

**AGSA**

**Lola Greeno  
Necklace**

**Interpretive Resource**



Lola Greeno, born in 1946 on Cape Barren Island Tasmania, is an Aboriginal shell necklace maker, sculptor, installation and fibre artist. Greeno comes from a long line of shell stringers and her work is mostly made from shells, she sometimes combines traditional and contemporary stringing by using mutton bird features, gum nuts, echidna quills and kangaroo vertebrae. This stringing tradition is an opportunity for women to share stories and knowledge with younger generations and is passed down from mother to daughter. Greeno continues this tradition with her own grandchildren. Her necklaces tell the story of her Aboriginal heritage, visiting the beach to collect shells, while growing up on Cape Barren Island 360km from Tasmania Island.

As well as a body adornment, shell stringing played a significant role in cross cultural exchange during early European voyages to Van Diemen's Land in the 18th and 19th centuries. They were used as gifts and as items to trade such as axes, clothing, glass beads and fish hooks. British colonisation had a devastating impact on the life of Aboriginal people, and although settlement threatened the tradition of shell stringing, survivors maintained their cultural practices. The shell stringing tradition is one of the few which remains and continues to evolve today.

**Image (below and cover)**  
Lola Greeno, Trawlwoolway people, Tasmania, born 1946, Cape Barren Island, Tasmania, *Necklace*, 2001, Riverside, Launceston, Tasmania, maireener shells, 206.0 cm circumference; Rhianon Vernon-Roberts Memorial Collection 2001, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist.

## Lola Greeno – *Necklace*, 2001, maireener shells



# Early Years

## Responding

Find Cape Barren Island on a map. What other Bass Strait Islands can you locate? What do you imagine the environment is like on these islands?

Ask a family member about their life story. What was one of their most memorable moments? Share an interesting part of their story with your class. What new things did you learn?

## Making

Some shell necklace makers create patterns by using different types of shells. Using recycled materials such as bottle tops, bread tags or shapes cut out from cardboard, create a repeated pattern neckpiece. **Tip** Look at the shell necklaces made by Dulcie Greeno (Lola Greeno's mother in law).

# Primary

## Responding

What does tradition and culture mean to you? Why is tradition and maintaining culture important?

Shell stringing is a tradition which has been passed down from one generation to the next. What traditions or skills have been passed down in your family?

Talk to older members in your family and ask them to recall some old skills or traditions which have been lost over time. Research this skill or technique. In small groups discuss why this skill or technique should be reinstated. Present your argument to the class.

Create a mind map about a place that is special to you. Using these words, write a poem which captures the essence of this place.

## Making

Using images of different shell types found in a location near where you live, create a design of a shell necklace. Label the shells in your necklace according to its scientific family name.

## Australian Curriculum: Year 4 Science Understanding

### Life Cycles

Lola Greeno keeps the location of the maireener shell a secret as they are in short supply. This allows the marine animals to breed and replenish. Investigate the life cycle of a maireener shell. How does it depend on other living things and its environment to survive? What are some environmental factors that could affect its lifecycle?

What role does kelp have in the cultivation of maireener shells?

When visiting local beaches shell collecting is discouraged. As a class, discuss why this may be?

## Australian Curriculum: Year 7 Science Understanding

### Classification

European classification is a scientific method of taxonomy which groups organisms to their hierarchal system which include kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus and species. Research 5 shell species which can be found in different locations in Australia. Identify and name the species. In small groups, collate your findings and classify each shell according the hierarchical system.

Where is the maireener shell found and which family does it belong to?

# Secondary

## Responding

Lola Greeno has been identified as a cultural warrior. As a class, brainstorm what it means to be a cultural warrior.

Artist Julie Gough describes shell necklaces as both record and communicator. Using Lola Greeno's necklace as an example, explain Gough's statement.

Compare *Malahide* by Julie Gough in the Gallery's collection to the shell necklace by Greeno. How do these two works communicate similar ideas about the enduring culture of Tasmanian Aboriginal people?

Aboriginal shell work is considered a Tasmanian heritage icon. What other heritage icons in Australia can you name?

## Making

Greeno has a rich knowledge of her environment, knowing the location of particular shells and when they are available for harvesting. What natural materials are endemic to the environment where you live? Create a sculpture or necklace using natural materials that tell the story of where you live.

## Image

Julie Gough, Trawlwoolway people, Tasmania, born 1965, Melbourne, *Malahide*, 2008, Hobart, coal, antlers, 200.0 x 133.0 x 35.0 cm; Lillemor Andersen Bequest Fund 2008, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist



## Resources

ABC News: Indigenous artist Lola Greeno keeping shell stringing alive with Cultural Jewels exhibition

<https://ab.co/2JbAmoe>

ABC News: Unbroken String: ancient art of shell necklaces

<https://ab.co/2PJDr13>

Australian Design Centre: Lol Greeno

<http://bit.ly/2Al6djm>

Australian Design Centre: Honouring the Past/Making the Future

<http://bit.ly/2NSKK52>

Living Treasure

<http://bit.ly/2NYeJst>

The kanalaritja: An Unbroken String exhibition Resource

<http://bit.ly/2R7CR4>

National Museum of Australia: Tasmanian Aboriginal Shell Necklaces

<http://bit.ly/2S7JLB9>

National Maritime Museum: Living Waters Indigenous Shellwork

<https://bit.ly/2Q14162>

National Gallery of Victoria: Lola Greeno's Purmaner

<http://bit.ly/2q3PpHG>

## Videos

The kanalaritja: An Unbroken String

<http://bit.ly/2CwmtQg>

Lola Greeno: My Story

<http://bit.ly/2JblIxp>

National Gallery of Australia: Lola Greeno

<http://bit.ly/2AmFL9k>

### Art Gallery of South Australia

Open daily 10am–5pm

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