

VOICES
PEACE • PRIDE • ACTIVISTS • SOCIAL ACTION

ABORIGINAL DREAMTIME

The land owns us; we don't own the land.
The land owns us; we don't own the land.
We are part of the land.
From the time we are children we learn the songs and stories about the land.
For thousands of years, these songs and stories have been part of the people's oral tradition and beliefs.

Aboriginal Dreamtime



Animal Dreaming
Painting by Paul Morin

Grade Level

Grade 3

Curriculum Area

Art • English/Language Arts • Science

Overview

According to Aboriginal belief, all life as it is known today can be tracked to the Dreamtime or the era of Creation. During this time, their Great Spirit Ancestors undertook many amazing journeys that criss-crossed the vast country of Australia in a maze of tracks. They performed feats along the way, which established the natural formations of the Australian landscape as it is seen today. The events of this distant time have been passed down in the oral tradition of folklore and are still enacted in ceremonies that include dance in mime form to the accompaniment of clap sticks. The animals of Australia seem to be at the center of all Aboriginal art. They are the subjects of the Dreamtime myths and legends. The Aborigines have painted on walls of rock for at least a century. There is early evidence from the 18th century that Aboriginal families were creating paintings for use in rituals and oral traditions. Their painting technique has become more complicated today and is still practiced in Arnhem Land. Traditionally, the paints are earth tones and made from clay and rocks. Brushes were created from chewed twigs, plant stems and hair. The subject matter varies from everyday activities of Dreamtime, in which stories describe creation beings in their animal and human form. The x-ray style is derived from cave paintings. The inside may not be medically correct, but they paint it the way they imagine it to be.

**VOICES
PEACE • PRIDE • ACTIVISTS • SOCIAL ACTION**

ABORIGINAL DREAMTIME

Objectives

To read or listen to an Aboriginal creation myth of the Dreamtime.

To write an original creation story: read it aloud dramatically, sing it, and publish it online.

To explore art techniques of Aboriginal artists of Australia.

To introduce the many strange, fascinating animals such as the kangaroos, koalas, pygmy mice, flying possums, pouched wolf, the bandicoot, and the wombat that are images in Aboriginal art and stories.



Spirit Country Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art Jennifer Isaacs 2000

VOICES
PEACE • PRIDE • ACTIVISTS • SOCIAL ACTION

ABORIGINAL DREAMTIME

Key Words

Aborigine

Definition-a member of the cultural group of people who were the original inhabitants of Australia.

Context-The Aborigines have painted on walls of rock for at least a century.

Mime

Definition-to act using only movements and gestures.

Context- The events of this distant time have been passed down in the oral tradition of folklore and are still enacted in ceremonies that include dance in mime form to the accompaniment of clap sticks.

Oral tradition

Definition-through the spoken word or verbal.

Context-There is early evidence from the 18th century that Aboriginal families were creating paintings for use in rituals and oral traditions.

Myth

Definition-an ancient story dealing with gods and heroes.

Context-They are the subjects of the Dreamtime myths and legends.

Dreamtime

Definition-from the time of the origin or the beginning.

Context-According to Aboriginal belief, all life as it is known today can be tracked to the Dreamtime or the era of Creation.

VOICES
PEACE • PRIDE • ACTIVISTS • SOCIAL ACTION

ABORIGINAL DREAMTIME

Activities

Activity

In Australia before Europeans arrived, there were no fences or barriers marking land ownership. So when Europeans came to Australia they concluded that no one owned the land.

Indigenous people divided the land up into traditional lands using geographic boundaries such as rivers, lakes, mountains and so on. The elders passed down their knowledge about boundaries to the younger people and children, through songs, dance, art and storytelling.

Myths are stories invented by a people to explain why things are the way they perceive they are. The stories themselves are not expected to be true in every detail, but they contain “truth” that helps to support the views and values of the people who retell them. People have told myths since language was created, keeping them alive and vital through the centuries by word of mouth. Myths are important in every culture.

For example, there are commonly retold myths found today in the United States that all involve apples:

- The apple that William Tell never shot off his son’s head with a crossbow to demonstrate what risks people may have to take when fighting tyranny.
- The apple that never hit Sir Isaac Newton in the head giving him the insight to develop the concept of gravity

For thousands of years, songs and stories have been part of the Aboriginal oral tradition and belief. Compare origin and creation stories from various cultures.

Activity

Read *Pheasant and Kingfisher*, a story recorded and translated by anthropologist Catherine Berndt.

The animals of Australia seem to be at the center of all Aboriginal stories and art. They are the subjects of the Dreamtime legends. They are depicted in bark paintings, rock carvings, and take center stage in the corroborees or festivals. The Aborigines are talented mimics and like to perform dances in which they imitate animals. Find pictures of the fascinating animals such as the kangaroo, koala, pygmy mice, flying possum, pouched wolf, the bandicoot, and the wombat and attach them to the story/dance/song/artwork in which they are depicted.

Activity

On the Internet site, *Stories of the Dreaming*, there are Dreamtime stories that you can read or listen to by the original author. You can also read original creation stories written by students from Australia, England, and other countries inspired by the Aboriginal creation myths.

<http://www.dreamtime.net.au/main.htm>

After reading and listening to Dreamtime stories, write and publish online a creation story of your own. Enter the story on the Kids' Stories website:

<http://www.dreamtime.net.au/stories/>



Spirit Country Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art Jennifer Isaacs 2000

Resources

- An Australian Experience.* Jack W. Kukuk. Washington, DC: John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.
- Animal Dreaming: An Aboriginal Dreamtime Story.* Paul Morin. New York, New York: Harcourt Brace and Company. 1998.
- Dreamings Tjukurrpa: Aboriginal Art of the Western Desert.* JoAnne Birnie Danzker. New York, New York: Prestel. 1994.
- Pheasant and Kingfisher.* Catherine Berndt. Greenvale, New York: Mondo Publishing. 1994.
- Spirit Country: Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art.* Jennifer Isaacs. San Francisco, California: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. 2000.
- Talking Walls.* Margy Burns Knight. Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, Publishers. 1996. Book and CD-Rom.

VOICES
PEACE • PRIDE • ACTIVISTS • SOCIAL ACTION

ABORIGINAL DREAMTIME

Internet Links

Teachers

Dreaming Online: Kids' Stories

<http://www.dreamtime.net.au/stories/>

Teachers/Students

Australian Museum Online: Stories of the Dreaming

<http://www.austmus.gov.au/index1.htm>

Students

Petroglyphs and Petroglyphy

<http://www.sunspot.sli.unimelb.edu.au/auro>

Textbooks

- **Time Detectives**

Literacy Place
Grade 3 Unit 5
Scholastic

- **Invitation to Literacy**

Level 1 Theme 3
The World Outside My Door
Houghton Mifflin Company



Standards and Expectations

- *MPS Standards Level 3 English Language Arts A.3.3*

Read and discuss literary and nonliterary texts in order to understand human experiences.

- *Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Visual Arts*

Students will reflect upon the nature of art and meaning in art and culture.

- *Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Science D.6.3*

Understand that many cultures have made and continue to make contributions to science, technology, and society.

VOICES
PEACE • PRIDE • ACTIVISTS • SOCIAL ACTION

ABORIGINAL DREAMTIME

Assessment

Students will write and illustrate a creation myth, which will be published online to share with students in Australia.

Teachers will develop appropriate rubrics.