

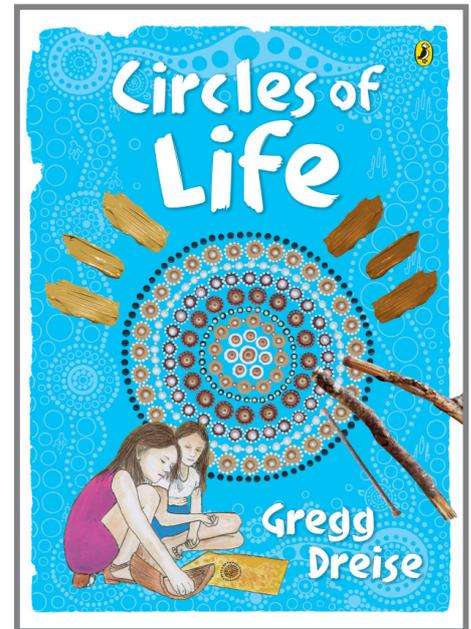
# Circles of Life

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR  
**GREGG DREISE**

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



## SYNOPSIS

*Let's turn this recycled paper into something from our heart. Come on—give it a try. As we use a stick to paint the first dot in the middle, we say thank you, Father Sky.*

Join Kamilaroi creator Gregg Dreise and explore his Cultural tradition of painting Gabayindah Guroos. With ochre from Mother Earth, two young girls are guided by Uncle to paint each layer of the Thank You Circles as a celebration of the different elements of our world. When the dots are placed together, they form astonishing circles of life.

## ABOUT THE CREATOR

Gregg Dreise grew up in south-west Queensland in a large family that loves music, art, sport, culture and family. He is very proud of his Kamilaroi and Euahlayi heritage. The Kamilaroi and Euahlayi peoples' lands extend from south-west Queensland into north-west New South Wales.

Culture, music and storytelling have run through his family's blood since time began. Gregg is a talented storyteller who uses didgeridoos, guitars, laughter and high-energy performances to pass on culture, unity and wisdom through his educational talks.

## STUDY NOTES

### Author's Inspiration

- The author, Gregg says: 'As a kid, I loved going down to the Balonne River in South-West Queensland and finding ochre. White ochre was always the easiest to find. We would create art with it by just drawing patterns. I then would make the body paint for dances. Later, I cherished my time with Uncle Reg Knox in traditional painting. I have always been drawn to art and storytelling. I love to be able to pass on these ancient techniques to the next generations to keep traditions alive.'
  - Who in your family have you learned from? Give an example of what you have learned. This might be something you've learned about your culture, a tradition you follow, or something your family celebrates like a religious occasion or a treat you like to bake/cook together. Swap your answers with the person next to you and learn about something they've learned from their family.

## AFTER READING

- After you have finished reading *Circles of Life*, take a moment to reflect on the things you are grateful for. To help

guide you, you can look at each layer of the Thank You Circle and think about what they represent for you. So, some things that you are grateful for could be elements of Country like the sky, Mother Earth and water; flora such as the trees, flowers and plants; animals (even a pet you may have!); and people like Elders, ancestors, friends, family and the children of the future that will be living on this land.

- Now have a go at writing down why you're grateful for these things and why they're important to you. If some are specific people in your life, perhaps you can write them a letter of your gratitude!
- Paint your own Thank You Circles. You might like to look at the worksheet on p 3 and make your own traditional paint to use. After you're done, share your circles with the person next to you.
- Do you have any favourite places in nature? This could be a beach or park or somewhere nice you went on holiday to. Draw this scenery, and on a separate piece of paper, describe the sounds, smells, textures and sights of this place.
- What sort of art do you like? This can be broader than drawing or painting. Music, reading, film, drama and theatre are also other forms of art, amongst others. Do you engage in any of these, and if so, why do you like this specific mode of art? How does it make you feel?

### Sustainability

- In *Circles of Life*, specifically in the last layer of the Thank You Circle, Gregg discusses the importance of being thankful for and respecting Country. He also discusses the importance of looking after our environment so that the coming generations too can cherish and enjoy what Mother Earth has to offer.
- Define sustainability and provide some examples of sustainable practices. Can you identify anything your school or local community is doing to be more sustainable? What things could they do to improve? List some ideas.
- How can you engage in sustainable practices in your own life? Remember even small things, like taking shorter showers, make an impact.
- In *Circles of Life*, Gregg uses materials and elements of nature to create art. What other materials can you find in nature that could be created into art? Think about things you could find in your backyard or schoolyard, or even places like the beach or a park. An example could be making jewellery out of seashells or using leaves in some scrapbooking.

### ACTIVITIES

#### How to Make Traditional Paint

##### You Will Need

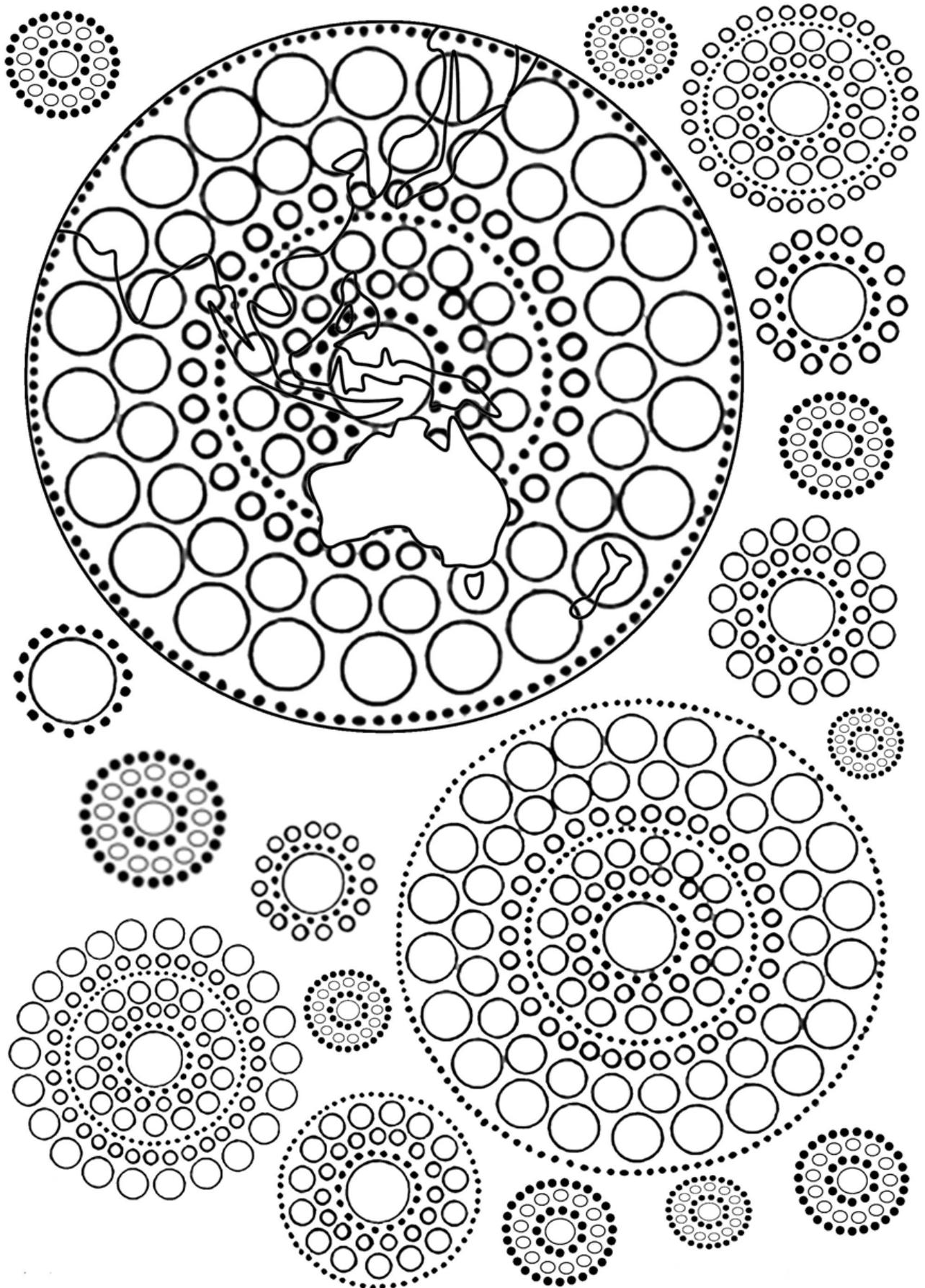
- Ochre stones (you can also use chalk sticks as a replacement)
- Palm frond bowls (or another bowl that you can find)
- Water

##### Instructions

1. Rub either your ochre stones or chalk sticks together over your bowl.
2. Once the stones/sticks have turned into powder, lightly add some water whilst mixing.
3. Add more water to the mix until the texture looks like paint.
4. You're ready to use this traditional paint for your own Thank You Circles or another piece of artwork you might like to make! Below is an example of a Thank You Circle Gregg has made on an old post bag.



- Have a go at colouring (or even using the traditional paint you made previously) to fill in the below Thank You Circles. Refer to Circles of Life to see what each layer represents.



- In *Circles of Life*, we learn about the importance of looking after Country for the children of the future. There are things we need, and then there are things of greed: things that we may love, but don't necessarily need that are harming the environment and our planet. See if you can list things we need vs things we want in a table with the following headings:
  - Things We Need in Life
  - Things That You Love . . . But You Don't Need (A Want)
- A lot of time and care goes into a picture book. Take your copy of *Circles of Life* and examine it carefully to answer the questions below.
  - How many sentences appear on each spread (double page)?
  - Can you identify a rhyme scheme in the book? Do they differ between spreads? What affect do you think this has to the overall story? Why do you think Gregg chose to introduce rhyme in this book?
  - Roughly how many syllables are there per line (up to each full stop)? Is this always exactly the same?
  - Can you find a most common length of a picture book? As writers we always write to a structure. Can you list some of the structures that your teacher/s encourages you to write to?
  - Try to replicate the structure of *Circles of Life* and write about yourself or perhaps something or someone you love. (Tip – Gregg enjoys writing about the things he is passionate about. To help you to write, think of the things you love. You will find that it is much easier to write about the things you love.)
  - Just like athletes, the more you practise, the better you get. To get better at writing try doing some practice every day. Try writing to your senses—eg. the smells you love. The tastes you love. The sights you love. The textures you love. The sounds you love.
  - When planning books, we draw ideas—these are called 'black-and-white roughs'. This is the black-and-white rough for spread 8 on p 16. Can you identify the additions to this drawing that went into the final painting?



AUTHOR OF NOTES  
**GREGG DREISE**