TEACHERS' NOTES

WHAT'S THAT SPLAT?

Written by Johanna Bell and illustrated by Amelia Luscombe

Notes prepared by Nina Ross

Blurb

Sometimes a splat is just a splat but sometimes a splat is much more than that!

Experience the fun of transforming abstract shapes into just about anything with this playful rhyming book.

What will your splat become?

Synopsis

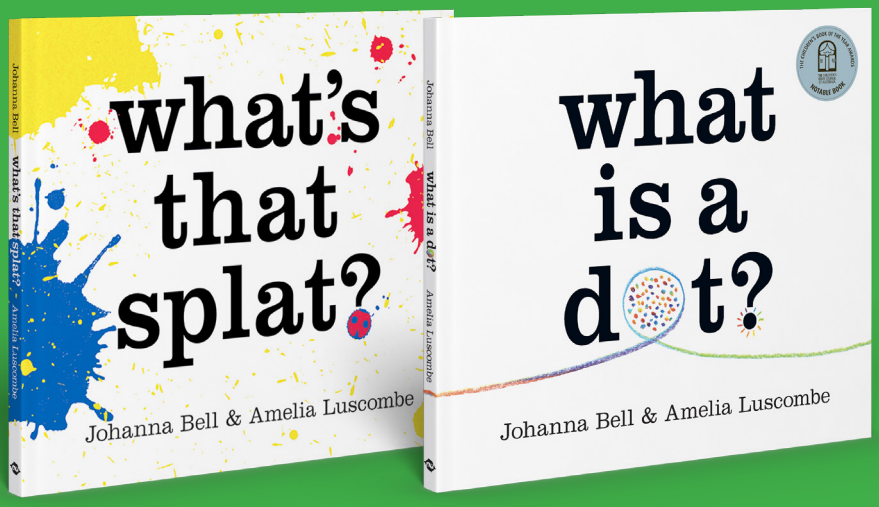
What's that Splat? inspires a guessing game and takes the reader on a rhyming adventure where seeing a splat becomes a world of magical possibility. Poetry and imagination turn everyday splats into an array of familiar animals and objects, created in simple yet recognisable illustrations. This book ignites wonder and imagination while reading, and motivates continued creativity beyond the last page.

Writing style

Jackson Pollock said, 'The painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through.' *What's that Splat?* encourages readers to understand possibility over actuality and builds the foundation for applying creative thinking for lifelong enjoyment finding magic in the everyday. With the use of rhyming verse featuring poetic devices including alliteration, onomatopoeia and word play, *What's that Splat?* has cross-curricula opportunities from early learning to primary years.

Companion text

What's that Splat? can be used in conjunction with companion text *What is a Dot?*, a rhyming text that follows a continuous line drawing as it becomes anything and everything.



Author motivation

I like playing around with words and seeing what happens when I make them rhyme. Often they turn into something quite unexpected. Sometimes they make me laugh. Sometimes they make me gasp. And sometimes I invent something strange and new. Just like a splat, a poem can be many things. You can take your rhymes in all kinds of directions – splat, hat, mat, that!, cat, spat, rat, tatt, bat, sat, gnat, flat, chat, pat, acrobat! And then when you get tired of those words you can invent something else weird – beard, steered, feared, cleared, smeared, sheared, speared, appeared! The more you play with words, the more you'll see that they can be anything, just like a cloud or a splat. *'But wait! What will this next splat be? It's up to you. What can you see?'*

Johanna Bell is an award-winning author who lives in Nipaluna (Hobart) on the land of the Muwinina. She loves writing poetry and working with artists to make all kinds of illustrated books. Her work has been published in literary journals and by Allen & Unwin, Scholastic, UQP and Thames & Hudson. Previously, Johanna lived in the Northern Territory where she made books with deaf artist Dion Beasley. In 2017, they won the CBCA Picture Book of the *Year for Go Home Cheeky Animals* and in 2020, they were nominated for a Prime Minister's Literary Award for *Cheeky Dogs: To Lake Nash and Back*, an illustrated memoir about Dion's life. Johanna's other kids' books include *Too Many Cheeky Dogs, The Colour Catchers, Digger Digs Down and Searching for Treasure*. When Johanna's not writing, you'll likely find her watching birds or doodling in the margins.

Illustrator motivation

I see all kinds of things in the shapes that surround me day to day. A puddle looks like a poodle, a tree is a dinosaur and there are many different faces in the foam in the sink. If a shape jumps out at me, it's because it has a feature that reminds me of another thing. That splat has a tail that looks like a whale. This splat is on wheels like an automobile. Just by adding a suggestion of a nose, leg, eye, window or door, a splat can be transformed into something else. Much like clouds, a random splat can become anything you want it to be.

Amelia Luscombe is a visual artist based in Rubibi (Broome), Western Australia. Growing up on a bush block and working in galleries across the Kimberley and the Top End has informed her art practice which is inextricably linked to day-to-day life and local landscapes. Amelia majored in printmaking and drawing at Curtin University and continues to create using these mediums while playing with mural painting, textiles and ceramics. Her approach to creative expression is fun, curious and deeply connected to the child within (who delights in sitting in mud puddles, swinging from trees and pelting her sister with gumnuts).

Themes

IMAGINATION

ART

PAINTING

CREATIVITY

POETRY – RHYMING VERSE

Australian curriculum

Foundation – Year 1 – Year 2

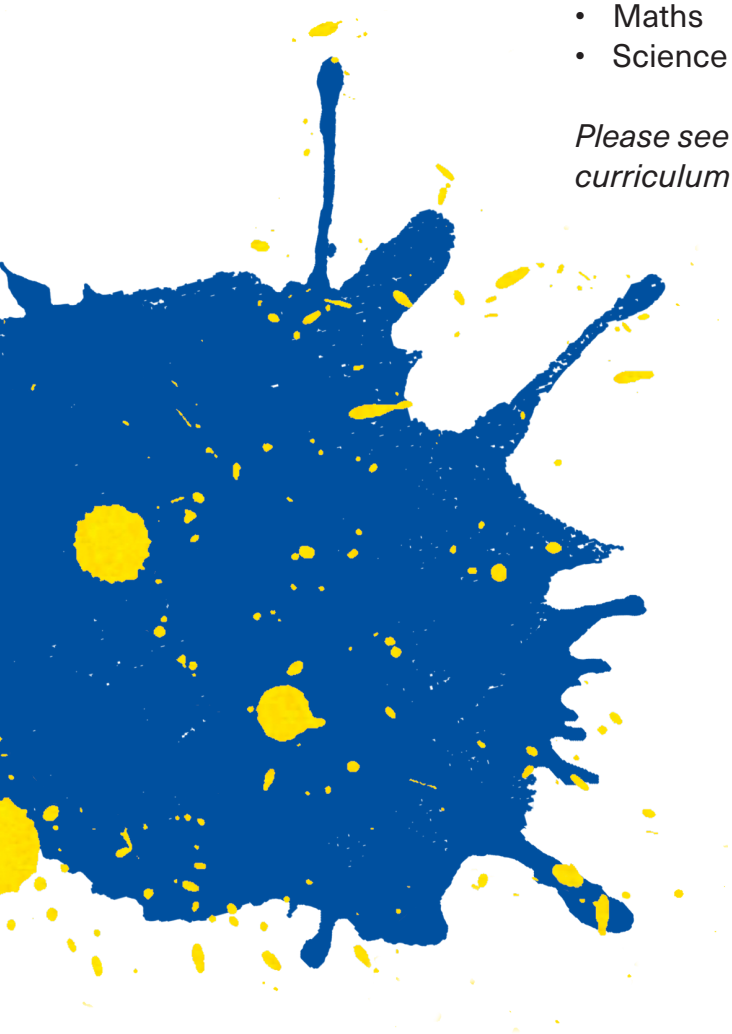
This book supports:

- Inference (how words and image work together)
- Tone and humour comprehension
- Imagination
- Visual perception and apophenia
- Connection between visual literacy and imaginary
- Understanding of possibility over actuality.

Curriculum links

- Health and Physical Education (HPE)
- The Arts
  - Dance
  - Drama
  - Media Arts
  - Visual Arts
  - Music
- Maths
- Science

Please see the end of these notes to find a full breakdown of curriculum links and learning areas.



Transcript

Sometimes a splat is just a splat
but sometimes a splat
is much more than that!

The thing about splats is there's so many kinds.
The more you look,
the more you find.

Splats can be little
and splats can be BIG.
Some splats zag
and some splats zig.

There are splats that are empty
and splats that are full.
Some splats have feathers
and others have wool.

But wait a minute, what's that splat?
Is it this? Or is it that?

Do drizzles make splats?
And what about squirts?
Can splats be sour
and also desserts?

There are splats that are red
and splats that are brown.
Splats that go up
and splats that come down.

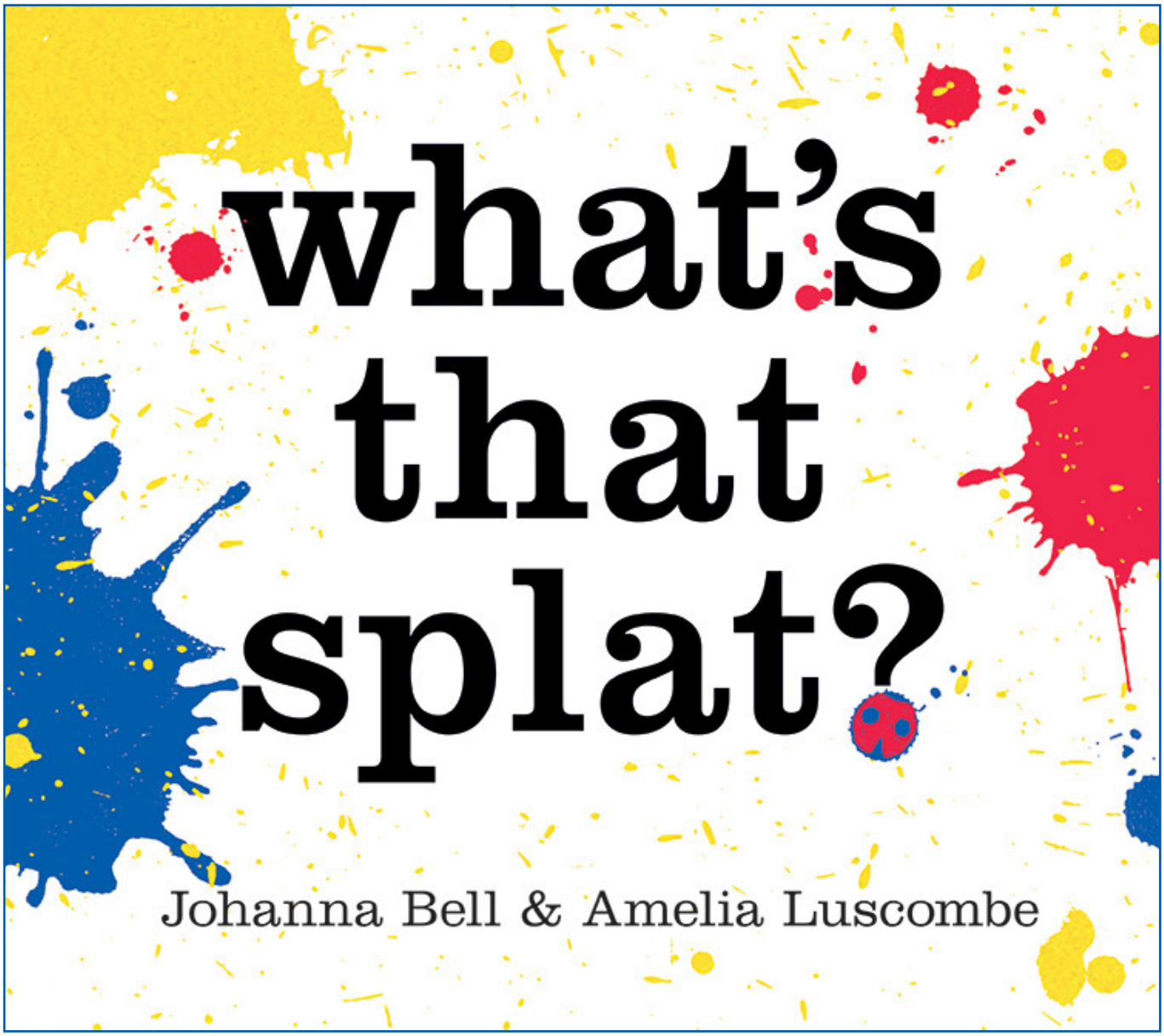
Sometimes splats ROAR
and sometimes splats squeak.
Some splats cartwheel and some splats sleep.

And now, what will this next splat be?
It's up to you.
What can you see?

Study Notes

Exploring the cover illustration

- Before reading *What's That Splat?* look carefully at the front cover. Discuss what you can see. What do you think may have happened that caused these splats?



- What is significant about the colours chosen? What colours do the primary colours (yellow, red and blue) make when you mix them together? Experiment with mixing colours together. Consider mixing paint or melting coloured ice-cubes in cups to explore colour theory and mathematic ratios.

Exploring the text

- Before reading *What's that Splat?* in its entirety, share just the written text (see transcript above). Discuss the use of rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia and word play.

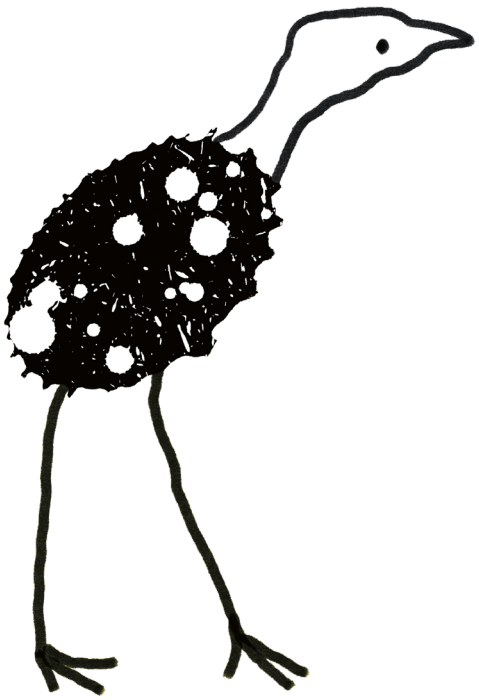
- Before reading *What's that Splat?* choose some of the verses and describe what the splats might look like using the words:
  - feathers
  - wool
  - zig and zag
  - roar
  - squeak

  Using paper and pencils, draw predictions for how the illustrator may have made connections with those words. After reading *What's that Splat?* together with its illustrations, make comparisons between your drawings with those in the book. Consider how different people's imaginations see different things in splats.

- Which is your favourite page in *What's that Splat?* Why is this your favourite? Share in a written or verbal reflection.

- Discuss the first and last statements posed in the book:
  - *Sometimes a splat is just a splat*
    but sometimes a splat
    is much more than that!
  - *And now, what will this next splat be?*
    It's up to you.
    What can you see?

  What are the author and illustrator challenging us to do? Where in our everyday lives can we use our imagination to see a splat as more than just a splat?



- Using the prompt from the book and textas, turn this splat into a creation of your own. Bring everyone's examples together and discuss who saw similar things and who imagined very different things.

- Perform *What's that Splat?* as a short play and present to another class or at your school assembly.

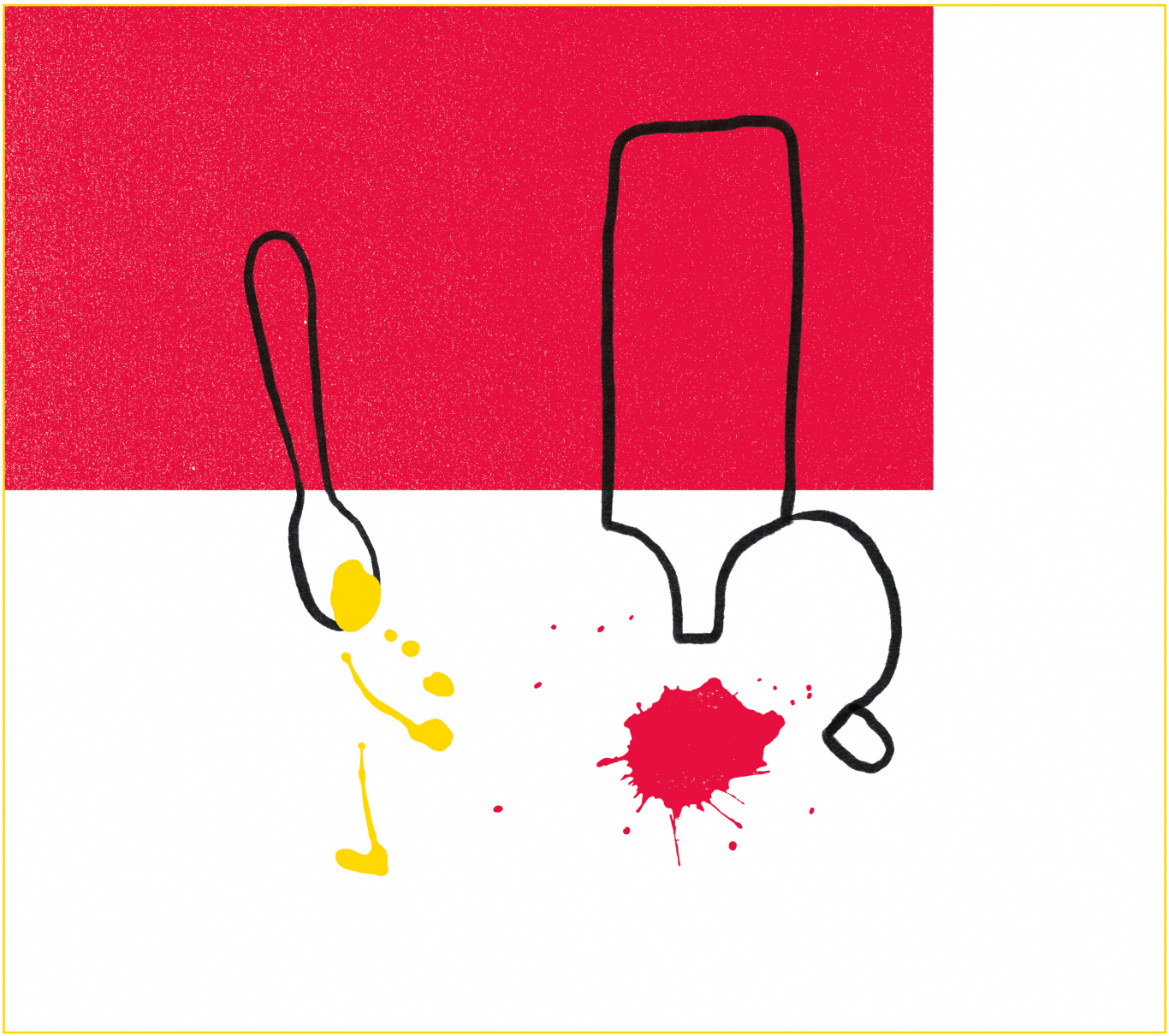
- Make splats that explore different sizes and quantities using the inkblot process:
  - Drop paint onto one half of a piece of paper.
  - Fold the paper and press it together to create unique, symmetrical splats.
  - Drawing inspiration from Abstract Expressionist artist Robert Klippel's mobiles (for example *No. 867 – Standing Mobile*, c.1967, cardboard and paper collage, wire), cut out the splats and attach them to a coat hanger using string and tape.
  - Discuss how they move in the breeze and try to mimic the swaying movements with your body.

- Create a class set of Rorschach inkblot tests using the same inkblot process above. Photograph the inkblot designs and create a PowerPoint using all the images. As a class watch the PowerPoint and discuss what you can see.

- Use the art technique of straw blowing:
  - Drop diluted paint onto a piece of paper.
  - Blow the paint across a piece of paper to create splats with your breath.
  - See how you can make splats that illustrate different directions, zigs and zags and spirals, continuing the theme of splats on the page below.

- Look at artwork by Tony Tuckson titled *White lines (vertical) on ultramarine* (1970–3, diptych: styrene-based house paint, polyvinyl acetate and pigment on hardboard). What do you think a diptych is? Using the artmaking technique of straw blowing create a diptych artwork of long repeated splats.

- Alliteration and onomatopoeia are used in the page below. Use jelly plates or Perspex to create a monoprint by exploring different surfaces and textures such as scrunched up newspaper, foil, leaves, sponges in wet paint. Press a piece of paper to the plate and peel it off to show the monoprint of splats. Describe the textures created, in a rhyming verse to match using alliteration and onomatopoeia poetic devices.



- Explore mark-making to music.
  - Wassily Kandinsky, *Impression III (Concert)* (1911, oil on canvas). Look at the painting while listening to the same musical piece he was listening to while he painted it, Arnold Schoenberg - 3 Piano Pieces op. 11. Consider which parts of the music influenced Kandinksy's mark making and splats. What can you see in the painting? Imagine what he was feeling and talk about what words are used to describe those feelings.
  - Peter Upward, *Syncopation no 5*, (1959, oil on hardboard). What do you think Upward's 1972 quote means: 'Everything is done in one movement ... with musical impulse, the same musical impulse as musicians when they improvise. My paintings are a series of chords and notes.' Upward listened to jazz and bebop music while he painted. Look at his painting and listen to some examples of jazz and bebop. Can you hear the music in the painting?

- Explore mark-making to music using string. Saturate string in paint and while listening to songs by Warnindhilyagwa and Filipino-Visayan musician Emily Wurramara:
  - Black Smoke
  - Dumugurra (Kookaburra)
  - Mamalika Diraka (Wheels on the Bus)
  - Yaka Yelyukwa (Rain Song)

  Dance the painted string across the paper following the rhythm of the music. While the paint is still wet, fold the paper in half and pull the string through the closed paper. Think about what you can see in your string art-splat. Swap your string art with a classmate so they can use textas to make your splat not just a splat. As a class discuss how your ideas differed.

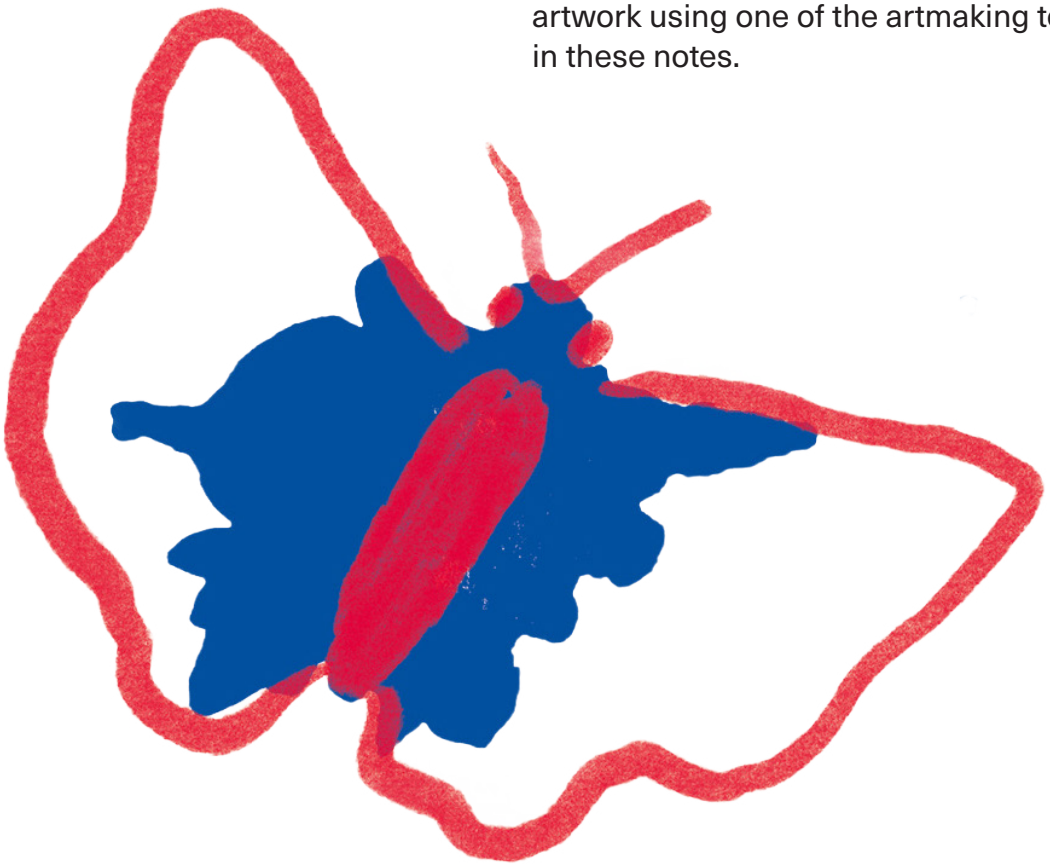
- Spend some time cloud-gazing on a sunny day with fluffy clouds in the sky. Head outside, lie down in small groups with your heads close together. Get comfortable and look for familiar shapes like animals, faces, or objects in the clouds. Focus on the clouds. Are they moving fast or slow? Look at the colours and textures. What do you think it would feel like to touch them? Would they be cold, wet, slimy or warm? Take turns describing what you can see in the clouds, and tell a story, or a poem collaborating on the narrative. Take photos of the clouds as they drift past. When you go back inside, recreate them on paper using pencils or crayons.
  - To add scientific knowledge to your learning, spend time investigating cloud types (Cirrus, Cirrocumulus, Cirrostratus, Altocumulus, Altostratus, Nimbostratus, Stratus, Stratocumulus, Cumulus, Cumulonimbus).
  - Think about how much of the sky is covered in clouds. Try estimating the cloud cover.
  - What direction are the clouds drifting? Over a short period of time make a record of your observations on paper or digitally. Compare over a few days of different weather to online or tv forecasts.

- Look at the following Abstract Expressionist artworks very closely. What can you see? Move back so you are some distance away. Do you still see the same objects, or have they changed?
  - Jackson Pollock, *Untitled* (c1946, gouache and pastel on paper). What do you think Pollock meant when he said, 'The painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through'?
  - Elaine de Kooning, *Juarez* (1958, oil on Masonite). Juárez is a last name or surname in Spanish. Can you see a person in de Kooning's painting?
  - Mary Abbott, *Hill Dancers* (1948, oil on linen). Does the title of the painting change what you first saw?

- Watch the video and learn about Anmatyerr artist Emily Kame Kngwarreye. Look at her painting Anwerlarr *Anganenty (Big Yam Dreaming)* (1995, synthetic polymer paint on canvas) and listen to the meaning behind the work. This artwork is 8 metres in length and almost 3 metres wide. As a class, map this out on the carpet using tape and discuss how the size of an artwork can impact the audience who are viewing it.

- The collaborative artwork *Dulka Warngiid* (2007, synthetic polymer paint on canvas) was painted by seven Kaiadilt women artists in Australia:
  - Birmuyingathi Maali Netta Loogatha,
  - Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori,
  - Warthadangathi Bijarrba Ethel Thomas,
  - Thunduyingathi Bijarrb May Moodoonuthi,
  - Kuruwarriyingathi Bijarrb Paula Paul,
  - Wirrngajingathi Bijarrb Kurdalalngk Dawn Naranatjil,
  - Rayarriwarrtharrbayingathi Mingungurra Amy Loogatha

  Dulka Warngiid translates as 'land of all' and is a vision of their island home, the saltwater that surrounds it, the sun and the sky. In groups of 6–8 create a collaborative artwork using one of the artmaking techniques explored in these notes.



The learning activities in these notes provide opportunities to access the following curriculum links across practical artmaking, artist studies and mindfulness activities:

Health and Physical Education (HPE)

- AC9HPFP03 - express and describe emotions they experience
- AC9HPFM01 - practise fundamental movement skills in minor game and play situations
- AC9HPFM02 - experiment with different ways of moving their body safely and manipulating objects and space
- AC9HP2M01 - practise fundamental movement skills and apply them in a variety of movement situations

The Arts

Dance
- AC9ADAFD01 - use play, imagination, arts knowledge, processes and/or skills to discover possibilities and develop ideas
- AC9ADAFC01 - create arts works that communicate ideas
- AC9ADAFP01 - share their arts works with audiences
- AC9ADA2D01 - experiment with ways to move safely and expressively using fundamental movement skills and the elements of dance
- AC9ADA2C01 - use the elements of dance to choreograph dance sequences
- AC9ADA2P01 - share dance sequences in informal settings

Drama
- AC9ADRFD01 - use play, imagination, arts knowledge, processes and/or skills to discover possibilities and develop ideas
- AC9ADR2D01 - use the elements of drama and imagination in dramatic play and/or process drama
- AC9ADRFC01 - create arts works that communicate ideas
- AC9ADR2C01 - create and co-create fictional situations based on imagination and/or experience
- AC9ADRFP01 - share their arts works with audiences
- AC9ADR2P01 - share their drama in informal settings

Media Arts
- AC9AMAFD01 - use play, imagination, arts knowledge, processes and/or skills to discover possibilities and develop ideas
- AC9AMAFC01 - create arts works that communicate ideas
- AC9AMA2D01 - explore ways of using media technologies responsibly to capture and organise images, sounds, text and/or interactive elements
- AC9AMAFP01 - share their arts works with audiences
- AC9AMA2C01 - use media languages and media technologies to construct representations
- AC9AMA2P01 - share media arts works with audiences in informal settings

Visual Arts

- AC9AVAFD01 - use play, imagination, arts knowledge, processes and/or skills to discover possibilities and develop ideas
- AC9AVA2E02 - explore examples of visual arts created by First Nations Australians
- AC9AVAFC01 - create arts works that communicate ideas
- AC9AVA2D01 - experiment and play with visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials
- AC9AVA2C01 - use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to create artworks
- AC9AVAFP01 - share their arts works with audiences
- AC9AVA2P01 - share artworks and/or visual arts practice in informal settings

Music

- AC9AMUFD01 - use play, imagination, arts knowledge, processes and/or skills to discover possibilities and develop ideas
- AC9AMU2E02 - explore examples of music composed and/or performed by First Nations Australians

Science

- AC9SFU02 - describe how objects move and how factors including their size, shape or material influence their movement
- AC9S1I05 - compare observations with predictions and others' observations, consider if investigations are fair and identify further questions with guidance
- AC9S1U02 - describe daily and seasonal changes in the environment and explore how these changes affect everyday life
- AC9S1I04 - sort and order data and information and represent patterns, including with provided tables and visual or physical models
- AC9S1H01 - describe how people use science in their daily lives, including using patterns to make scientific predictions
- AC9S2H01 - describe how people use science in their daily lives, including using patterns to make scientific predictions
- AC9S2I01 - pose questions to explore observed simple patterns and relationships and make predictions based on experiences

Mathematics

- AC9MFSP02 - describe the position and location of themselves and objects in relation to other people and objects within a familiar space
- AC9MFA01 - recognise, copy and continue repeating patterns represented in different ways
- AC9MFM01 - identify and compare attributes of objects and events, including length, capacity, mass and duration, using direct comparisons and communicating reasoning
- AC9M1A02 - recognise, continue and create repeating patterns with numbers, symbols, shapes and objects, identifying the repeating unit
- AC9M1M01 - compare directly and indirectly and order objects and events using attributes of length, mass, capacity and duration, communicating reasoning
- AC9MFSP01 - sort, name and create familiar shapes; recognise and describe familiar shapes within objects in the environment, giving reasons

- AC9MFST01 - collect, sort and compare data represented by objects and images in response to given investigative questions that relate to familiar situations
- AC9M1SP01 - make, compare and classify familiar shapes; recognise familiar shapes and objects in the environment, identifying the similarities and differences between them
- AC9M1ST01 - acquire and record data for categorical variables in various ways including using digital tools, objects, images, drawings, lists, tally marks and symbols
- AC9M2ST01 - acquire data for categorical variables through surveys, observation, experiment and using digital tools; sort data into relevant categories and display data using lists and tables
- AC9M2ST02 - create different graphical representations of data using software where appropriate; compare the different representations, identify and describe common and distinctive features in response to questions
- AC9M1ST02 - represent collected data for a categorical variable using one-to-one displays and digital tools where appropriate; compare the data using frequencies and discuss the findings
- AC9M2SP01 - recognise, compare and classify shapes, referencing the number of sides and using spatial terms such as ‘opposite’, ‘parallel’, ‘curved’ and ‘straight’.