


Aboriginal Dot Painting

 lessonplanspage.com/artsslamusicmdaboriginaldotpaintingk12-htm/

By – Maggie Yant

OBJECTIVES:

Students will learn about the culture of the Australian Aborigines and do their own traditional dot paintings.

MATERIALS:

Tempera paint or poster paint in basic colors

Construction paper in shades of brown

Cotton swabs

The book *The Flying Emu and Other Australian Stories* by Sally Morgan

CD or Tape of Didgeridoo music

Pictures of traditional dot paintings from Australian Aborigines

Background:

- Display pictures around the room for students to look at. Explain to them the history of dot painting in Australia. (There are good websites you can find information on, but here is the general idea; you may want to go into more detail for your own lectures, depending on grade level).
- Aborigines used dot painting as a way of telling a story and recording ritual practices, passing on the stories verbally as well as through music and art. They would use the pictures as a guide as they told the story (much like we use note cards for a speech).
- Didgeridoo players often played music as the storytellers told their tales. Often times the stories depicted were secret, and only certain members of the tribe were allowed to know the contents (these were usually ones that depicted ritual practices).
- So, they would paint dots all over the picture as a form of camouflage. Only those "in the know" were able to decipher the hidden pictures within.
- One of the most common stories told in dot paintings is the Aboriginal creation story – *Dreamtime*. It is fitting since the pictures and the music all have a dreamy quality to them.

Activities and Procedure:

- Students should begin by choosing a paper to paint on. These should be in shades of brown to simulate the bark aborigines would have used.

- The students should draw their simplistic designs very lightly in pencil. It is important that these designs are simple, as it is difficult to do detailed painting with a cotton swab. (Good ideas are simple animal forms, leaves, stick figures, etc. They should be organic things, no racecars or cartoon characters.)
- Demonstrate how to make dots of paint by pushing straight down with the swab, first into the paint then onto the paper, much like you'd use a rubber stamp. (Older students may not need a demonstration.)
- Encourage students to mix their paints to create earth tones.
- Aborigines didn't have paints, as we know them. They made their paints using the items in their environment – ochre, dirt, crushed seeds, etc.
- Once the students have dotted in their main elements, they should begin camouflaging the picture with dots of other colors and patterns. Swirling and waving lines of color are common.
- As they are painting, read some of the stories from Sally Morgan's book.
- Play didgeridoo music in the background to really set the mood.
- The kids love this because it's like being transported, and I found that the music was very soothing and they really zoned into their paintings.

Here are some websites that may be helpful to you:

<http://www.didgeswedoo.com.au/aboriginals.html#aboriginals>

Also, if you search Google images for Aboriginal art you'll find some great pics of dot paintings .

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