**Year 7/8 Visual Arts**

**Portrait Project — Leaders and activists**

**Suggested duration:** Three lessons

## Summary

In this activity, students will plan and create a portrait in oil pastels on canvas. There is a two-fold emphasis for this project: first is the conveying of the artist’s impression of the portrait subject, and second, the implementation of oil pastel techniques. Students will choose one Indigenous Australian activist to be the subject of their portrait. They will spend some time preparing for the project by researching and making study sketches of their subject.

*Cultural resistance is arguably one of the most important forms of survival. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have fought to retain our languages and ways of life, and our many cultures are proudly seen as the longest ongoing living cultures in the world. Our warriors include not only those who served with honour and pride in Australia’s military, but our ancestral warriors who fought against colonial invasion and occupation over many years. Today our modern-day warriors continue the fight to maintain our culture, battle against racism and work in defence of our sovereignty and rights to self-determination* (The Little Red Yellow Black Book, p. 142).

**Learning outcomes**

1. Students will demonstrate the use of visual conventions, techniques and processes to communicate meaning in their artworks
2. Students will use research skills to plan and create a portrait of an Indigenous Australian activist

## General capabilities Cross-curriculum priority

Literacy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

Critical and creative thinking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures organising ideas: 1, 6, 9

Ethical understanding

**Australian Curriculum content descriptions**

**Years 7 and 8 Visual Arts**

Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork (ACAVAM118).

Practise techniques and processes to enhance representation of ideas in their art-making (ACAVAM121).

Identify and connect specific features and purposes of visual artworks from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their art-making, starting with Australian artworks including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAVAR124).

## Provisions for differentiation

## Learning support

Students with special learning needs should have their learning difficulties taken into account when teachers come to assess their work. Rather than emphasising quality of technical work or skill, teachers should consider the intent of the work.

## Extension

Students could keep a process diary that details the development of their work from its earliest stages. This provides excellent practice for the major works they will complete in their senior year.

## Resources

* Double-sided copies of the **Assignment sheets 1 & 2** (one copy per student)
* A3 sketch book (one per student)
* Sketching materials
* Oil pastels
* Oil pastel prepped canvas (A3 or larger portrait orientation)
* Computers or personal devices with internet access for students to use to conduct online research
* ICT capability to screen projections of reference images found online
* *The Little Red Yellow Black Book - an introduction to Indigenous Australia* (4th edition), Aboriginal Studies Press, ‘Our leadership and activism’, AIATSIS, Canberra, 2018.

## For teachers

Ensure that the guidance notes included in *The Little Red Yellow Black Book* teacher resource have been considered.

**Vocabulary**

Activist

Self-determination

Preparation: Make double-sided copies of the **Assignment sheets 1 & 2** — one copy for each student. Prepare to display screen projections of the reference images found among the online resources.

**LESSON ONE**

**Step 1** Distribute one copy per student of the **Assignment sheets 1 & 2** and a sketch book to each student.

**Step 2** Explain the requirements of the assignment to the students, as follows:

The first element of this assignment is to conduct some online research about one Indigenous Australian leader or activist — active in the past or present. You will need to choose the person you’d like to be your subject. To do this, read through the list of activists on the **Assignment sheet 1**. You can find some preliminary information about each of these activists in *The Little Red Yellow Black Book — An introduction to Indigenous Australia*. (Use the index to help you locate the relevant material.)

After you have chosen the person who will be your portrait’s subject, you will need to find out about the person’s life and accomplishments. You will conduct online research to achieve this. You should aim to learn about their life and their accomplishments. Try to find as many different pictures of that person as you can. *Make sure you note down the source of each picture. Copying and pasting the URL from your browser bar is the easiest way to keep track of your online sources.* You may choose to focus on a certain event or just on the feelings evoked when you look at images of that person. The important thing is that you should create a work of art that represents that individual to you. In order to achieve this, you will need to know quite a bit about your subject.

**Step 3** Assign the remainder of this lesson for students to conduct their online research.

**LESSON TWO**

**Step 1** Explain the following instructions to students:

The second element of the assignment is to create a work of art that tells the viewer something about the person. The message you communicate about this person could have something to do with their life story, their achievements, their personality or their relationships. Think in symbolic terms about these aspects of the person.

**Focus questions:**

* What three descriptive words summarise your impression of this person?
* What colours, lines, shapes and forms and other features and techniques will best represent the ideas you wish to express?
* Think about the medium of oil pastel on canvas. What features are peculiar to this medium?
* How can you manipulate this medium to best reflect your ideas and communicate your impression of the person to the viewer?

**Step 2:** Hand out materials and direct students to begin this work.

**LESSON THREE**

**Step 1:** Ensure that students have all the art materials they need and task them with working on their final portrait.

**Step 2:** Set a deadline for the portrait’s completion.

**Assessment ideas**

Marked against criteria explained in Assignment sheet 1