

Study Guide for the Australian Collaboration Fact and Issue Sheet

ROLE OF THE ARTS

FOR REVIEW

1. Indigenous Australians

1a. i) What does it mean to say that Indigenous Australians 'have one of the world's longest surviving artistic traditions?'

ii) Can you think of any places in the world where art which was practiced 20,000 years ago is no longer practised in the same way?

1b. Name four ways in which artistic activity continues to be important to Indigenous Australians.

1c. Why is it important that the work of Indigenous artists reaches into mainstream Australian society?

2. Non-indigenous Australian Art History

2a. What kind of artists came with Captain Cook and the first fleet? What did these artists depict?

2b. What role did art play for the early settlers of the colony?

3. Australian Art Today

3a. What are some of the typical characteristics of Australia's contemporary artistic 'voice'?

3b. i) Do you know what a 'genre' is? If not, look it up in the dictionary.

ii) Name three genres in which Australian artists have achieved international success and give an example from each genre.

4. Identity

4a. What is cultural identity? Why is it sometimes hard to describe our cultural identity?

4b. How did the arts contribute to the formation of an Australian identity in the early days of modern Australia?

4c. What would be the consequences for Australians of not having a national identity?

5. The Role of the Arts

5a. What are the four main functions of the arts in society, in addition to the formation of cultural identity?

5b. Name five reasons why people become involved in making art. Why do you think artistic involvement might contribute to someone's wellbeing?

5c. Do Australians go to more sporting or artistic events?

5d. Describe four ways in which the arts help to build communities.

5e. How do the arts contribute to change within communities? How do the arts contribute to changing attitudes between communities?

6. Art and Industries

6a. What is special about how a creative person thinks?

6b. Why is creativity highly valued in spheres other than the arts?

6c. What does it mean to say that the arts are labour-intensive and can you think of an example?

6d. Name some qualities for which Australian artists are prized overseas. To what extent do you think these qualities are part of Australia's general cultural identity?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Class brainstorming activity:

The definition of 'what is art' is constantly changing. To build up your class' definition of what art is, think of as many examples of contemporary and historical art as you can. Be as broad as you can. Remember that your definition can include such diverse examples as Indian miniature painting and graffiti. Keep your 'class definition' in mind as you answer the rest of the questions.

2. Use a 'Think/Pair/Share' activity to answer the following question:

The Fact Sheet notes that 'many Australians, even today, often underestimate the importance of the arts in our society and play down the status of our culture.' Why do you think this is the case? What could be done to change the situation?

3. Work on the following two questions individually:

i) Given that we all have a 'multifaceted' cultural identity, how would you describe your own cultural identity?

ii) Can you think of any art (remembering that art comes in many forms: images, songs, movies, poems, paintings, cartoons etc) that has contributed to your sense of cultural identity?

Then, share your answers with someone in the class whom you don't know very well. Listen carefully as they tell you their answers. What do we learn about others when we hear about their cultural identity and the art that contributes to it?

4. Discuss this set of questions:

The Fact Sheet notes that *Neighbours* has had a big impact on British ideas about Australia and that *Crocodile Dundee* has had a big impact on American ideas about Australia.

i) Why do you think certain art works become 'symbols' of Australia for people in other countries?

ii) Can you think of any art works from another country, in any genre (e.g film, music, animation, literature), that have a big influence in Australia?

iii) How have these artworks shaped how your ideas about that country?

FOR RESEARCH

1. Use your school library, the listening section of a good music shop, or your local video shop to access one or two of the artworks listed at the beginning of page two of the Fact Sheet.

i) What are your impressions?

ii) What does the artwork tell you about how Australian identity was being formed in this era (1940s to 1970s)?

iii) Are we getting different messages about ourselves as a nation through the art of today (in movies, music, TV, digital/web art etc.)?

2. Use the internet to become familiar with the Australia Council for the Arts' website:

i) Go to the links for the different art forms, such as dance, theatre and literature. What is unique about each genre? Then, have a look at the Interdisciplinary Arts section. This section is for new practices in the arts that blur the boundaries between the genres. Look at some examples. How do these new practices embody the criteria for 'creative thinking' that you outlined in 'questions for review' above?

ii) Go to the Australia Council's initiative for young artists. Look at the profiles of some of the young Australian artists and their artworks. What evidence can you see in their artwork of the ideas you have explored through the Fact and Issue Sheet? For example, what means do they use to express themselves? How might their self-expression contribute to their cultural identity? Does their artwork involve them in a community? How might their art challenge or reinforce existing community values and/or cultural identities in Australia?

3. A question for advanced students:

Do some further internet and/or library research on the concept of creativity. For example, how might a psychologist such as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi define creativity? How might a neuroscientist such as Antonio Damasio (Director of the Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California), define creativity?