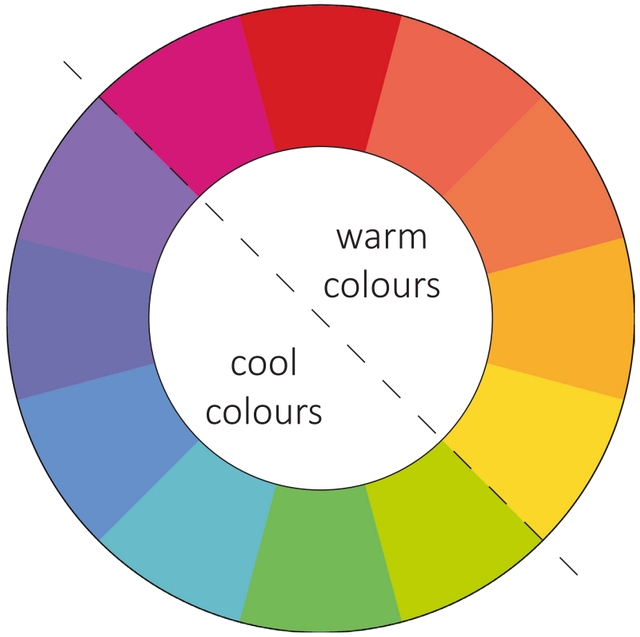
Warm and Cool Colours

The colour wheel can be divided into warm and cool colours.



Warm colours are made using mostly reds and yellows. They include primary, secondary and tertiary colours, such as red, red-purple, red-orange, yellow, orange and yellow-orange.

Cool colours are made using mostly yellows and blues. They include primary, secondary and tertiary colours, such as blue, purple, blue-purple, blue-green, green and yellow-green.

Warm and cool paintings

Warm colours remind the viewer of heat, fire and sunlight. They can make people feel happy and make objects stand out in the foreground of a picture.

The Golden Hour by Thomas Moran, 1875

Cool colours remind the viewer of water, ice, snow and the sky. They can make people feel calm or lonely and they can make objects recede into the background of a picture.

Nocturne: Blue and Silver – Chelsea by James Abbott McNeill Whistler, 1871

Aboriginal art

The Aboriginal people were the first people to live in Australia. They have a rich culture of stories but before they had a written language, they expressed their beliefs in other ways, including through their art. Their artistic styles continue today.

The colours they use reflect the colours they see in their environment and the raw materials available, such as ochres and charcoal. Dot paintings are one of the most recognisable forms of Aboriginal art.

Glossary

foreground	The part of a scene that appears closest to the viewer.
ochre	Coloured earth that can be used to make dyes and paints.
recede	To move further away into the distance.
tertiary colour	A colour made by mixing equal amounts of a primary and secondary colour.

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