

EDUCATION RESOURCE KIT

ART & VISUAL LITERACY

For Stages 2 & 3

A VERY FINE RIVER: CONVICT STORIES FROM THE HUNTER



LAKE
MACQUARIE
CITY
ART
GALLERY



OVERVIEW

Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery is dedicated to working with educators to enhance education opportunities in the region. To this end this resource was developed to support visual literacy and visual arts education for primary school students and teachers, and marks the first of many to come.

This resource was more specifically developed to enhance the experience of teachers and pre-service teachers attending a professional development day on Friday 29 August 2014 and visiting the exhibition *a very fine river: convict stories from the Hunter* with students. It can also be used in conjunction with the exhibition catalogue and Stages 2 & 3 Exhibition Activity Sheet.

Curated by Rob Cleworth and Nicole Chaffey, *a very fine river: convict stories from the Hunter* includes the artwork from five Hunter-based artists who were invited by the gallery to research local convict stories and interpret them through contemporary visual art. The stories of forced migration and the impact it had on Aboriginal people are important to tell, especially to young people.

The resource addresses aspects of the New English K–10 Syllabus and relevant Stages 2 & 3 HSIE Units of Work. It also addresses the content descriptions in both the MAKING and RESPONDING strands from the Australian Curriculum: The Arts, Foundation to Year 10. Detailed curriculum information can be found online at ACARA website: <http://acara.edu.au>. Some of the LEARN, APPLY and RESPOND activities outlined in this resource have been adapted and sourced from Arts:LIVE, a free online resource that aligns with Australian Curriculum outcomes and is funded by the Department of Education and Communities. Access and support for teachers is available at www.artslive.com.au.

All Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery documents relating to this exhibition, including a copy of the catalogue, are available in hardcopy form from the gallery or on our website, artgallery.lakemac.nsw.gov.au in either the Exhibitions or Learn sections.

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| HSIE AND ENGLISH SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES | 5 |
| HSIE: Stage 2 & 3 Units of Work | 5 |
| Learning: Tara Standing and Ryan Williams | 5 |
| Apply: Activity One (Convict Journal Entry) | 6 |
| ENGLISH Stages 2 & 3: New Syllabus Links | 6 |
| Learning: Carolyn McKay | 7 |
| Apply: Activity One (Modes of Identification) | 7 |
| Learning: Ryan Williams | 8 |
| Apply: Activity Two (Storybook) | 8 |
| | |
| VISUAL ARTS SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES | 9 |
| Learning: Tara Standing | 10 |
| Learning: Ruth Feeney | 11 |
| Apply: Activity One (Storybook) | 12 |
| Learning: Sophia Emmett | 13 |
| Apply: Activity Two (Keepsake) | 13 |
| | |
| APPENDICES..... | 15 |
| Thoughts and Ideas Brainstorm Worksheet | 15 |
| Hunter-Gatherer Challenge Worksheet | 16 |
| How to Create Your Own Storybook Worksheet | 17 |
| Special Memory Y-Drawing Template Worksheet | 19 |

Cover:
Tara Standing
Black & White – We Remain
(detail) 2014
digital photograph on paper
100 x 150cm
© the artist



HSIE and ENGLISH

SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES

Ryan Williams
Challenge 2014
oil on hardboard
40 x 30cm
© the artist

The exhibition and resources provide links to a range of KEY LEARNING AREAS in English and Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE).

HSIE

Stage 2 Units of Work and matching HSIE syllabus outcomes:

British Colonisation of Australia: 'This unit provides students opportunities to explore issues related to Australia's original inhabitants, explorers before the British and the British arrival and occupation of Australia. The unit focuses on the evaluation of viewpoints about the consequences of British colonisation for people, groups and the environment, and on formulating opinions.' (<http://boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au>)

Outcomes: CCS2.1 and ENS2.6

Places: Then, Now and Tomorrow: 'This unit provides opportunities for students to investigate aspects of local history such as transport, housing, Aboriginal traditions, education, women and the arrival of different cultural groups. The unit focuses on historical enquiry and the ways in which information about the past can be gathered.' (<http://boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au>)

Outcomes: CCS2.2 and CCS2.1

Stage 3 Units of Work and matching HSIE syllabus outcomes:

Identity and Values: 'This unit provides opportunities for students to explore the contribution of different cultural groups to Australian identity. The unit focuses on the diversity of Australian life, what has influenced it in the past, present-day influences and the changing nature of these influences.' (<http://boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au>)

Outcomes: CUS3.3, CUS3.4 and CCS3.1

LEARNING

Tara Standing's Aboriginal ancestors, the Wonnarua people, were directly affected by colonisation and the resulting spread of pastoralists from the Newcastle settlement. The effects have been ongoing through the Stolen Generations and other social and political issues. Standing acknowledges it is only the passing of time that separates her from the women who suffered under the government policies that removed children from families and culture. The artwork also reinforces the fact it is the spirituality, history and endurance of a culture, not skin colour, which defines an Aboriginal person. (See page 10 for reproduction.)

Non-Aboriginal artist **Ryan Williams** has used a hand-coloured engraving made in 1828 by Joseph Cross, entitled *A View of King's Town* (later Newcastle), as inspiration for his artwork. (The original images can be found at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/6974511959/>.) This engraving depicts two Aboriginal people on the hilltop amidst a busy settlement, whereas Williams has painted only one, in a more desolate setting. Is the artist describing a spiritual challenge, or maybe a defiant gesture, or is the artwork about survival after colonisation?

Discuss, using the Visual Literacy elements of subject matter, relationship with the viewer and the layout/design, *Black & White – We Remain* by Tara Standing and *Challenge* by Ryan Williams, particularly looking at what British colonisation has meant for Aboriginal people.

HSIE and ENGLISH SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES

APPLY

ACTIVITY ONE: CONVICT JOURNAL ENTRY

Based on discussion and further research, students imagine they are a convict who has lived in the Newcastle settlement for two years. They prepare a journal entry with text and drawings outlining what it is like in the settlement and what they see British colonisation doing to local Aboriginal people. Students should write the entry so it reflects an understanding of different perspectives on the same event.

More adventurous students could write and design an anti-promotional poster for the penal settlement from the convict and Aboriginal perspectives.

ENGLISH

The New K–10 English Syllabus allows students to consider works of art as texts. It defines texts as: ‘Communications of meaning produced in any media that incorporates language, including sound, print, film, electronic and multimedia representations. Texts include written, spoken, non-verbal, visual or multimodal communications of meaning. They may be extended unified works, a series of related pieces or a single, simple piece of communication.’

Across a stage of learning, the selection of the texts must give students experience of:

- texts that give insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia
- a wide range of factual texts that present information, issues and ideas
- texts that include aspects of environmental and social sustainability
- an appropriate range of digital texts, including film, media and multimedia (<http://syllabus.bos.nsw.edu.au/english-k-10/content-and-text-requirements>)

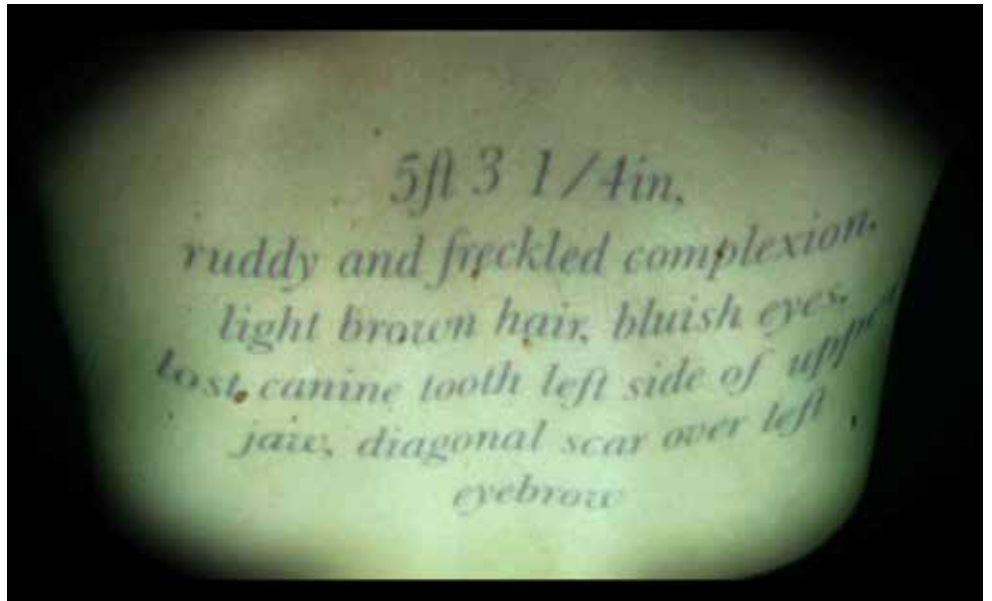
According to the syllabus, visually literate students can read the intended meaning in a visual text, interpret the purpose and intended meaning, and evaluate the form, structure and features of the text. They can also use images in a creative and appropriate way to express meaning.

A critical literacy approach to teaching English has students composing, responding to, analysing and evaluating written, spoken, visual and multimedia texts from various perspectives in order to learn how they operate as cultural products.

A very fine river: convict stories from the Hunter provides an opportunity for Stages 2 & 3 students to examine the artworks and extract meaning communicated by the images, as single images and as a part of a larger group. Due to the thematic and historical narratives in each of the artworks, students can embrace visual and critical literacy techniques not only to describe the artworks, but also to decode, interpret, create, question, challenge and evaluate the artworks as texts.

HSIE and ENGLISH SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES

Carolyn McKay
Writing the Body 2014
HD video, three screens
16:05mins
(female convict tattoos)
21:01min (male convict tattoos)
16:55 (tattoo mandala)
© the artist



LEARNING

Discuss the artwork *Writing the Body* by **Carolyn McKay**. This video artwork is a response to convict bio-data records, meticulous handwritten descriptions including tattoos and other body markings of male and female convicts. These were used to identify convicts in a pre-photographic era and were known as Convict Indents. In this artwork the artist projects examples of these descriptions onto a body, as a tattoo.

Students analyse visual literacy elements of the artwork such as the subject matter, the relationship to the viewer and the design and layout of the work. How does the artist convey her message? How is the camera angle used to reinforce this? How is colour used? How realistic and believable is the image? What is the focus of the image/s? How important is the framing of the image/s? Does the projected text relate to the subject?

APPLY

ACTIVITY ONE: MODES OF IDENTIFICATION

Students construct, via written text, a description of themselves and then a fellow student. Each student takes a 'selfie' and a photograph of the other person they have described. How do the two modes of communication compare? Is one a more accurate portrait than the other? In what way? How can meaning be manipulated through these two modes of communication? Perhaps organise a classroom display of both 'portrait' styles.

HSIE and ENGLISH SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES

LEARNING

Discuss the three paintings of **Ryan Williams** below. *Bogeyman* is a portrait of Major James Morisset, who ordered the Bogey Hole in Newcastle be hand-hewn out of a wave-cut rock platform by local convicts for his private use. By calling the artwork *Bogeyman* and placing the Major fully clothed in the pool, the artist is not only giving the Major ownership of the pool, but also commenting on him as a scary character – his nickname was ‘King Lash’ (<http://coalriver.wordpress.com/2010/12/02/the-bogey-hole/>). *Desertion* is inspired by stories of convicts who escaped but returned to settlement due to starvation or the hostility of the local environment. Is this convict deserting or returning? *Challenge* is based on a hand-coloured engraving made in 1828 by Joseph Cross, entitled *A View of King’s Town* (later Newcastle). Is the artist describing a spiritual challenge, or maybe a defiant gesture, or is the artwork about survival after colonisation?



Ryan Williams
Bogeyman 2014
Desertion 2014
Challenge 2014
each oil on hardboard
each 40 x 30cm
© the artist

APPLY

ACTIVITY TWO: STORYBOOK

All of Ryan Williams’ paintings (above) are based on stories that may have occurred from around 1815 to 1825. Students construct a storyboard/visual text of at least six frames, with written components, to link at least two of these paintings together within the storyline. Drawing, painting or collage techniques can be used with written text elements. You may want to use the ‘How To Create Your Own Storybook’ worksheet (Appendix 3). The front and back cover can be incorporated into the story.

VISUAL ARTS

SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES

This resource emphasises the shaping of children’s art-making processes: the communication of ideas and thoughts as well as producing artworks and reflecting on them. In Activity One, students are provided with the opportunity to develop and share their stories as a group, through a talking circle and present these stories using visual means by creating a storybook.

In Activity Two, students are encouraged to think about their own special memory and communicate this through the creation of a keepsake object. They learn that art, inspired by personal memory or emotion, can call to mind similar memories and feelings in the audience.

These two activities can be adapted to suit the needs of students from Kindergarten to Year 6 (K–6). Teachers are encouraged to focus on developing students’ understanding of how artists express personal feelings and memories of the past and the present through storytelling, objects, and works of art.

The activities in this resource contribute to students developing general capabilities, Literacy and Intercultural Understanding. The resource supports Literacy Capabilities such as elements of text structures, text knowledge and visual knowledge, understanding how visual elements create meaning, and composing and comprehending learning texts using visuals.

The resource is valuable for the cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. In particular, talking circles and sharing of stories recognise that the ways of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are uniquely expressed through ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.

A very fine river: convict stories from the Hunter installed at Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery in 2014 featuring (R-L) artworks by Ryan Williams (paintings), Ruth Feeney (*convict mandala*) and Carolyn McKay (video – *Writing the Body*) and objects from the Newcastle Museum’s collection in the foreground.



VISUAL ARTS SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES



Tara Standing
Black & White – We Remain
(detail) 2014
digital photograph on paper
100 x 150cm
© the artist

Learning Aims:

- Understand expression of personal feelings and memories through storytelling and making artworks
 - Respond to and reflect on a particular artwork
 - Classify objects as a particular art form
- Outcomes: Stages 2 & 3 VAS2.3, VAS2.4 and VAS3.4

General Capabilities Addressed:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Critical and creative thinking
- Personal and social capability
- Ethical understanding

LEARNING

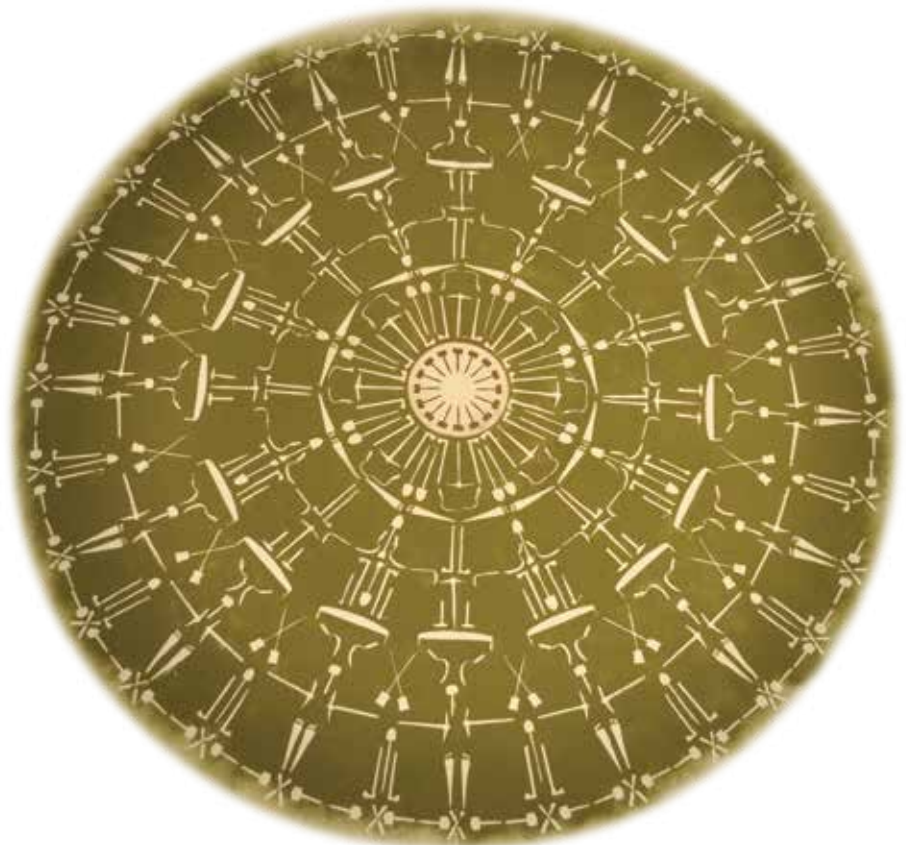
Tara Standing is a Hunter-based artist who has been exhibiting her artworks for over 12 years. She is a descendant of the Wonnarua people, in the Hunter region. In *Black & White – We Remain*, she photographs herself holding her own daughter; they are both barefoot, standing in a local bush setting. In the artwork the artist is looking at us but we are the audience, and we see a mother and a young daughter. It shows us Standing's cultural heritage as a Wonnarua person and her connection to the local environment is an important intergenerational connection. For the Aboriginal people of the past, present and future, it is an important issue to pass on cultural heritage, traditions and values to the younger generation in the

VISUAL ARTS SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES

form of stories. Oral storytelling is one of the oldest and most familiar forms of storytelling. Another form is visual – stories told through the visual arts using rock, bark and canvas painting, the creation of message sticks, drawing in the sand, and body art.

LEARNING

Ruth Feeney is a young artist, currently living in Newcastle. The city of Newcastle has provided her with many convict stories, which have inspired her artworks known as temporary installations. Feeney constructed her artwork *convict mandala* out of natural resources such as fragrant leaf dust from the local environment, making it temporary or short lived. To create the green colour of the dust the artist used native eucalyptus leaves found in the Hunter region, and for the brown dust, the leaves of an English oak, which is an introduced European flora species. The green/brown leaf dust provides the positive spaces in the artwork and the variety of shapes created in the negative spaces are tool motifs. Both these elements of the mandala work together to present a visual story. The story can be read from the middle of the circle as it radiates out to the edge; it can also be viewed and read as you walk around the artwork. Convict labourers and Aboriginal inhabitants in the Hunter used the different tools represented in the artwork. These tools were used to change the way the land and environment of Newcastle now looks. For example, the construction of Nobbys pier began in 1818 and took 38 years to be completed. Now that part of the coastline looks very different.



Left: Ruth Feeney
convict mandala 2014
ground eucalyptus leaves,
English oak leaves
170cm diam.
© the artist

VISUAL ARTS SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES

APPLY

ACTIVITY ONE: STORYBOOK

Students take inspiration from the historical stories and narratives in Standing's and Feeney's artworks to create their own artwork known as a storybook. They can use pictures, words, sentences and flat recycled/found objects as a means of exploring memories, storytelling and idea sharing.

To begin making the storybook, students should follow and complete these sequential activities.

Materials:

- 30 x pictures, e.g. buildings, people, animals, landscapes
- Videos: *How To Do Visual Storytelling* and *What Is Visual Storytelling?*
- Recycled materials/objects/decorative papers/aluminium foil
- Glue
- A3 paper
- Pen/pencils
- Talking object, e.g. toy microphone

1. The Group Circle – Sharing Time

Watch the video *What is Visual Storytelling?* on the ARTS:LIVE site.

Ask students to sit in a group circle. This can be located inside or outside. Introduce a toy microphone as the 'talking object'. Explain that when a student has hold of the object, it is their turn to speak. To use the 'talking object', students need to put their hand up and it will be passed to them when available. All students choose a picture they can relate to as a stimulus for telling a story, and take turns to describe what is in their picture and why they chose their picture.

2. Thoughts and Ideas Brainstorm

Students are to write down ideas that are appropriate for their storybook. They list different ideas on the 'Thoughts and Ideas Brainstorm' worksheet (Appendix 1). To develop and explore the basics of their story, students identify their story plan on the worksheet, including:

- Who are the characters?
- Where is it set?
- What happens?
- What inspires them?



VISUAL ARTS

SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES

3. Hunter-Gatherer Challenge

Start a 15-minute challenge to gather objects for each storybook using the 'Hunter-Gatherer Challenge' worksheet (Appendix 2). Ask students to collect some recycled materials provided by the teachers inside, and safely look for natural materials outside. The students then sort through their objects, decide which ones to use for the storybook, and then classify each object under the following categories:

- Object
- Type (natural, recycled, other)
- Use (what can it be used for)

4. Create the Storybook

Students:

- use the 'How To Create Your Own Storybook' worksheet (Appendix 3) to learn how to tell visual stories and master the bookmaking technique.
- illustrate and design their storybook using A3 paper.
- apply collage of the different materials to their storybook, ensuring they think creatively about how their found objects will be used and how they might use collage to present parts of their text.
- when pages are dry, carefully fold the A3 paper into the book formation for display and sharing.

5. Respond

Students share:

- their stories with the group, explaining why they chose the idea and why it is important to them.
- their materials list and explain how they used these materials in the storybook.
- why they chose the designs in the storybook and how these helped to illustrate what they were trying to say.
- what is unique about their book?

LEARNING

Sophia Emmett was born in 1969, Sydney and now lives in Newcastle. She has travelled extensively in Australia and the USA to develop her practice of using Hot Glass, training with a number of master glassblowers. In *Our heritage of displacement*, she captures stories about the Hunter's convict history, as well as recent refugee stories, inside keepsake-like objects made of glass.

APPLY

ACTIVITY TWO: KEEPSAKE

Students take inspiration from Emmett to make a work of art known as a keepsake. What is a keepsake? Do the students keep any objects that remind them of special celebrations, holidays, friends or pets?

To begin making the keepsake object, students should follow and complete these sequential activities.

VISUAL ARTS

SYLLABUS LINKS AND ACTIVITIES

Sophia Emmett
Our heritage of displacement
(detail) 2014
glass, enamel underglaze, steel
dimensions variable
© the artist



Materials:

- PVA glue
- Y-Drawing template (Appendix 4)
- Tissue paper
- Permanent marker or felt-tip pen
- Scissors
- Keepsake glass pebble
- Watercolour pencils

1. Special Memory Y-Drawing

Students:

- think of a keepsake or special memory of a person, place or event.
- complete the Special Memory Y-Drawing Template (Appendix 4), drawing three images of what their keepsake idea *feels like*, *looks like* and *sounds like*.
- select one drawing that best represents their memory and tell a fellow student about their keepsake. They can explain why the object, person or memory is special to them, where they display their keepsake and why they choose to keep it.

2. Creating the Keepsake Object

Students:

- look carefully at the imagery they have drawn and redraw it onto tissue paper to enhance and highlight their special memory. Use felt-tip pens or finetip permanent marker to make the second drawing.
- decorate the drawing with colour, by using the available inks and watercolour pencils to the tissue paper.
- place the PVA glue on the back of the glass pebble with a paint brush, place the tissue paper face down so that it can be seen through the front-side of the keepsake object, and then apply more layers of drawing if required.
- place more PVA glue onto the back of the tissue paper to seal it.
- leave the keepsake to dry for at least one hour.

Respond

Students consider where their completed keepsake object could be displayed to further enhance its meaning.

Thoughts and Ideas Brainstorm

Make a list of ideas of what your storybook could be about. Brainstorm ideas from stories about you or the things around you. Remember your ideas can be made up of pictures, words and sentences. It doesn't have to be a finished story.

1. Begin with your list of words – jot down whatever words come to you. This is called brainstorming. You might think of more ideas as you write.

2. From the word list above, decide on a theme for your story (some suggestions might be: about me, my family, native plants, native animals, my favourite place, etc).

3. Explore these ideas and the characters in your story. Based on your brainstorming and your theme, explore what you would like to write a story about.

- Who are the characters in your story? What are your feelings about the characters?
- Think about where the story is set.
- What happens in the story? What inspires you?

Some ideas for your story could include:

- News
- How you feel about your favourite things e.g. an activity or place
- What you did on the weekend or on holidays e.g. 'I went to...'
- Your family and friends eg 'In my family...'

| Who are the characters? | Where is it set? | What happens? What inspires you? |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| e.g. my sister Nikki and I | e.g. camping at the holiday park | e.g. Nikki finds a gumnut leaf |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

4. Finished? Let's share:

- Tell the class why you chose your idea. Why it is important to you?
- Think about what everyone had to talk about.
- What was different about some stories and what was similar?

Hunter-Gatherer Challenge

Go on a hunt to find materials for your storybook. Why? Hunting and gathering can be a great way of finding inspiration around us. Many artists, like Ruth Feeney, collect things to inspire new ways of seeing things. Found objects can make new and interesting artworks. Art is everywhere. It is in nature, and in collecting and collating objects around us.

1. Begin your hunt by collecting all your items in 15 minutes. Use a bag or bucket to collect your objects, and be creative.
2. When hunting for objects:
 - Outdoors: look for sticks, leaves, bark, petals, grasses, sand, etc.
 - Indoors: sort through the recycled materials your teacher has provided.
3. Gather all of your items and see which ones work best for your story.

Tips for gathering your materials:

 - Think about what shapes the objects in nature remind you of (e.g. a flower petal might look like a dress or shirt for a person in your story).
 - Try not to pick too many flowers from one bush or too many leaves from one tree. Be aware of and kind to nature.
 - You can paint your leaves.
 - Choose flat objects so it's easier to stick them on your page.
4. Write a list of hunter-gatherer materials and explain where you will be using them. You can add additional material that you find at home to help tell your story.

| Object | Type (natural, recycled, other) | Use (what can it be used for?) |
|-----------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| e.g. bark | e.g. natural | e.g. my character's skin |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

5. Finished? Let's share:
 - Choose your favourite item that best expresses what you want to say. Why have you chosen it?
 - Share your materials list with the class and explain how you are going to use them.
 - Explain why you chose these materials. For example, what do you like about the colour, shape or texture? Is it because they are natural or recycled?

How to Create Your Own Storybook

Make your own storybook using just one piece of paper.

- To begin, write your story points:
 - page 1 is your front cover.
 - pages 2 to 7 are your six main points.
 - page 8 is the back cover, sometimes used as a dedication or 'Thank you' page.

| | | | |
|-------------|--------|--------|------------|
| Front Cover | Page 2 | Page 3 | Page 4 |
| Page 5 | Page 6 | Page 7 | Back Cover |

- To create your storybook. Copy the instruction template below onto a blank piece of A3 paper. You will notice the page numbers are upside down. This is so they will be the right way up when the paper is folded and cut.
- Fold and cut the storybook template (on the next page) following your teacher's guidance.
- Design your layout and decorate your book with words and pictures.
 - Unfold your book and sketch the basic design of your book in pencil checking where each page goes.
 - The pages of your book should be illustrated with the paper flat, not folded in book formation.
 - Consider telling parts of the story not just with words, but using pictures instead.
 - Think creatively about how you will use the natural and recycled materials you have gathered (e.g. bark, leaves, flowers, or collage materials such as glitter, coloured scrap paper, glue, old magazines) to highlight parts of your writing.
 - Decorate your pages with drawings and patterns (e.g. pencils, coloured textas, oil pastels).
 - Write your text on coloured paper, cut it out, and then glue the words to your pages. This will really stand out!
- When your paper is dry, carefully fold it back into the book formation.
- Finished? Let's share:
 - Why did you choose to use these materials and designs in your storybook?
 - How did they help to illustrate what you were trying to say?
 - Was your book similar to anyone else's in the class? What was unique about your book?

1
2

3
8

4
7

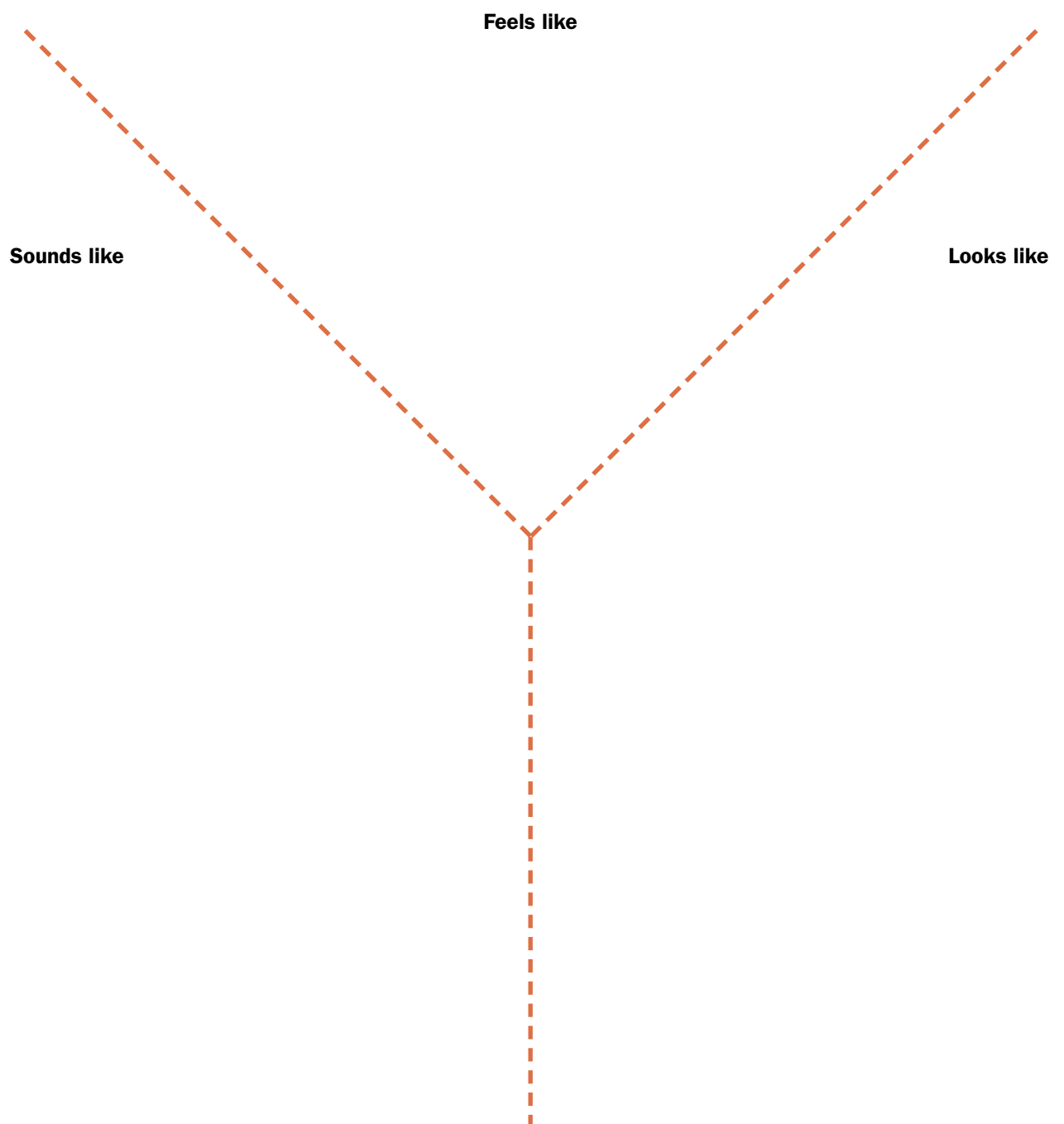
5
9

My Storybook Title

By

Special Memory Y-Drawing

1. What is your special memory?
My special memory is



Published to accompany the exhibition
a very fine river:
convict stories from the Hunter
a gallery exhibition project curated
by Rob Cleworth and Nicole Chaffey

Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery
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