

## Fun at home activity

### Young Masters – My Story Collage

**Inspiration:** [Old Masters: Australia's Great Bark Artists](#) exhibition. This exhibition shows bark paintings in the National Museum's collection painted by Aboriginal artists from Arnhem Land in northern Australia. These amazing artworks show sacred meanings, traditional knowledge, symbols, history and stories.

They are works that are very personal and important to the artist, their families and communities. The colours and patterns have different meanings depending on where the artist is from.

The works are painted to pass on these stories to the next generation or to share with other people outside the family. These artworks are very important and are treasured possessions.



**Activity:** Children in the January 2014 Discovery Space at the National Museum made their own My Story Collage masterpiece documenting their journeys, histories and family stories. You might like to make your own at home.

You can come up with your own set of symbols and meanings that represent your community or family. You can use photos, maps, symbols, paper and other special things to create a treasured keepsake to hand down to your children or grandchildren.

**Time and difficulty:** This activity might take two hours or it could take much longer if you're enjoying it. If you do the printing part of the activity, it will take longer, but this is optional. It can be as easy or as difficult as you like.

**Hint:** This is a great family activity. Share stories about your family to get children inspired.

**Materials:** Some of the materials we've suggested below may give your artwork a feeling of being similar to the bark paintings – but not a copy.

Traditionally bark paintings were made from a strip of bark from a stringybark tree. Some have an elongated rectangle shape. We made our collage in a similar rectangular shape. We ripped the edges of our paper instead of cutting it with scissors, to give a rougher edge, similar to the barks.



**What you'll need:**

- brown card (approx. 160 x 280mm)
- two sticks about the same length as the shorter edge of your card
- string
- hole punch
- textured, patterned or coloured paper. We used paper that looked like bark but you can use any type of paper
- glue or double sided tape
- maps or postcards – use these to represent journeys or landscapes of where you are from, or where you have travelled
- photos or photocopied images of your family, friends, pets, home or things that are important to you
- coloured wax crayons. We used red, black, white and yellow but you can use any colour that might be meaningful to you
- printing materials such as foam, roller and paints. Hint: you don't have to use foam – you can use anything that you can groove a pattern into – half a potato will work just as well.

These materials are only suggestions. You can choose anything from around the house that helps to tell your stories.

### **Questions to start you thinking**

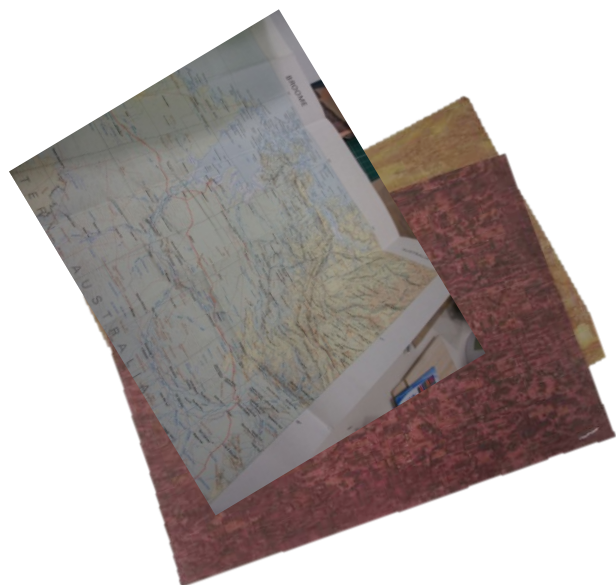
- What are the stories of your family?
- What is important to you?
- Do you have any family traditions or symbols?
- If you could make up your own family symbol, what would it look like?
- Where have you come from and where have you travelled?
- Do you have pets or special connections to particular animals?
- When you are older, what do you want your children and grandchildren to remember about you and the times when you lived?

### **Steps**

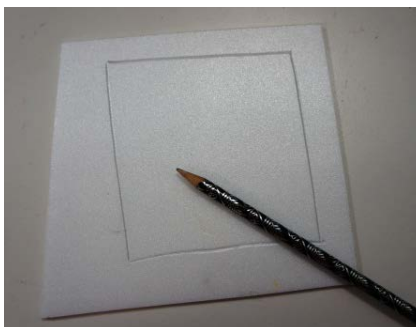
1. Using a hole punch, put two holes in the shorter edges of the brown card. Tie the two sticks at the top and the bottom of the card with the string. This will create a nice frame for your work and make it look special.



2. After thinking about the questions above, gather all your photos and images, maps and textured paper. Arrange how you would like to place them on the card. You may need to rip paper and maps to a size that will fit on the cardboard.
3. Once you have arranged the paper and photos, glue them on the backing card. You might like to use crayons over the top to add your travels or symbols.



4. Do you want to add printing to your artwork? Patterns are used a lot in the paintings on show in *Old Masters*. These patterns have deep spiritual meanings, so it is important not to copy their patterns. Can you come up with your own patterns or symbols? Perhaps your family might love to go to the beach, so a pattern of waves or sand might be a good representation. In our example, this pattern represents the paving in the family yard, where lots of time was spent playing as kids.



5. Draw your pattern or symbol on the printing foam with a blunt pencil to make grooves. Remember what you groove will not show once printed, it's the flat areas that will make a print). When you have pressed your design into the foam, roll an even layer of paint onto the foam. Place the painted foam directly on to the collage (or on a separate paper to add) and press down firmly and evenly. Carefully lift up and your print will be left behind. Hint: it is a good idea to practise the printing first. The beauty of printing is that you can do it again and again.

**Congratulations: you are finished!** Hang your Young Masters – My Story Collage on the wall for all your friends and family to see. Share your creation with us by sending a photo to: [schoolholidays@nma.gov.au](mailto:schoolholidays@nma.gov.au). We will add your photo to the [National Museum's Flickr stream](#), where you can see other craft creations from our Discovery Space.

[More fun at home activities, videos and games on the Museum's website](#)