



Yalangbara

art of the Djang'kawu

Yalangbara: Art of Djang'kawu is the story of many journeys. Most importantly, it is the story of the Djang'kawu, ancestral beings from Burralku who came to Yalangbara, giving birth to the Rirratjingu clan. It is also the story of the Marika family, direct descendants of the Djang'kawu and custodians of the region.

Yalangbara is the most important site in the northeast of Arnhem Land for Dhuwa moiety people. It is the site of the first ancestors, the Djang'kawu.

Banduk Marika

Introduction

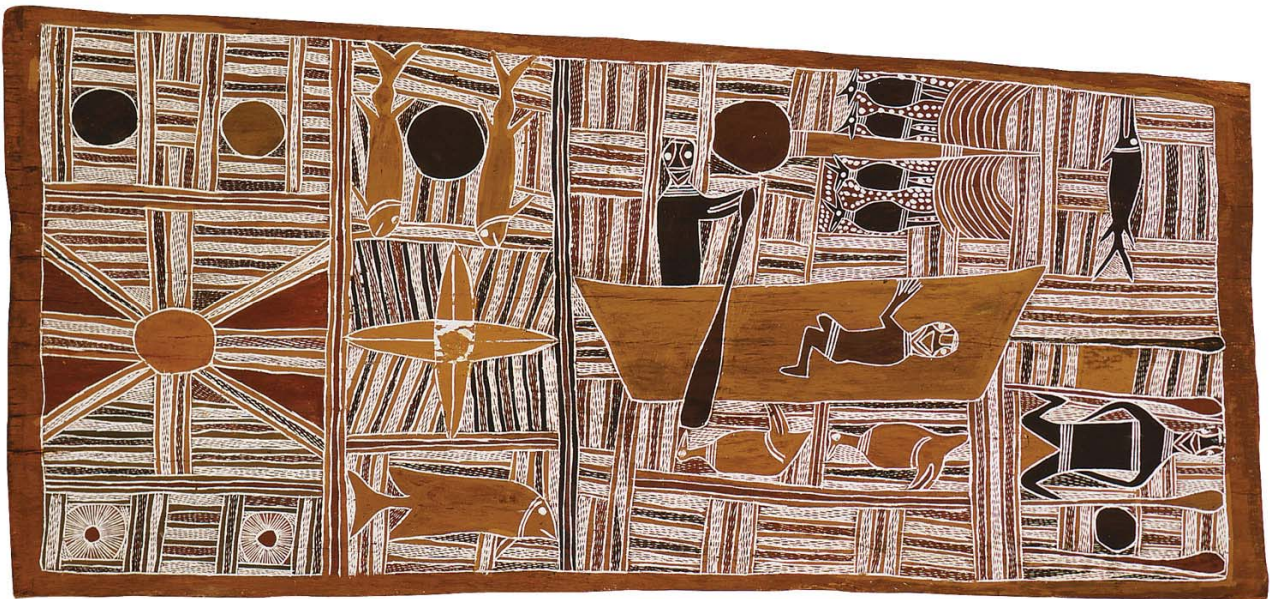
This education resource is designed for students in years 5 to 9. Background information is aimed principally at teachers but may also be useful for older students. This resource complements the exhibition *Yalangbara: Art of the Djang'kawu* and comprises information and activities on four topics:

1. Journey of the Djang'kawu to Yalangbara
2. Marika family artists
3. Land rights through painting
4. The case of the counterfeit carpet.

Please understand that many Aboriginal artworks have strict copyright laws relating to who can paint certain symbols. It is inappropriate for students to copy Aboriginal paintings or symbols from them. These symbols may represent detailed cultural knowledge that has been handed down through many generations. They may belong to a community and identify places of sacred significance or business that is not discussed in public. For a concrete example of these issues, see section 4, 'The case of the counterfeit carpet'.

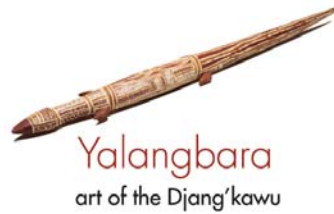


1. Journey of the Djang'kawu to Yalangbara



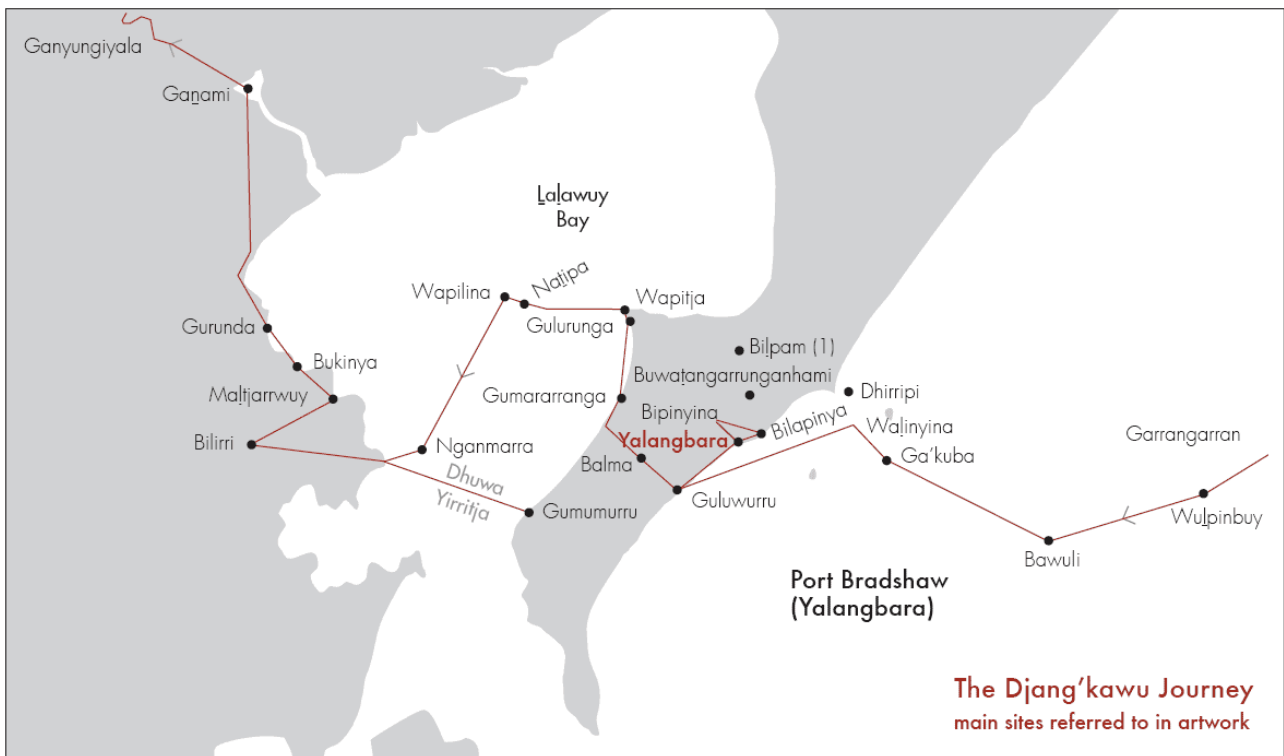
Mawalan 1 Marika, *The Arrival of the Djang'kawu at Yalangbara*, 1967, Natural pigments on bark, Groger-Wurm Collection, gift of the Northern Territory Administration. MAGNT Darwin (Abart 474).

The story of Yalangbara (Port Bradshaw) is about the journey of the Djang'kawu from Burralku to northeast Arnhem Land. The Djang'kawu were two sisters, Bitjiwurruru and Madalatj, and their male companion. Departing from Burralku, an island far to the east of Yalangbara, the Djang'kawu paddled a dugout canoe across the waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The journey was made in semi-darkness guided by the light of the morning star *banumbirr*, and the thunder man Djambuwal who was positioned above Yalangbara. The journey took many days. Along the way the Djang'kawu encountered many creatures including *garriwa* the flat back turtle, *ngrurla* the sea tern and *daymirri* — a whale or sea monster. Each time they came across a new creature they named it, picking up their clapsticks and singing of the encounter. When they arrived on



the mainland the Djang'kawu shaped the landscape of Yalangbara, leaving feathered strings and armbands which formed granite rocks in the sea. *Bawuli* and *Bilapinya* are two of these sites you can see on the map below. As they travelled overland they created freshwater wells, their digging sticks sprouted into a variety of plants, and many of their objects transformed into landforms.

The Djang'kawu shaped more than the environment during their journey. Bitjiwurruru, the elder sister, also gave birth to members of all the different Dhuwa moiety *baparru* or clans. The first of these groups was the Rirratjingu who were born at Yalangbara. They are considered to be the first people and were bequeathed their language and customs by the Djang'kawu. So Yalangbara is to the Yolngu the centre of human and cultural origins, addressing the question 'where do we come from?' Today the Rirratjingu celebrate and pass on knowledge about the Djang'kawu journey through their art and ritual performances.



Journey (Goyurr) of the Djang'kawu in the Yalangbara Peninsula Area. Source: Mawalan 2 Marika, prepared by Geoffery Bagshaw; not to be reproduced without permission of the Marika family.



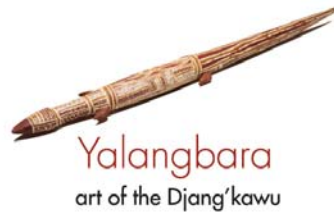
Yalangbara
art of the Djang'kawu

I am the man ... many generations, eldest son of eldest son, descended from Djang'kawu.

Wandjuk Marika

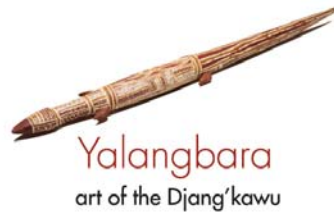


Mawalan 1 Marika, *Djang'kawu Creation Story*, 1959,
Natural pigments on bark, Art Gallery of New South Wales.



Do and discover

- Discuss the significance of Yalangbara and the creation of the Dhuwa people exploring the significance of place in the context of other religions. Ask the students to consider how myths are important to their behaviour, belief and identity.
- Invite your students to research how Indigenous cultures pass on stories through song, dance and art. How are other cultural beliefs represented through song, dance and art? Describe the potency of artworks as vehicles for passing on stories and traditions.
- Show the students a painting of the journey of the Djang'kawu. Ask them to write a narrative of the journey. In the classroom use the interactive whiteboard to locate Yalangbara (Port Bradshaw). Create a journey map from the classroom to Yalangbara and discuss the environments you may travel through. As a class project create an artwork to show this journey. Ask the students to consider their needs on the journey and how they will annotate the map to reflect this.
- Challenge your students to develop a narrative artwork accompanied by dialogue and descriptive prose to pass on to the next class outlining their experiences through the year or illustrating the school's code of conduct.
- Have the students read more about the journey of the Djang'kawu ancestors and create a language dictionary showing the translation of Yolngu words to English. There are many Indigenous languages in Australia. Research your local Indigenous language and creation stories and create a dictionary of local Indigenous words.



2. Marika family: guardians of Yalangbara, descendants of the Djang'kawu

Yalangbara is one of the most significant creation sites in north-eastern Arnhem Land, shaped by the Djang'kawu, the first human members of the Dhuwa moiety and ancestors of the Marika family. One of Australia's oldest dynasties and the custodians of Yalangbara, the Marikas are important figures in Australian art and history.

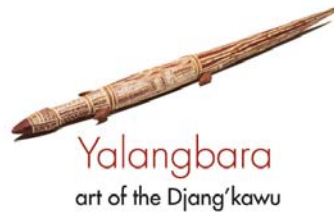
Mawalan 1 Marika (1908–67) is one of the most important Yolngu artists in the history of bark painting. At the time of early European arrival he was a senior religious leader, not only of the Rirratjingu clan but also of other Dhuwa moiety clans. Mawalan 1 was a key figure in many historic negotiations between the Yolngu people and the outside community.

From the 1930s Mawalan 1 helped the Methodist Overseas Mission to establish a mission station on Rirratjingu land. In the 1940s he assisted anthropologists Charles P Mountford and Ronald and Catherine Berndt with their research into Yolngu culture and society. Later in the 1950s and 1960s he created barks for major galleries and was a signatory to Yirrkala Bark Petition presented to parliament in 1963.

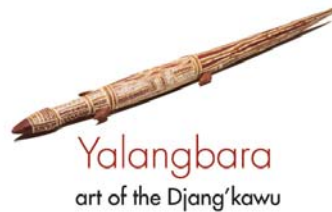
Traditionally, stories were passed down orally. There was no written language and important religious information was transmitted in dance and song as well as in the symbolic paintings used in ceremonies. Mawalan 1 was significant in establishing the bark painting tradition encouraged at the mission in the 1930s. He was one of the Yolngu pioneers who developed the narrative approach to painting combining figurative and symbolic elements that became a signature style of Yirrkala bark painting. Mawalan 1 also encouraged Yolngu women to paint at a time when women were not allowed to produce sacred paintings, teaching his daughters along with his sons. Mawalan 1's brothers Mathaman, Milirrpum and Roy were also artists and activists in their own right although Roy and Milirrpum were not as prolific as their elder brothers due to other commitments within the community. Mawalan's son Wandjuk and his daughters Banduk and Dhuwarrwarr have carried on their father's artistic legacy, along with other family members.

Do and discover

- Eleven [Marika family artists](#) have an online biography. Assign each student an artist to explore. Then together, prepare a family tree with a brief biography of each person:
 - Mawalan 1 Marika
 - Mathaman Marika
 - Milirrpum Marika
 - Roy Dadaynga Marika
 - Wandjuk Djuwakan Marika
 - Banduk Marika
 - Dhuwarrwarr Marika



- Wanyubi Marika
 - Yalmay Gurrwun (Marika) Yunupingu
 - Mawalan 2 Marika
 - Jimmy Barrmula Yunupingu
- The expression 'Dreamtime' or 'Dreaming' was first used by Europeans to explain Aboriginal notions about creation, the 'time before time when all things were created by particular ancestral beings or Dreamings'. Different groups have their own name for this concept. The Yolngu call it *wangarr*. Stories of the *wangarr* are handed down from generation to generation and are integral to Indigenous Yolngu culture. People believe they reconnect with the *wangarr* in the present through dance, music, story and visual art. Investigate how other Indigenous communities express their creation stories.
 - Mawalan 1 Marika's *Djang'kawu Creation Story* (on page 4) tells the story about how his ancestors came into being. He incorporated designs given to his family by the Djang'kawu into his work to signify and narrate the birth of his family and community. Explore the notion of family and ancestors with your students. Consider/identify how their ancestors have influenced the traditions and beliefs they and their family hold today.
 - In north-east Arnhem Land all Yolngu clans belong to one of two moieties. The word moiety is derived from the French word for half and describes the division of society into two groups. Yolngu are either Yirritja or Dhuwa. The people of each moiety are affiliated with powerful Ancestral Beings who created the cosmos. Everything — plants, animals and land are also divided into Dhuwa or Yirritja. These moieties are intermarrying groups; a Yirritja man must marry a Dhuwa woman. Membership is traced through the father here, so the child of a Yirritja moiety man is also Yirritja. Many societies also make these divisions. Ask the students to create a three-generation family tree. Assign each student a moiety. Ask them to trace their moiety back to their grandparents.



3. Land rights through painting

Mawalan 1 encouraged his son Wandjuk to attend the mission school and learn to read and write English. Later Wandjuk was to become a key translator for his father and other senior men in their dealings with Ngapaki or Balanda (non-Aboriginal Australians). Mawalan 1 and his brothers Mathaman, Milirrpum, Roy and son Wandjuk were all signatories of the famous [Bark Petition](#) that was sent to the Australian Parliament in 1963. Wandjuk also helped prepare the text of the petition on his old typewriter.

The 1963 petition was the first of bark petitions presented to the Australian Parliament, and it remains the only one to have been formally recognised. A replica is displayed in Parliament House. One panel is *Dhuwa* and the other is *Yirritja* representing each Yolngu moiety. The petition was produced in response to then Prime Minister Robert Menzies' announcement, in February 1963, that the government would grant leases to mine bauxite in land taken from the Arnhem Land reserve. Elders from the region were angry that they had not been consulted and because the mining would interfere with sacred sites.

Having received the petition in August, a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry reported that it:

acknowledged the rights the Yolngu set out in the petitions and recommended [...] that compensation for loss of livelihood be paid, that sacred sites be protected and that an ongoing parliamentary committee monitor the mining project.

The mining went ahead on Rirratjingu and Gumatj land, but the Marika family and other Yolngu elders did not give up. A case was lodged in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory by Mawalan's brother Milirrpum — *Milirrpum and others v Nabalco and the Commonwealth Government*. This was again unsuccessful when in 1971 Justice Blackburn found that the Yolngu people could not prevent mining on their lands as native title was not part of the law of Australia. However this decision led directly to the establishment of a Royal Commission after which Justice Woodward concluded:

I believe that to deny Aborigines the right to prevent mining on their land is to deny the reality of their land rights.

Finally in 1976, due largely to the efforts of the Marikas along with other Yolngu, the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act ruled that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory were allowed a claim of title if claimants could provide evidence of their traditional association with land.

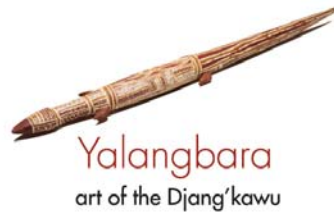
Paintings of Yalangbara establish the Rirratjingu clan's traditional association with the land. Unfortunately Mawalan 1 and Mathaman did not live to see this victory.



Yalangbara
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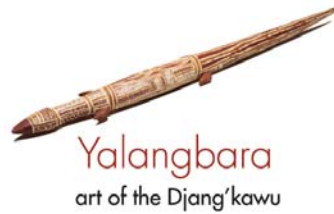


Mawalan 1 Marika, Mathaman Marika and Wandjuk Marika, Djang'kawu Story 1, 1959,
Natural pigments on bark, Art Gallery of New South Wales.



Do and discover

- Have students create a glossary that you can add to as you work through this resource. For example:
 - *translator* — person who turns the written or spoken word from one language into another
 - *signatories* — person who has signed a document
 - *petition*
 - *moiety*
 - *consultation*
 - *native title*
 - claimants
- Have students look at all the paintings in this resource, and list aspects of them that show the tradition of connection with the land. Small groups could look at one painting each and then share their findings with each other.
- As a class, have students decide on an issue they think worthy of sending a petition about. It may be a school issue where the petition is sent to the principal, or a community issue where the petition is sent to the local council. When the issue has been decided upon have each student write their wording for a petition. Have the class decide which wording they would like as their class petition. Print this out and mount it on a large piece of card. Have students decorate the edges of the card with motifs that represent their class.
- Organise a class court. Choose a judge, a plaintiff (to argue for the right to protect their land) and a defendant (to argue for the right to mine the land). Each side may call three witnesses to help argue their case. The rest of the class become a jury. The decision should be made on the basis of the strengths of the arguments presented. At the conclusion make sure you discuss with your students how the decision was arrived at and what other considerations may be taken into account in an actual court of law.



4. The case of the counterfeit carpet

Paintings are one way that Aboriginal people share their stories with other Australians. Art galleries and museums collect and display paintings. Often images of these paintings are reproduced in books, on websites, and in resources such as this one. For this to happen the Museum contacts the artist and seeks permission to reproduce the image. Once permission is given the Museum is allowed to use the image for the purposes specified in the copyright agreement. Anyone wishing to reproduce an image of an artwork must first receive permission.

In 1974 Wandjuk Marika raised the issue of Indigenous copyright at a board meeting of the Australia Council for the Arts. Wandjuk had seen a teatowel and tablecloth decorated with images that represented a Yalangbara story his father had given to him. Paintings here are like title deeds to people's land and only land owners and people they authorise can reproduce them. To steal someone's ancestral designs is therefore a very serious offense in Yolngu society.

In response to Wandjuk's concerns, the Aboriginal Artists Agency was established in 1976 to monitor unauthorised reproductions of Aboriginal artworks. In 1993 Wandjuk's sister Banduk recognised designs from her print *Djanda and the Sacred Waterhole* on a carpet. In this artwork Banduk tells part of a special story about a sacred waterhole on her Country. She had not given permission for her designs to be used on the carpet, and was shocked and offended by the discovery. For Banduk, her art is her culture — her identity.

It was found that a Perth-based company had reproduced woollen carpets with the unauthorised artworks of eight Aboriginal artists. In 1994 Bunduk and the two other living artists, George Milpururru and Tim Tjapangarti, were awarded \$188,000 damages and the firm was ordered to release the remaining carpets to the artists.

Banduk said:

It is important for all artists but especially for Aboriginal artists to assert their right to cultural and artistic freedom.¹

The Judge said:

It is an infringement of copyright to authorise or to do any of the acts controlled by the copyright owner without permission.

¹ Michael McMahon, 'The case of the counterfeit carpets', in *Copyrites: Aboriginal Art in the Age of Reproductive Technologies*, National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association and Macquarie University, 1996.



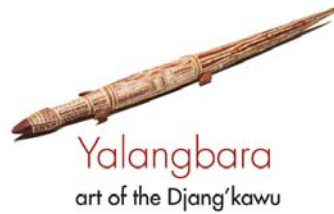
Yalangbara
art of the Djang'kawu



Banduk Marika, *Djanda and the Sacred Waterhole*, 1988, Linoprint on paper, and the unauthorised reproduction by Indofurn Pty Ltd as a carpet in 1995.

Do and discover

- Continue your glossary with these words:
 - reproduce
 - copyright
 - permission
 - unauthorised
 - damages
 - infringement
- Compare the designs on the two pieces of art. What are the similarities? What are the differences?
- Show students [The Great YouTube Copyright debate](#) — a 5-minute video on YouTube. Set up a class debate 'that Copyright is important in the digital age'. Choose students to argue the affirmative and the negative sides. At the end have the class divide to show which side they support.



Curriculum relevance

New South Wales

HSI

Years 7–8 — What can we learn about Indigenous peoples? What has been the nature and impact of colonisation on Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples?

- 4.2 describes significant features of Aboriginal and Indigenous cultures, prior to colonisation
- 4.7 identifies different contexts, perspectives and interpretations of the past
- 4.9 uses historical terms and concepts in appropriate contexts
- 4.10 selects and uses appropriate oral, written and other forms, including ICT, to communicate effectively about the past.
- LS.9 recognises the contribution of Aboriginal peoples and other cultures to Australian society
- LS.10 recognises different perspectives about events and issues

Visual Arts, Stage 3

Students investigate ways of mapping a place using symbols. They discuss how artists have represented their environment in paintings and public sculptures.

Students investigate ways of evoking the environment, using observation and recording as a basis for an expressive interpretation. They look at how artists have represented their environment in expressive ways.

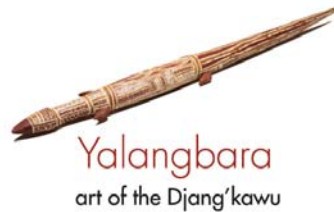
Students look at artworks that record and interpret Australian history. They discuss how artists create points of view in the way subject matter is organised and how colour and texture has been used.

Students consider how artists represent ideas and feelings in abstract artworks through the use of symbols. Students develop their own symbols in response to dream images.

Australian Capital Territory

In the later childhood years students will:

- 4. LC.9 identify what a stereotype is
- 4. LC.10 identify discrimination against people on the basis of their ability, physical or intellectual attributes, gender or race in texts and in actual situations and suggest counter-measures
- 5. LC.1 identify why people cooperate in groups and consider values that communities share to help them live and work together



- 7. LC.12 interpret and respond to a range of artistic works, identifying some of the skills, elements and techniques used to create meanings and giving reasons for their interpretations and preferences
- 21. LC.3 the ways Australia's Indigenous peoples lived prior to colonisation, including distribution across Australia, diversity of cultures, languages, customs, social organisations, technologies and land uses
- 21. LC.13 explain current and past events using evidence from investigation.

In the early adolescent years students will:

- 4. EA.12 recognise that, when some groups within a society are characterised as different and inferior and are described in stereotypes, this leads to consistently unfair treatment that equates to discrimination
- 21. EA.3 understand Indigenous perspectives of colonisation and how Indigenous peoples' lives were affected (e.g. impact of disease, frontier wars, dispossession and land disputes, differing experiences in different locations, increasing government control)
- 21. EA.5 understand the importance of 'Country' to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (e.g. different ways individuals are related to the land)
- 7. EA.11 research an artist and/or artistic work in a way that informs and deepens their understanding and appreciation of the artist and artwork
- 7. EA.12 interpret some artistic works and/or artists in the context of the society in which they lived and the dominant ideas of the time.

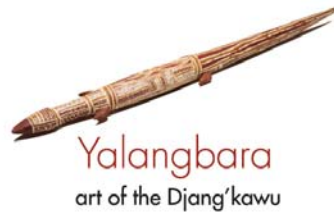
Victoria

Humanities

- Level 3 – Students use a range of historical evidence, including oral history, artifacts narratives and pictures, to retell events and describe historical characters.
- Level 4 – Students use a range of written, visual, oral and electronic sources to study the past.
- Level 5 – Students examine the impact of European colonization of Australia, including representation of that settlement as invasion.

The Arts

- Level 3 – Students identify and describe key features of arts works from their own and other cultures, and use arts language to describe and discuss the communication of ideas, feelings and purpose in their own and other people's artworks.



- Level 4 – Students interpret and compare key features of arts works made in a range of times, places and cultures. They communicate ideas and understandings about themselves and others, incorporating influences from their own and other cultures and times.
- Level 5 – Students compare, analyse, evaluate, and interpret the content, meaning and qualities in arts works created in different social, cultural and historical contexts, offering informed responses and opinions and using appropriate arts language.

Queensland

- Year 7 – Students consider their own opinions, experiences and understandings to develop respect for and to value Aboriginal people and cultures and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures.
- Year 9 – Students understand the world views of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people and their connections to places and other groups, and apply this understanding to their own connections to people and places.

The Arts

- Year 7 – Students understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks are expressions of knowledge, complex relationships and diverse perspectives. They use protocols relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks.
- Year 9 – Students understand that diverse individual and communal expressions of Australia's past, present and future are represented through artworks, including those created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Western Australia

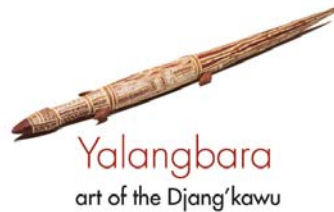
Society and Environment

Year 6 – Students will understand:

- that cultural groups express their culture through their actions, the production of artefacts and their beliefs and values
- that individuals learn the values, beliefs, practices and rules of a culture from a range of influences
- the ways in which the practices of cultural groups promote cohesion and continuity.

Year 7 – Students will understand:

- that Australian society is made up of a range of different Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural groups, each of which has its own values, beliefs and practices
- how the culture of a group is influenced by its values, beliefs and practices



- there are different types of world views and belief systems
- the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in building the Australian national identity was marginalised in the past
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity has been influenced by their pursuit of citizenship rights including representation.*

Visual arts

Years 6–9 – Students will:

- recognise differences in artwork from different times, cultures and societies
- recognise symbols in artwork
- value art work from Australia and other societies, cultures and times.

South Australia

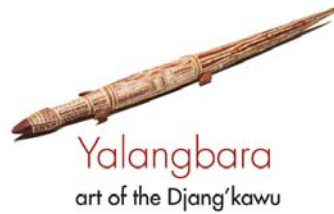
Society and the Environment

Time, Continuity and Change

- 3.1 Identifies and explains sequences of change that have occurred in Australia over time, and recognises various perspectives on events.
- 3.2 Researches and discusses the importance of understanding events and ways of life of some past periods, using primary and secondary sources.
- 5.1 Critically analyses different interpretations of events, ideas and issues, including an understanding of the relationship between power and historical representation.

Societies and Cultures

- 3.8 Learns from rural and urban Aboriginal peoples and other minorities about their histories and present day experiences, and acts to counter prejudice.
- 4.8 Demonstrates critical understanding of their own cultural practices in comparison to the histories, cultures and present day experiences of rural and urban Aboriginal groups, and acts for Reconciliation.
- 5.8 Identifies and analyses complex social, cultural and environmental issues and strategies, including self-management and land protection, that are important to local and other Aboriginal peoples today.



The Arts

- 3.1 Uses thought, imagination, research and experimentation to create/re-create arts works within each arts form that convey meaning about issues within their community.

Tasmania

Society and History

Standard 3 – Students will:

- recognise the need to counter discrimination
- understand that conflicting values can affect decisions about land use
- use different types of evidence to examine the past, present and future
- understand how information can be represented differently in the past and present.

Standard 4 – Students will:

- examine values and beliefs of different cultural groups and their influence on identity
- understand the value of diversity and recognise equity and inequity
- compare how changing values influence choices and decisions about land use in different places
- understand that differences in values can cause conflict about land use
- compare multiple sources of primary and secondary evidence to establish historical fact and opinion.

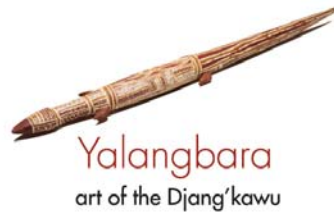
Visual Arts

Standard 3

- Making connections — Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times and places.

Standard 4

- Symbolism — Students recognise a range of cultural symbols and icons and reference them in their own work.
- Influences — Students demonstrate awareness of the significance of some cultural symbols.
- Intention — Students recognise that art works have multiple meanings according to the context in which they are viewed.



- Diversity — Students appreciate diversity and gain some insight into the lives of others through artworks.
- Purpose — Students understand that art is made to express a point of view about things the artist finds important.

Northern Territory

SOSE

Strand 3

Soc 3.1 – Time, Continuity and Change: Students investigate the past and how events have impacted on individuals and groups.

Soc 3.2 – Indigenous Studies: Students explain what they have learned about the core beliefs of urban and non-urban Indigenous peoples and apply the principles of reconciliation to take action to counter prejudice.

Soc 3.4 – Values, Beliefs and Cultural Diversity: Students describe key elements of culture in groups and communities, how individuals learn and share their culture and the impact of differing values upon individuals and societies.

Env 3.1 – Place, Landforms and Features: Students investigate patterns of use of natural resources and how they have changed over time.

Strand 4

Soc 4.2 – Indigenous Studies: Students analyse their own cultural practices in comparison to the histories and current experiences of all Indigenous groups and actively contribute towards reconciliation.

Soc 4.4 – Values, Beliefs and Cultural Diversity: Students research and describe the diverse interpretations and reactions of individuals/ groups to the impact of major events in Australia and how this cultural diversity contributes to the identity of a society.

Art

Strand 3

CrA 3.1 – Creating Art: Students create artworks that involve a degree of experimentation with ideas, and present to a range of audiences.

Strand 4

VA 4.4 – Arts in Context: Students identify the purpose and characteristics of artworks that locate them in particular societies, cultures and times.