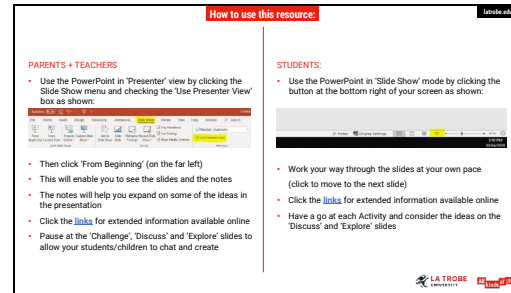


# Artist Journals Education Resource: Notes for Teachers

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Students often think of journals, sketchbooks or visual diaries as a chore, but they can be an exciting space where you can synthesize and express your experiences of the external world and your own internal world of imaginings, feelings, dreams and ideas.

In this time of lockdowns, our journals can be an even more useful tool.

This image shows a still from a video created by 2019 La Trobe University Creative Arts Graduate Danika Tayte. Danika Tayte, said that through her art she focuses on articulating her own lived experience of Autism Spectrum Disorder, [and aims to] “...inform others of both the frustration and confusion of daily life, and the sensory overload experienced by hypersensitive people.”

Danika uses her journal when she is feeling overwhelmed, it helps to calm her down and enables her to feel centred.

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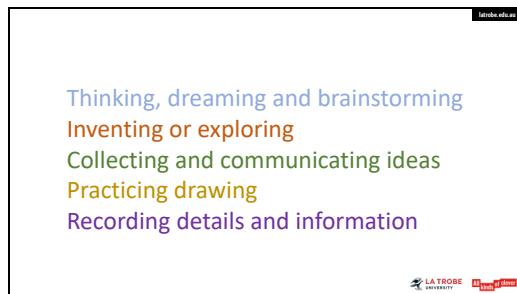
The Tate Modern museum in London holds hundreds of artists sketchbooks in their archive, many of which can now be viewed online. See <https://www.tate.org.uk/search?q=Artist+Sketchbooks>. This 10 minute film reveals how for young and established artists, their sketchbooks are a creative space for thinking, trying out ideas, making mistakes - even shopping lists - and how digital media is making these processes more shareable.

**Listen for the different ways artists use their sketchbooks or journals –are there any new ways you have not tried?**

**Write down any other surprising or interesting things you learn.**

*Note For Teachers: This YouTube clip created by Tate Modern in London (Duration: 9.40 minutes) includes Tate Modern staff and artists, illustrators, costume designers, and others speaking about the importance of using a sketchbook, how different artists use their sketchbooks and why the Tate has chosen to create a digital archive of hundreds of artist sketchbooks.*

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Here are some more fun ways to use your journal:

- Brainstorming to generate ideas and/or to relax and free up your mind for more focused thinking
- Inventing or exploring how to draw something (eg. Character design or different expressions, angles etc, different versions of something, draw from life, trying to draw from different p.o.v) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCAILTJLvKU>
- Collecting details to inspire or inform future artworks. Many artists, especially those interested in landscape, go out into the landscape to draw from life. They might record a scene in their sketchbook, taking note of colours, architectural or other details, pick up leaves or little bits of interesting rubbish, and stick or sew it into their sketchbook to use later in an artwork. You might like to follow and/or contribute to #Walktosee a hashtag started by UK illustrator Helen Stephens to encourage artists to draw from the landscape <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/walktosee/?hl=en>
- Daily drawing practice is important for any artist, (like scales for a musician). Just like athletes who train everyday, artists need to draw daily to keep their hand-eye coordination in shape. Developing a journal or sketchbook practice –taking it with you for walks or on the train helps keep your drawing skills sharp and the ideas flowing.
- A sketchbook is just a great place for collecting your ideas, maybe for an artwork, and communicating your ideas to yourself and/or others.

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We can use our journals to document the *external* visual world around us.

Try these activities:

1. Look around you. Do some 2-minute drawings of 2 or 3 things that interest you and say something about where you are right now. Notice what you are attracted to drawing.
2. Do a treasure hunt around your home. Find some interesting items that you have a connection with or that have a special personal meaning for you – an old toy, photograph, memorabilia, a present from someone special. Draw it and write about its significance to you in your journal. How does it make you feel when you hold it? What memories does it evoke? What does it feel and smell like?
3. Take your sketchbook on a walk along with a limited range of art materials. Find a spot to sit and draw. You can draw something small you find there or the wider landscape.

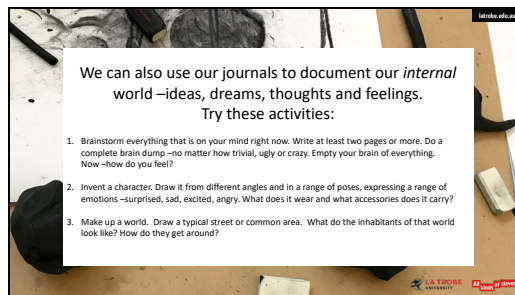
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We can also use our journals to document our *internal* world –ideas, dreams, thoughts and feelings.

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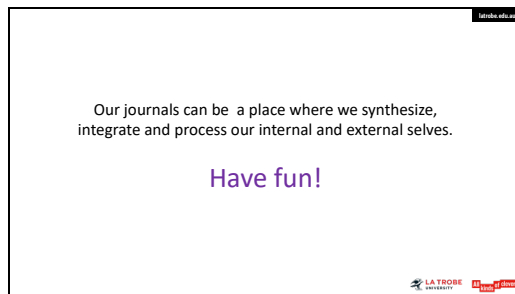
Try these activities:

1. Brainstorm everything that is on your mind right now. Write at least two pages or more. Do a complete brain dump –no matter how trivial, ugly or crazy. Empty your brain of everything. Now –how do you feel?
2. Invent a character. Draw it from different angles and in a range of poses, expressing a range of emotions –surprised, sad, excited, angry. What does it wear and what accessories does it carry?
3. Make up a world. Draw a typical street or common area. What do the inhabitants of that world look like? How do they get around?

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Our journals can be a place where we synthesize, integrate and process our internal and external selves.

Have fun!

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Starting a journal can be daunting - blank pages can be scary!  
This short video addresses four 'Journal Fears' frequently expressed by students and provides some tips to help you get started.

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**Thank you**

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