

Aboriginal art Activity pack

In this pack we explore the work of contemporary Aboriginal artists and attempt to copy their techniques to create art.

Nellie Marks Nakamarra

Nellie Marks Nakamarra is a **contemporary Aboriginal artist** from the **Pintupi** people of the Western Desert in Australia. She grew up surrounded by art, watching her relatives paint, and learned the **traditional Dreaming stories** passed down through generations. Today, Nellie is known for her powerful storytelling through paint and is part of the famous Papunya Tula Artists group.



Techniques



Nellie paints in the **Western Desert style**, using:

- **Dots and lines** to show sacred symbols and landscapes
- **Repeating geometric shapes**, often creating hypnotic patterns
- **Earthy colours**, such as ochres, white, black, and desert reds
- **Spiritual themes**, often drawn from women's Dreaming stories

Her paintings often show country (land), bush foods, and the journeys of her ancestors.

Activities to Try in Nellie's Style

1. Dot Circle Landscapes

-  Use cotton buds or the back of a pencil to create circles made from dots.
-  Try showing places that are important to you (like your school or home) using only symbols.

2. Pathways and Patterns

📍 Paint or draw long lines made of small dots to show a journey — from one place to another.

💡 Add circular shapes connected by these dotted paths.

3. Story Symbols Collage

📍 Draw a map of your day using symbols (like a circle for where you ate lunch).

🎨 Use only dots and curved lines, with a limited colour palette (e.g. brown, white, red).

4. Create a Patterned Canvas

🟠 Fill the whole background with repeating shapes or dots — **don't leave any space empty**.

🖌️ Think of what patterns represent to you (e.g. footsteps, water, stars).

Emily Kame Kngwarreye







Emily Kame Kngwarreye was an Anmatyerre elder from Utopia, Northern Territory, Australia. She started painting late in life—at around 80 years old—and became one of Australia's most important artists. Her art expressed her deep connection to her country and culture.

Techniques

Emily used **bold dotting**, **layered colours**, and sweeping movements to represent the land and seasonal changes. Her work often shows patterns from her Dreaming stories.

Create in her style

-  Use cotton buds or your fingers to make dotted patterns.
 -  Choose earth colours (reds, browns, ochres, creams).
 -  Make shapes that feel like nature—paths, seeds, roots.
 -  Try building layers of dots to create depth.
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Judy Watson







Judy Watson is a contemporary Aboriginal artist from the Waanyi people in Queensland. Her artwork often speaks about land, family, and history, especially stories that have been hidden or lost.

Techniques

She uses **natural pigments**, **staining**, **etching**, and **subtle layers** to reflect the marks of the landscape. Water, memory, and healing are key themes.

Create in her style

-  Try watering down paints to make stains on paper.
-  Layer soft marks or rubbings using charcoal or pencil.
-  Make a “map” of your favourite place using gentle lines and soft shapes.
-  Include hidden symbols or impressions of objects (like leaf rubbings).