

# Beautiful Boomerangs!

by Debi West

This next lesson in our “eARTh ... it’s got ART” yearlong curriculum series takes us to the wonderful continent of Australia. This is a fun continent in that students are surprised to find it is not only the smallest continent, it is the only continent that is also a country.

There are so many lessons that can go with this unit, as you can look at the modern world of Australia or the authentic work of the Aborigine people. Our students looked at a bit of both worlds and the lesson I am choosing to write about can be used at all grade levels—as illustrated with my kindergarten students as well as my fifth-graders (see online lesson plan). It is a simple lesson with a great success factor and gives students the opportunity to do a one-day clay lesson.

Making clay “boomerangs” is a very exciting lesson, especially when you give students some background information regarding the history of the boomerang. When they realize these instruments were created as a weapon to hunt for food, and have now become a recreational sport in Australia, they are so excited to create their own! They also understand these are more than pieces of art—they are a mathematical and scientific design that is an artwork with both form *and* function.

On day one, students are given this history through a PowerPoint slide show, as well as an information sheet with many different shapes of boomerangs. They are then given a piece of burlap and a chunk of clay.

First, they are taught to wedge the clay to get all of the air bubbles out. Next, they make their clay into a pan-

cake shape, making sure it is about a quarter-inch thick. They then mold the clay into their own unique boomerang shape. They can cut it out using clay tools, or simply mold it using their hands as their tools. It is important to reiterate that sculpting is actually all about using your hands to *feel* the art!

Once this is completed, I give my students wonderful texture sheets, so they can press an array of interesting textures into their boomerang. They can also add their own lines and shapes into the clay using a dull pencil or a sharp clay tool.

On day two, after the boomerangs have been fired, students paint their boomerang using a cool- or warm-color watercolor wash. The kids are so excited to use a familiar paint on a different



After learning about Aboriginal art, kindergartners made “boomerangs” out of clay.



piece textured of art! When the paint dries, which happens quickly, they can then rub a little bit of oil pastel over their boomerang, embellishing it a bit more with exciting colors of their choice. Often, teachers are interested to know what the students used to color their clay, as the watercolor and oil pastel makes for a very interesting and beautiful finish!

These are artworks that will never be “thrown away”! ■

*Currently an art teacher at North Gwinnet High School, Debi West wrote her “eARTh: it’s got ART” curriculum while at Level Creek Elementary (both in Suwanee, Ga.). She’s also a past-president of the GAEA and owns the Crystal Collage Children’s Art Studio.*



## AUSTRALIA

grade level: kindergarten

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Elementary students will ...

- learn about the art of the Aborigine artists, as well as modern-day Australian art.
- sculpt clay boomerang-shaped objects and add texture and color.
- learn the vocabulary words: Aboriginal art, boomerang, sculptures, watercolor wash, cool color, warm color and texture.

## MATERIALS

- Clay
- Burlap
- Texture sheets
- Clay tools
- Pencils
- Permanent markers
- Watercolor paints
- Water cups
- Paintbrushes
- Oil pastels
- Boomerang information sheets (created from your research)

## RHYTHM-ONG

Boomerangs, Boomerangs  
made from texture and hue,  
Throw them well  
and they’ll come back to you!

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## AUSTRALIA

The following lesson plans are available at [www.artsandactivities.com](http://www.artsandactivities.com)

- Grade 1:** Bark Painted Collages
- Grade 2:** The 3 K’s of Australia—Koalas, Kiwis and Kangaroos!
- Grade 3:** Didgeridoos ... The Sounds of Art!
- Grade 4:** Collaborative Aborigine-Inspired Dot Paintings
- Grade 5:** Sydney Opera House Abstract Artworks (and Clay Boomerangs)