite them to use a mix of media or materials.

Share your work

The filmmakers of The Oyster Gardener, and the team at Regenerators, always love to see the work that students create! If your students would like to share what they have done, please email us at contact@regenstudios.com and put 'The Oyster Gardener - Art Lesson' in the subject header.

We may showcase these pieces on our social media (@regenerators) and [website](#). If we do, we will be sure to reach out and let you know before we publish anything.

Take it further - Learning extension ideas

1. Have you ever sat in nature and sketched what you see? Nature journaling is a great way to get outside and be truly mindful of the ecosystem. What can you see and hear when completing this task, what can you smell? Close your eyes to listen and smell and feel sensations on your skin.
2. Organise an incursion or excursion to a place where students can sit peacefully in nature and draw what they see. Here are some examples of [Australian Botanical Illustrations](#). They could also explore the work of Ernst Haeckel, a well known scientist who used to illustrate his microscopic findings, or take a look at contemporary Australian landscape artists like Fiona Kostidis and Dan Kyle. And the famous First Nations artist Albert Namatjira who has had a significant influence on Australian landscape art.
3. Relay your connection with your local water system in a form of artwork designed and created by you, use any medium you wish! Have fun with the process and let your imagination lead your expression!
4. Students could create and submit an art piece to Ocean Youth Group's (OYG) [Wave of Change](#) project which is open all year round for submissions. OYG is a leading ocean action & innovation organisation for youth. Students are invited to create ocean themed art that could end up on OYG's next piece of merchandise – T shirt, cards, phone covers etc. Promoted globally, art submissions will be featured across OYG's networks to raise awareness and improve ocean health. Or students can submit their artwork/images for the 'Youth of the Ocean' Anthology.
5. Invite students to discover more about the significance of a traditional Aboriginal Welcome to Country. If your school can connect with local land councils and Elders, consider investing in an Elder to deliver a Welcome to Country and possibly a smoking ceremony at your school.





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