

Appreciating Indigenous Art — Knowledge Organiser

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Key facts

- Indigenous peoples across Canada have rich and varied art traditions.
- On the west coast, totem poles tell stories and honour families and history.
- Art uses animals like the raven, eagle, bear and orca as powerful symbols.
- Each nation has its own distinct styles and meanings.

Key vocabulary

- Totem pole — a tall carved pole telling stories.
- Symbol — something standing for an idea.
- Crest — an animal symbol belonging to a family.
- Appreciate — to value and admire.

Stories in art

A totem pole is not worshipped — it is more like a carved story or family record, with each animal carrying meaning.

Respect, don't copy

We admire and learn about Indigenous art respectfully, understanding it belongs to living cultures, rather than copying it as our own.