



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 4–8; years 1 to 3)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English; Art
- **General capabilities:** Intercultural understanding
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Learn about Aboriginal culture and heritage through a personal story from Gregg Dreise, one of Australia's best storytellers.

## THEMES

- Storytelling
- Aboriginal music, dance and movement
- Aboriginal art
- Identity
- Connection to the land
- Connection to culture and heritage

## PREPARED BY

Gregg Dreise

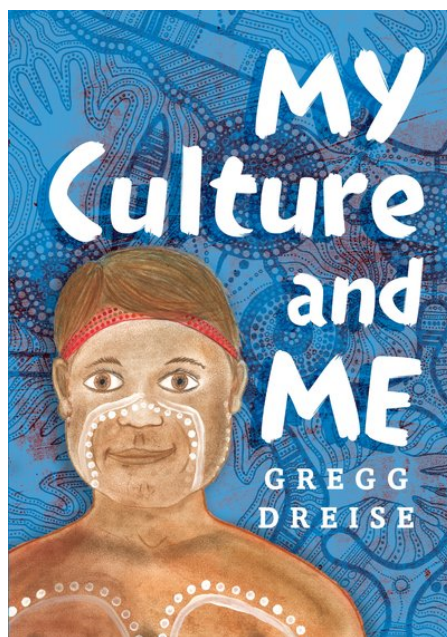
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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## My Culture and Me Gregg Dreise

## PLOT SUMMARY

*Feel the rhythm of the music, from your heart down to your feet.*

*Enjoy the movements of melodies, as clapsticks keep a strong beat.*

*This is my culture. This is me.*

Beautifully written and illustrated, *My Culture and Me* is a heartfelt and stirring story of cherishing and sustaining Indigenous cultures.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gregg Dreise grew up in south-west Queensland in a large family that loves music, art, sport, culture and family. He is very proud of his Kamilaroi and Euahlayi heritage. The Kamilaroi and Euahlayi peoples' lands extend from south-west Queensland into north-west New South Wales.

Culture, music and storytelling have run through his family's blood since time began. Gregg is a talented storyteller who uses didgeridoos, guitars, laughter and high-energy performances to pass on culture, unity and wisdom through his educational talks.

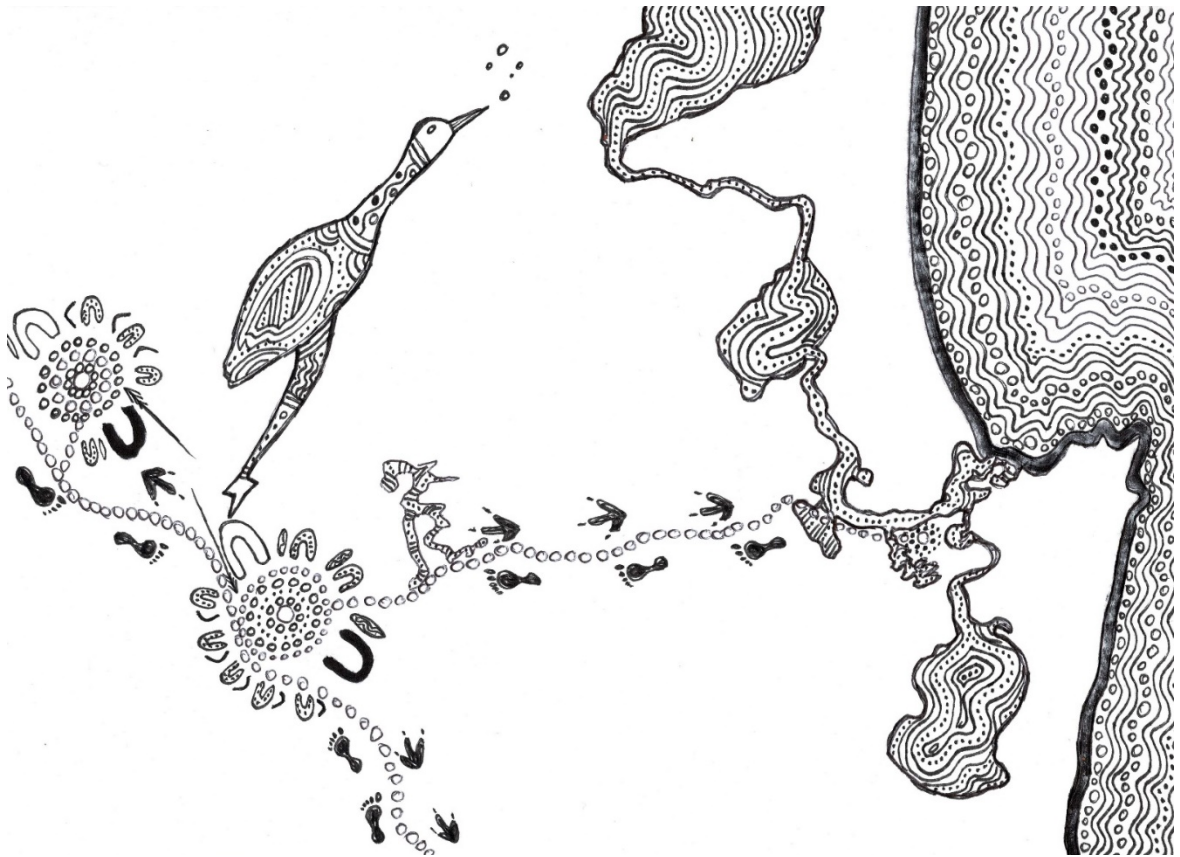
He is on a journey to get right around Australia to share his stories and learn more about the ancient and diverse histories and cultures of this beautiful country. He is fully aware that all of our cultural roots help strengthen the assortment of unique and proud Australians that we all become.

## WORKSHEET: Aboriginal Art

Learn and respectfully create

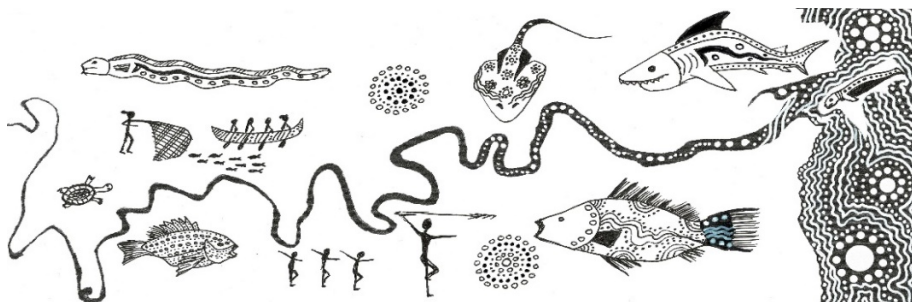
Aboriginal art is sadly often misunderstood. The purpose of the art is not to look pretty – everything in each image has connections and meaning.

Look at my artwork and discuss what you see.



- Did you see my parents and my seven brothers and sisters?
- Did you see my children and me?
- I'm guessing you found my totem easily enough.
- Search an aerial map of Noosa and compare it to the map above. Does my artwork now make more sense? Knowing each part of your area is essential to your connection to country and survival. Perhaps you can search a map of your area and create your own connection to your country, and include your family too.

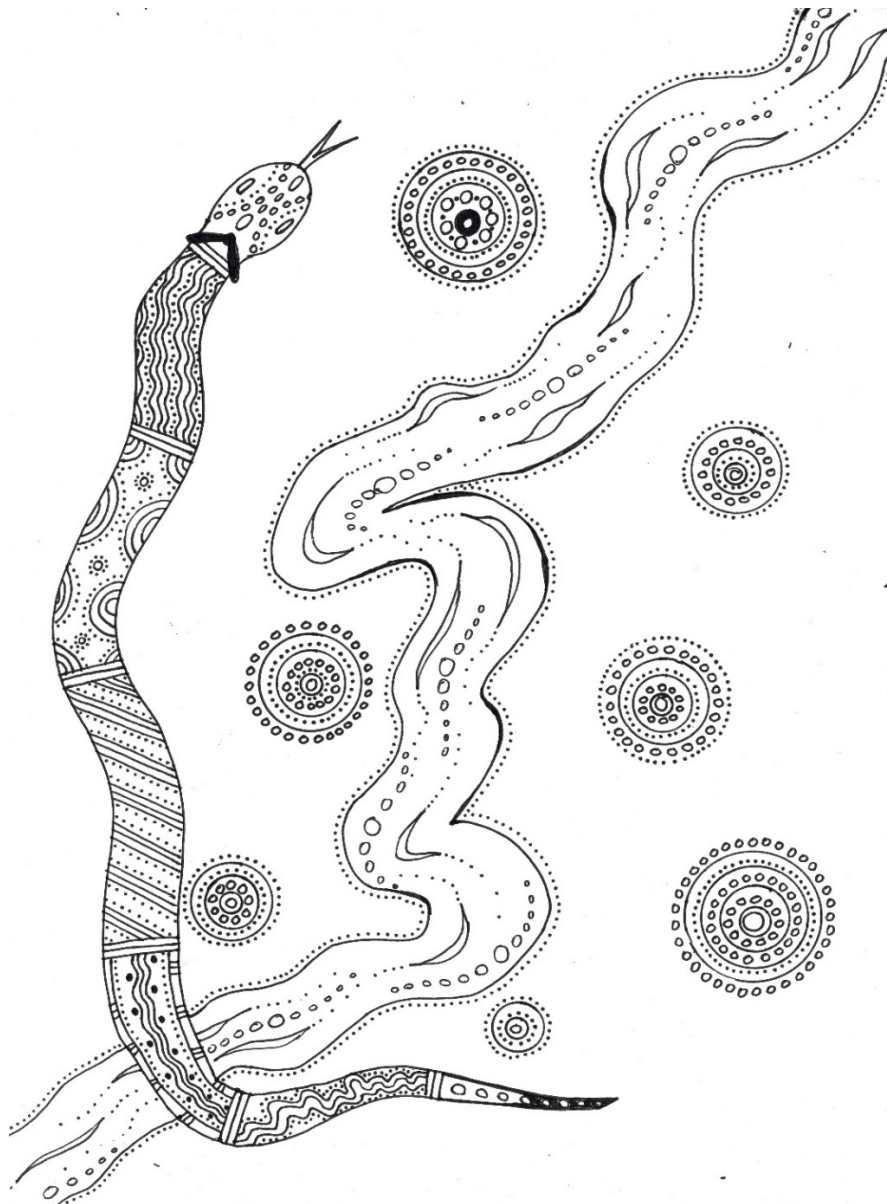
**Challenge – where is this Aboriginal Art of Country from?**



## WORKSHEET: The Importance of Water

Listen, learn and brainstorm

In Kamilaroi and Euahlayi Country, water is cherished and hard to find. It is believed that the Rainbow Serpent helped our ancestors carve out the waterways to supply our country. He also used his great power to dig down and create the waterholes which magically supply us water from Mother Earth – even throughout droughts.



- Can you research how you get your water each day?
- Discuss what we could do to better look after our water.
- Do you think that there are some things that disappoint our Aboriginal Elders that happen around our waterways today?



## WORKSHEET: Fire Technology

### Aboriginal Science

Have you ever seen people rub sticks together to make fire? Have you ever tried it yourself? Did it work – honestly?

Most people don't know that you need a special type of stick to make fire in this way. Fire sticks are fibrous . . . that means that when you scrape the end of the stick with your fingernails a powder falls out – like tiny snowflakes. This is what heats up.

Do you know what 3 things make the fire triangle?



Can you identify how rubbing fire sticks creates fire using the fire triangle?

The rubbing makes the \_\_\_\_\_

The blowing makes the \_\_\_\_\_

The dead plant fibres make the \_\_\_\_\_

Can you work out some of the rules of who starts the fires to keep our families safe?





## WORKSHEET: Paint Making

Paint making is an important part of Aboriginal culture, and there are many things that go into making paint.

First, you need to know what ochre is: a rock that turns into a fine powder when rubbed. Chalk is an example of a white ochre that companies now shape for use on chalkboards and pavement.

Then you need to locate different coloured ochres, collecting only what you need at the time.

Next, you thank Mother Earth for providing you a gift.

Then, to start making the paint, you rub two parts of the rock together over a Coolamon (bowl) until the bowl is half full of coloured powder. Using a stick with a rounded end, or a smooth river stone, press on any bits of rock in the bowl to ensure everything is totally crushed. Continue to stir whilst slowly adding water.

When you have created a smooth paint-like mixture you have created body paint. This is used in ceremonies to decorate our skin to either look like a character in a story (costume), or to paint your family totemic lines and designs on you (passed on through families since time began).

You can make the paint more long term, or permanent, by adding animal fat.

**Did you know** – there was no can or compressor used to turn paint into spray paint in Aboriginal art. Can you think how the earliest spray paint was sprayed? Did you guess that it was by putting into the paint into your mouth to spray it? This type of art was made by spraying paint around your hand to create a silhouette. Nowadays, you could put your home-made ochre paint into a spray bottle and try spraying it over your hand.

Below is my hand.



## WORKSHEET: Didgeridoo Note Taking

Your teacher is going to read the following passage about Didgeridoos. Take notes as you listen, and see if you can get the most important parts jotted into your notes in time.

Didgeridoos are one of the oldest instruments in the whole world. They are from the northern parts of Australia. They are a very sacred instrument, which is why only men play the didgeridoo. However, didgeridoo is not the instrument's real name – it was a mistake. There are several names for the instrument in different languages.

Didgeridoos are only made from a few types of trees that are hard on the outside, and soft on the inside. When the tree branches fall to the ground, termites eat through the soft, middle part of the branch and make it hollow. (Other trees are the same throughout, so the termites eat all through the wood and they fall apart.)

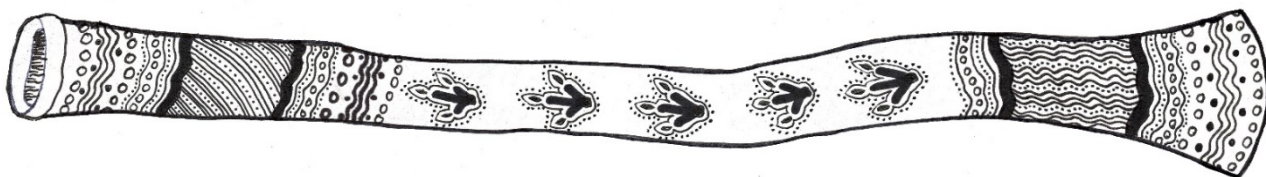
Once hollow branches are found by Aboriginal men, great care is taken to ensure snakes and other dangerous creatures have not taken shelter inside. Once the branch has been checked, it is then put in water to chase out the termites and other insects. When the branch is completely empty of creatures, the bark is stripped and family totems and tribal designs are painted on the bare wood to show ownership of the instrument. Beeswax is then heated and applied to the top opening of the branch to make it more comfortable to play.

Playing the didgeridoo is done for several reasons: Making music throughout sacred ceremonies; Performing at open ceremonies that lots of people go to; Playing traditional games with children; Creating relaxing music to help people, especially babies, to go to sleep.

Aboriginal people ask all people to respect their traditions. It is especially important that people show respect to one of the oldest instruments in the world and don't touch a didgeridoo unless they are invited to. Aboriginal Elders are continually disappointed when they see people breaking such sacred and ancient rules. It is also extremely disappointing to see non-Aboriginal people use this instrument to make money, as this is disrespectful. Didgeridoos should not be made out of bamboo nor drilled-out wood.

Let's see how your notes went. Look at your notes to answer these questions:

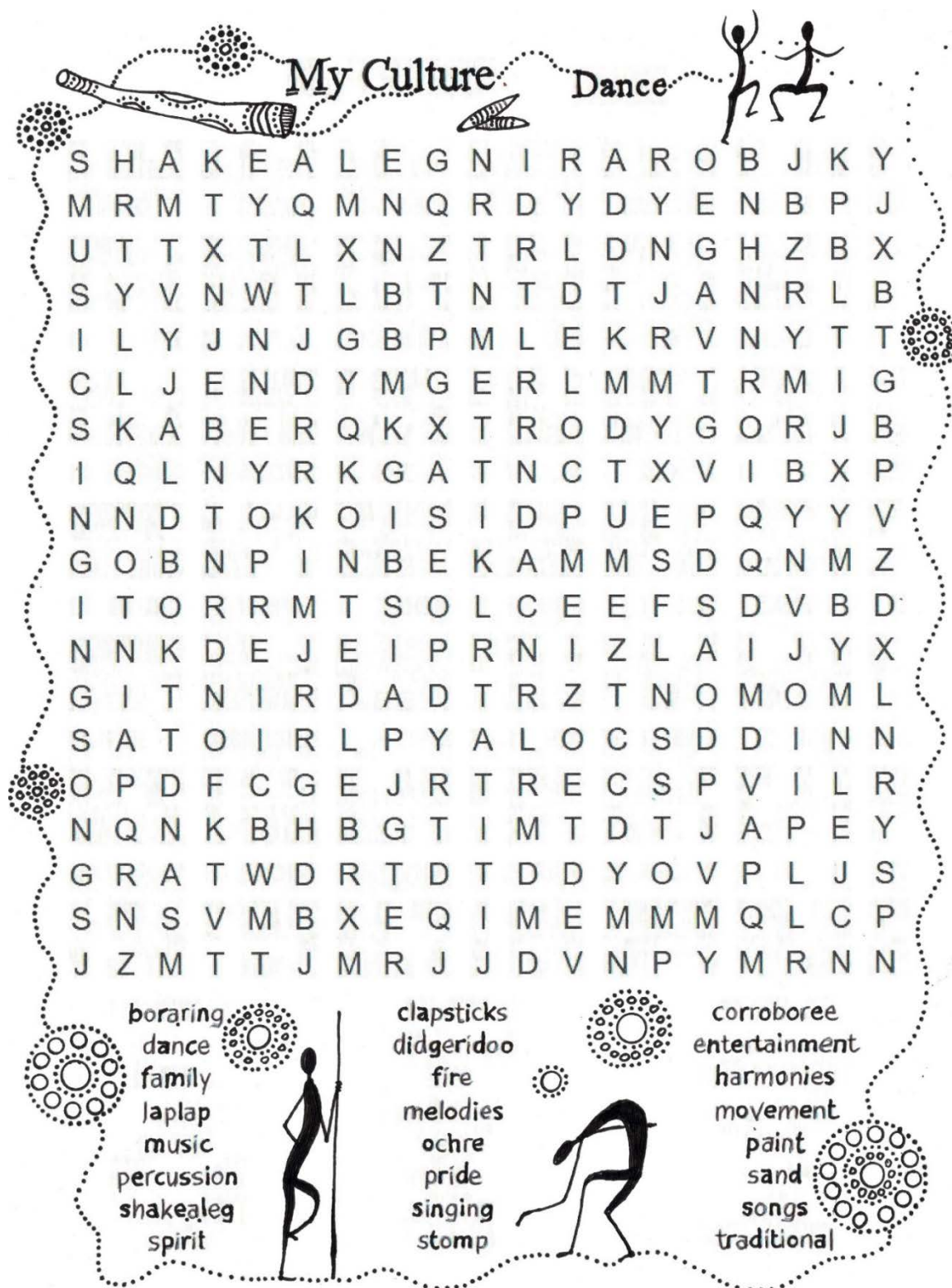
1. Which part of Australia are didgeridoos from?
2. Who plays the instrument?
3. List the four reasons to play the didgeridoo.
4. What is the greatest care taken when finding didgeridoos?
5. What is applied to the instrument to make it more comfortable to play?
6. Why are didgeridoos painted?
7. How are they made hollow?
8. Why can't you make a didgeridoo from the wood of any tree?
9. Should non-traditional people play and sell didgeridoos for money?
10. How can fake didgeridoos be created?



# WORKSHEET: Aboriginal Dance

## Word search

Can you find all the words listed in the word search below?





## WORKSHEET: The Art of Creating a Picture Book

A lot of time and care goes into a picture book. Take your copy of *My Culture and Me* and examine it carefully to answer the questions below.

- How many sentences appear on each spread (double page)?
- What is the usual amount of full stops used per spread? Do any spreads have significantly more or less than average? Can you think of a reason for the change in pattern?
- Roughly how many syllables are there per line (up to each full stop)? Is this always exactly the same?
- Listen to my song 'My Culture' on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/CHCgo7XKcVg>). Do you think my love of music helps me to write? Can you list the similarities of writing picture books and songs?
- Can you find a most common length of a song? Can you find a most common length of a picture book? As writers (song or picture book) we always write to a structure. Can you list some of the structures that your teacher/s encourages you to write to?
- When planning books, we draw ideas – these are called 'black and white roughs'. This is the black and white rough for spread 8. Can you identify the additions to this drawing that went into the final painting?



Try to replicate the structure of *My Culture and Me* and write about yourself.

- Tip – I enjoy writing about the things I am passionate about. To help you to write, think of the things you love. You will find that it is much easier to write about the things you love.
- Just like athletes, the more you practise, the better you get. To get better at writing try doing some practice every day. Try writing to your senses – e.g. the smells you love. The tastes you love. The sights you love. The textures you love. The sounds you love.



## WORKSHEET: Persuasive Writing

Read the persuasive writing piece below, titled: *Technology is ruining children's lives*.

Far too many children are growing up in front of screens. TVs, computers, laptops, iPads, iPods, Xboxes, PlayStations, phones – blah blah blah. Yes, they are awesome, I agree, but so is chocolate. But everyone knows that chocolate is a 'sometimes' food – a treat. Screen time should be just that too – a 'sometimes treat'.

If you study old black and white photos, no-one is overweight. Old photos of Aboriginal hunters will show you fit men with muscles and six packs – but there were no gyms around. You don't need a gym to keep you fit and in great shape if you get out every day and walk. Walk and work. This keeps you in great shape. Sadly, if you look at adults who are in front of screen for too long, their bodies don't look anywhere near as healthy as the people in black and white photos from before technology screens were invented.

It is awful to be honest enough to do the same comparison of children. Yes, those old black and white photos of children are all healthy looking. However honestly, look at today's children. What was the difference – obviously no screen time. Children in those old photos ran around playing all day. There were some wooden toys, but generally they explored, invented and created – most importantly walked and ran regularly.

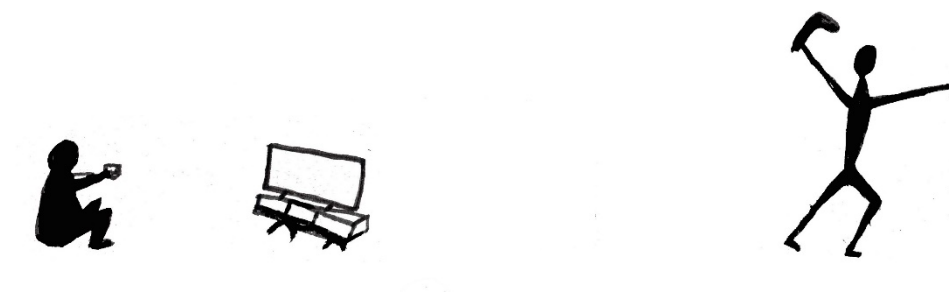
In Aboriginal Culture children walked with the Elders and learnt directions and understood landmarks so that they could never get lost. They explored hunting techniques and dangers of their environment. They learnt to catch, prepare and cook food. They played traditional games that involved running around laughing and learning about animals and food.

Sadly, today even our Aboriginal Elders struggle to get the children outside learning traditions. 'Why hunt?' they say. We can buy food. Albeit fast food that is not at all healthy for you. 'I will come out and learn traditions later – after I play these games on the screen.' But grandparents and Elders don't last forever. This is why more of our culture is being lost.

This is why people don't know which foods are poisonous. This is why people can't find water in the desert. This is why people get lost in the bush. This is why people buy fruit and vegetables whilst the native food is rotting on its plant. This is why some bush tucker can't regrow, because no one is tilling the soil for it to come back next season. This is why stories of rules, food and danger are being lost throughout generations. This is why people are out of shape and unhealthy . . .

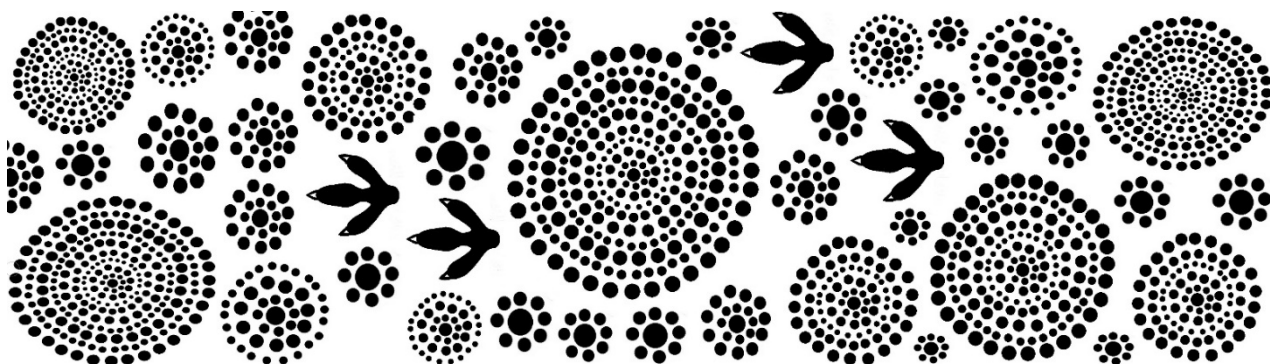
Technology screens. A 'sometimes treat' that people use far too often. Do you need more time away from screens? What are you waiting for?

The pride in listening to your Elders WILL lead to pride within yourself.



What did you think of the piece? Did it outline compelling reasons why screen time should be minimised? What other things do you think people do that are bad for them? Write a persuasive piece to make your point.

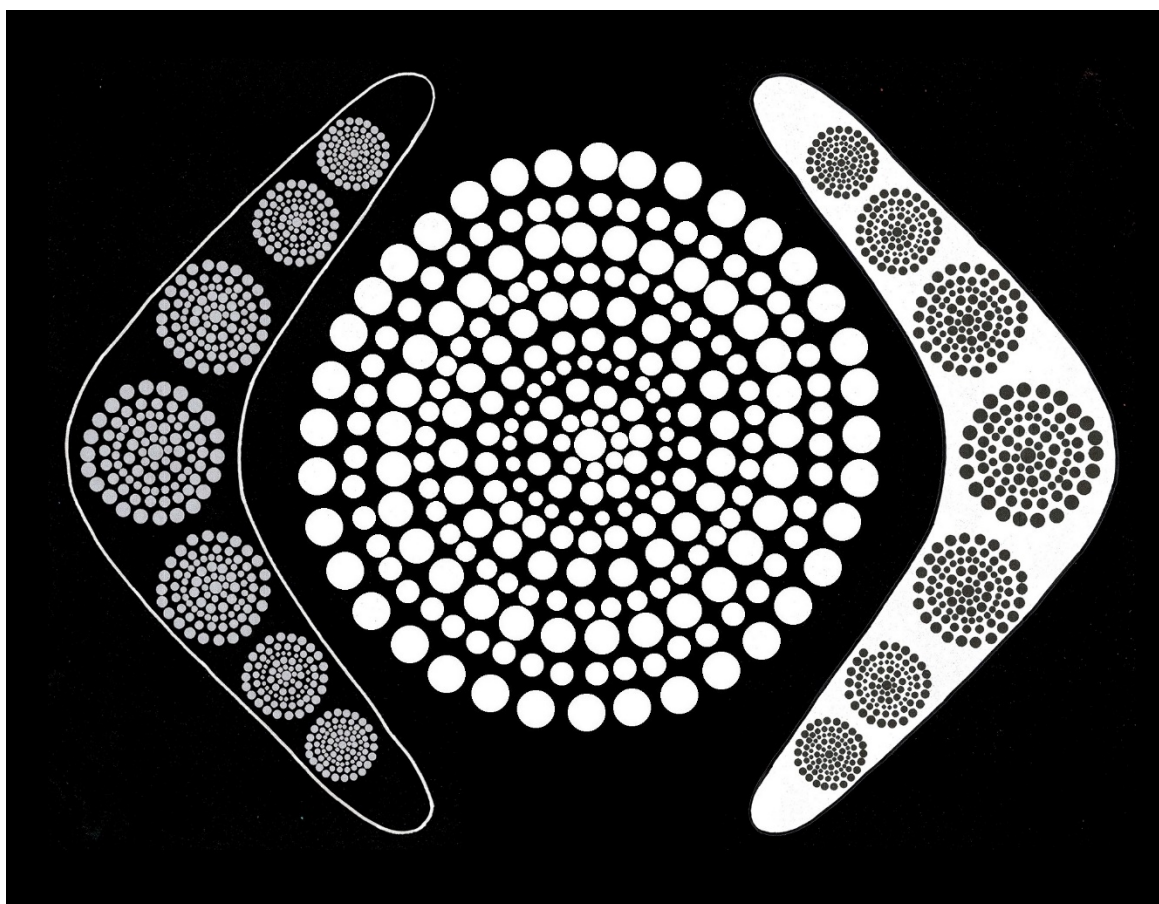
## INFORMATION SHEET: Dreaming Circles



Have you noticed the dots arranged in circles in Aboriginal Art? These are Dreaming Circles. They represent our place in space and highlight the importance of things going around and around forever.

They show us going around the sun, the cyclic nature of our seasons, the transition of our generations and how we need to look after Mother Earth so that she is happy to feed our family, our children's families, our grandchildren's families, our friends and our fellow countrymen. They remind us that all of our decisions need to consider the future of the world.

It is essential that we all learn not to be greedy and worry about ourselves, right now. These circles are things we often invite people to join in on our artwork, but we always respectfully ask that other people don't copy our sacred art for profit. Please enjoy creating some art work of your own, but leave the creation of our art to Aboriginal people.



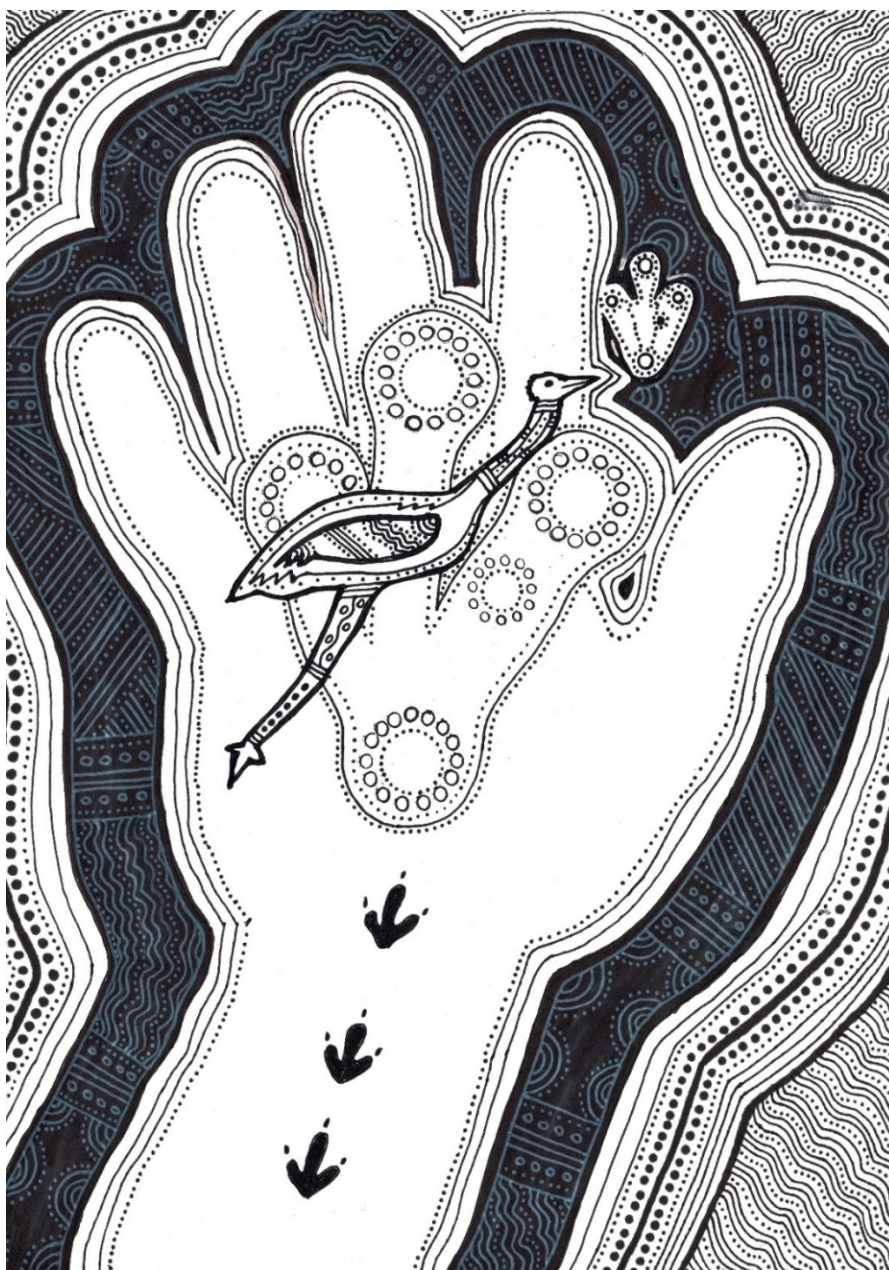
## INFORMATION SHEET: Totems

There are many different Aboriginal cultures across Australia, but they all have some things in common. One of those things is a totem. A totem is a family group that is passed down through your family since the Dreamtime. In the Dreamtime, people and animals could change – these totems descended into our families today.

My Family Totem is the Emu. Our Songline (Dreamtime Story) is all about that giant emu in the sky (The Milky Way) and his footprint (The Southern Cross). Our Dreaming talks about how the Emu in the Sky got there, and why Emus can no longer fly. Our Songline teaches everyone in our nation not to be a show-off.

Because we are the Emu family, we do not kill, cook nor eat emus. We are their guardians. If emu populations are low in our area, we can order the rest of the community not to hunt emus until their numbers are replenished.

To highlight our connection, we paint all of our artefacts with emus, their footprints, and even the Southern Cross. If you look back at the book, you will see quite a lot of these things. I can count 31 . . . but you had better check that amount and see if you agree.





## WORKSHEET: Identity

It has been extremely important for me to paint the character of this book to reflect my culture and me.

Sadly lots of people think that all Aboriginal people are the same. This is not the case. For example, communities from close to the equator are the darkest. Can you research the equator and brainstorm why these groups have the darkest skin?

Aboriginal groups also lived in areas that snowed, and some cultures are rainforest people. Obviously, they are not out in the hot sun like desert people. Can you identify on a map of Australia the parts that snow? Can you find the dense rainforests of Australia?

These areas also affect the hair type of Aboriginal people. See if you can research a range of hair types across Australia from straight all the way to tight 'afro'-like hair.

It is also important to discuss modern Aboriginal people. Luckily, today people are free to marry whoever they choose. My Aboriginal mother married my Caucasian father, whose family came to Australia from Germany well before I was born. When I was at school, people called me half Aboriginal. I drew a picture of what I might look like if that were true. Funny, hey?



The truth is, you either are Aboriginal or you are not. There is no fraction. My family doesn't teach me half of our culture because of my dad. You learn from your Elders as much culture as you are willing to learn. It is not determined by a fraction.

Throughout *My Culture and Me*, you will notice that the main character is not as dark as his dad, nor his uncle. Being Aboriginal is not about colour, it is about pride.

**I hope that you have enjoyed learning a bit of my culture, and a bit about me. Please take the time to listen and learn about Aboriginal culture. It is very wise and extremely important to know all about the rich knowledge of the oldest culture in the world.**

## WORKSHEET: Connection to Country

### Close Activity

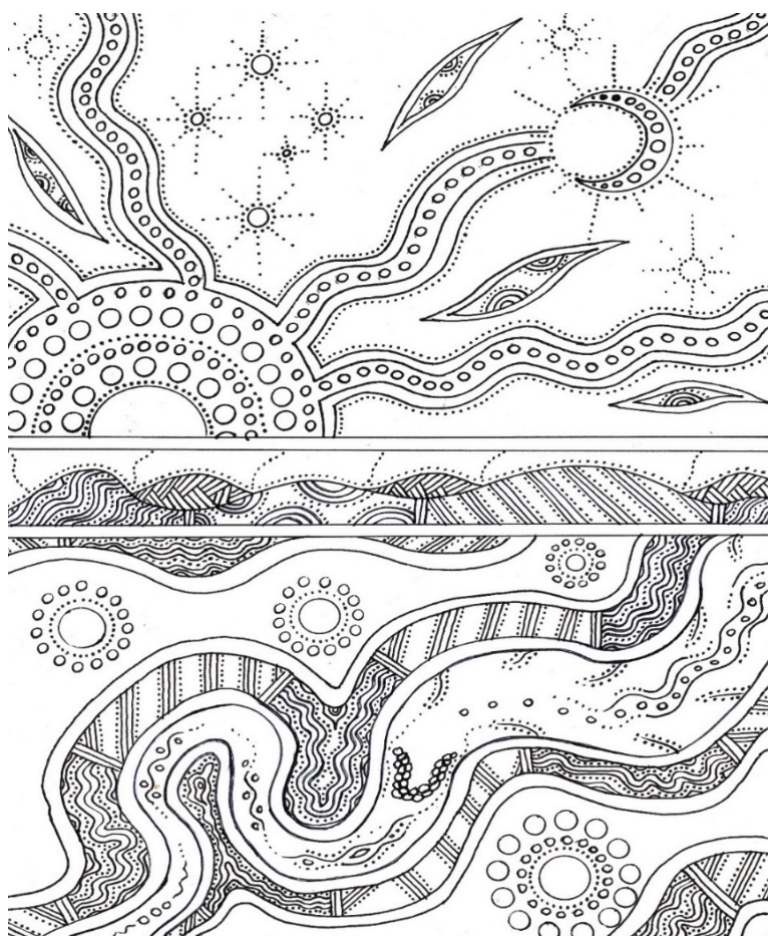
Fill in the missing words from the list below.

Throughout most c\_\_\_\_\_ it is said that humans p\_\_\_\_\_ or own land. In my culture we have been r\_\_\_\_\_ to understand (from our current g\_\_\_\_\_ all the way back to the beginning of time) that we are a p\_\_\_\_\_ of the land. It is said that our s\_\_\_\_\_ upon conception comes from Father Sky's magic; it r\_\_\_\_\_ with us here on Mother E\_\_\_\_\_, until it is time for our b\_\_\_\_ to go to the earth and our spirit back up to the s\_\_\_\_\_.

One way to show our c\_\_\_\_\_ to country is through an i\_\_\_\_\_ ceremony where our h\_\_\_\_\_ are sprayed onto stone. This connection h\_\_\_\_\_ the respect we have for our t\_\_\_\_ here with our Earth Mother.

As an i\_\_\_\_\_ throughout my book My C\_\_\_\_\_ and Me, I have blended t\_\_\_\_\_ art into modern P\_\_\_\_\_ Book illustrations.

The traditional p\_\_\_\_\_ below shows my connection to F\_\_\_\_\_ Sky and M\_\_\_\_\_ Earth. It is much more a\_\_\_\_\_ than the illustrations throughout the book.



abstract  
connection  
cultures  
Father  
hands  
Illustrator  
Mother  
part  
purchase  
remains  
spirit  
traditional

body  
Culture  
Earth  
generation  
highlights  
initiation  
painting  
Picture  
raised  
sky  
time

### Bonus activity:

Can you find the following in the illustration?

The Earth  
The Sky  
The Sun  
The Moon  
The Stars  
The hills  
The river  
The fish trap  
The 4 waterholes

## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
My Culture and Me	Gregg Dreise	9780143789376	1-3	\$24.99		
TOTAL						

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