**PAPUNYA TULA LESSON PLAN 1: FAMILY STORIES, PATTERNS AND EXPERIMENTATION**

*The Dreaming been all the time. From our early days, before European people came up. The Dreaming carry on. Old people carry on this law, business, schooling, for the young people. Grandfather and grandmother, uncle and aunty, mummy and father, all that - they been carry on this, teach 'em all the young boys and girls . . . They put down all the story, same like I do on the canvas.*

— CLIFFORD POSSUM TJAPALTJARRI

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### ABOUT PAPUNYA TULA

In 1971 a small group of Aboriginal artists in Australia’s remote desert changed the face of global art history. After several years of painting, the artists founded Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd, an Aboriginal-owned and managed organization. Established to run the business of Anmatyerre, Arrernte, Luritja, Pintupi and Warlpiri artists, it is recognized as one of Australia’s most successful artist collectives to emerge from the 20th century. The town of Papunya is located about 160 miles northwest of Alice Springs and was established in 1959 by the Australian government as part of an assimilation policy that brought together Aboriginal people from several western desert language groups.
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CLIFFORD POSSUM TJAPALTJARRI AO

Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri (1934 – 2002) was born in a creek bed at Napperby Station, in Anmatyerre country, about 150 miles northwest of Alice Springs. He worked as a stockman (cowboy) at numerous cattle stations and in the late 1950s was recruited to help build the Papunya settlement, where he met and married Emily Nantakutara Nakamarra. In the late 1960s Clifford Possum was already a noted woodcarver and had experimented with paintings based on traditional symbols. In Rain Dreaming at Mount Denison, Possum depicts multiple aspects of his ancestral ceremonial stories that center on the importance of water in the desert.

NANCY NUNGURRAYI

Nancy Nungurrayi was born around 1935 in the Pollock Hills area, over 500 miles west of Alice Springs. As a young woman she travelled and hunted throughout the region with her family. Nancy lived in Papunya for a number of years, but longed to return to her country. She was one of an early group of people who left Papunya to move back to their traditional homelands, eventually settling in Kintore. Nungurrayi started painting for Papunya Tula Artists in 1996, often inserting large U shapes into her paintings that represent designs painted on women’s bodies for ceremony.

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PRE-K & ELEMENTARY

RESPONDING

Locate Papunya on a map. What are the main features of this region?

Do both of these paintings have dots in them? How are they similar or different?

Find and name any shape or form that might be a symbol in these paintings.

Why do we tell stories? Make a list of all the ways we communicate stories to others. Do we ever tell stories without words?

Aboriginal artists sometimes paint as a means of teaching their stories to younger generations. What are some things you have learnt from your grandparents or parents?

Early Papunya artists sometimes used house paint, poster paint, acrylic paint or natural ochres. In the early days of Papunya, they didn’t have a lot of supplies, so they had to get creative. They often used things they found or recycled like linoleum tiles of wood from building projects. Have you ever painted on a unique surface?

MAKING

Look carefully at the variety of dotting techniques used by Papunya artists and consider how the artists have made these marks.

Experiment with a variety of materials to create a unique tool that makes a repeated pattern.

The early artists from Papunya used symbols they used in other art forms like body painting, sand drawing, and more, which were connected to stories that were important to them. Think of a story that is important to you, your family, school or community. Then create a painting that represents this story using your own symbols and choice of colors.

Make a book or artwork illustrating something you learned from your grandparents, aunts or uncles. Give it to them and thank them for teaching you!

Collect recycled surfaces such as cereal boxes, old wood scraps, fabric, even sticks, leaves or tin cans. Try painting on them. What is hard about it? What do you like about it?

Experiment with different types of paint available to you. Create a series of samples with annotations documenting your experience with working with different materials. Which was the most transparent or opaque? Which paint was the most vivid? Which was your favourite to work with and why?
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MIDDLE & HIGH

RESPONDING

Using the virtual exhibition, research the Papunya Tula painting movement and its impact on the international art scene.

With a partner, discuss the different techniques and processes used by the Papunya artists.

Investigate the evolution of paintings from Papunya. Identify key characteristics of artworks created in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and today. How has the style of painting changed and what reasons can you suggest for these shifts?

Papunya is recognized as one of Australia’s most successful art collectives to emerge from the 20th century. When discussing men’s painting at Papunya, writer and curator John Kean has stated: “Intended as a ‘half-way house’ between ‘nomadism’ and ‘civilized settlement,’ Papunya proved to be a meeting place for Indigenous ideas and culture.” Discuss how this movement aided cultural sustainability. Compare Papunya to another moment in art history where artists have joined together to form a movement.

MAKING

Create a painting or drawing that represents a story that is special to you. Experiment with different ways to tell and represent your story.

Imagine you have been asked to curate an exhibition of eight artworks from the virtual exhibition around a central theme. Choose a theme, select eight artworks that relate to that theme, and write a statement introducing your exhibition. Make a Google slideshow to illustrate your exhibition.

Many artists use art as a means of recording their stories and understanding historical events that have shaped their lives. Think of a historical event that has shaped your life. Create a painting that documents this event or explains why this event occurred.

Design a poster that protests the Australian Government’s assimilation policies toward Aboriginal people. What words, color(s) and font(s) will you use to make your poster eye-catching and convincing?

Up until the 1960’s the Australian Government implemented assimilation policies, which had devastating effects on Aboriginal communities. What is the difference between assimilation and multiculturalism? Discuss why assimilation is problematic.

AGSA Developed collaboratively by the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia and the Art Gallery of South Australia
What artworks? Who are the artists?
- Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri AO
- Nancy Nungurrayi

What are the main ideas, themes or concepts in the artist’s work?
- Identity and Personal History
- Symbols hold information

How does this relate to the world of my students?
- Family Stories
- Mark-Making/Pattern
- Experimentation

What are some ways students could respond to these issues – without creating copies of the artist's work?
- Create a painting that represents a family story using your own symbols and your choice of color.
- Create a tool that makes a repetitive mark, resulting in a pattern.
- Experiment with different types of paint and different surfaces to paint on.