The pages that follow contain printable lessons, ideas and activities for students of various ages.
Rock art found in central Arnhem Land could be among the oldest examples of rock painting in the world – if the birds depicted in the painting prove to be what scientists think they are. Rock art specialists suspect that the paintings depicted the long-extinct genyornis.

The genyornis, a flightless bird which stood three times the height of an emu, was one of many megafauna to became extinct when humans began burning the continent for hunting and land-clearing 40 000 years ago.

The paintings showed a thick, rounded beak, which was a characteristic of the genyornis. The painted birds, the largest of which is a metre in height, also feature a crop or a muscular pouch near the throat which forms part of the digestive tract and short, very solid legs.

Certainly, if the image was that of a genyornis it would date the paintings as at least 40 000 years old, making it one of the oldest examples of rock art in the world. It would certainly predate some of the oldest reliably dated rock art of parts of Europe, which go back 30 000 years.
Talk about or Write about

1. In what ways is painting on rock different from most other forms of painting?

2. What do you think depicted means? (1st para)

3. What are megafauna?

4. What caused the megafauna to go extinct?

5. Genyornis had a thick, rounded beak and the paintings show this. How else could we know what genyornis’s beak looked like?

6. Many palaeontologists believe that birds evolved from dinosaurs. Can you think of any resemblance(s) between genyornis and a dinosaur you know about? If so, what are the common characteristics?

7. Why do you think genyornis would have been an important animal in the lives of ancient Aboriginals?
Ceremonies: Inma

Two boys from the Coonana Aboriginal Community in Western Australia prepare for an ‘Inma’ – a dance to welcome home the kids who have been out in the desert for months learning tribal law from the elders.

Picture © Alastair McNaughton.

An Inma is a celebration of the earth and land with song, dance and feasting. Inma Maku is a chance for modern Aboriginal kids to learn a bit about the old ways of their people. Maku means ‘witchetty grub’.

The kids dig in the roots of acacia trees to find plump white witchetty grubs (larvae of the cossid moth). Witchetty grubs made a traditional meal for Aboriginal tribes in the days when they roamed the land, hunting and gathering their food. Today, Aboriginal people often live in towns and cities, so events like Inma Maku help them not to lose touch with their past. They tell stories about ‘The Dreamtime’, paint their faces and bodies with ancient designs and perform traditional dances by the firelight after feasting on the grubs.

**Talk about or Write about**

1) Aboriginal kids learn tribal law from the elders. What could be some advantages in learning directly from older people rather than learning from computers and books?

2) Would you eat a witchetty grub? Why/Why not?

3) Is eating live witchetty grubs any more cruel than eating larger animals that have been slaughtered, as occurs in many modern civilizations?

4) Why do you think participants in an Inma might paint their faces and bodies with ancient designs?
This icon tells about thunder and lightning.

The circle in the centre represents the water (soakage). The two snake symbols represent the thunder and the strokes (straight lines) is the lightning.

Thunder and lightning represent an aspect of the Rain Dreaming.

**Talk about or Write about**

1) How might a thunderstorm have affected tribal Aboriginal people’s activities?

2) What kinds of places could offer shelter from electrical storms?

3) Which would have been more of an influence, night-time storms or storms that occurred in daylight hours?

4) Thunder and lightning is often accompanied by drenching rain. Would desert Aboriginals have been disadvantaged by big downpours, would they have welcomed this rain or would it depend on their particular circumstances (time since last rain, places for shelter, etc)?

5) What would you say native animals (kangaroos, wombats etc) do during thunderstorms? What about birds?
Indigenous Art: Dugong Dugong

This painting tells of a young boy who wanted to see how long he could stay under water, but when he came up for air he came up in the form of a dugong so he remained in the sea until this day.

Talk about or Write about

1) Do you think there might be a moral in the caption above?

2) What is a dugong?

3) In the picture there are two fish and two dugongs (dugongs are mammals). Note the difference in their tails. How does a dugong’s tail move differently from a fish’s?

4) Not all tribal Aboriginals would have come into contact with dugongs. Why would this be?

5) Most people think of Aboriginals as living in the outback or desert regions of Australia where animals such as kangaroos, goannas and emus were hunted for food. How, and with what weapons, might dugongs and fish have been captured?

6) What advantages and disadvantages would coastal tribes have had compared with their counterparts who lived far from the sea, and how -if at all- would their lifestyle have been different?
Note to Teachers: This Indigenous game offers an ideal supplement to PE and sports sessions. It may be played by both boys and girls, suits most ages, is a lot of fun and is excellent for developing co-ordination and concentration. Woggabaliri provides a nice ‘bridge’ for inter-cultural awareness and is ideal for inclusion in any Indigenous Studies program.

Woggabaliri is a non-competitive game played with a ball made of Bulrush roots wrapped in possum fur where the aim is to keep the ball in the air using football (soccer) type skills of teamwork and ball control. Played by the Wiradjuri and surrounding peoples before European arrival, Woggabaliri is the Ngunnawal word for “play”. A similar game with a ball made of grass covered in beeswax was also played by the Jingili people of the Northern Territory.

Woggabaliri is recognised by the Australian Sports Commission as one the oldest Indigenous ball games.

**Basic rules:** The game is played by groups of four to six players standing in a circle 2 metres apart and uses either a football (soccer) or a volleyball. Using feet and knees only, in no set order but without consecutive touches, the players attempt to keep the ball from touching the ground. The group that has the most touches in a set time wins. If the ball touches the ground the count is restarted.

**Team rules:** Two teams of four play on a volleyball court sized pitch with football (soccer) goals at each end. A game consists of two halves lasting 10 minutes each. Players may use feet, knees, thighs, chest and head to keep the ball aloft with the team losing possession if the ball touches the ground, is intercepted or an infringement occurs. Tackling is not permitted, and goals can be scored from any part of the pitch.
Artefacts: Didgeridoo

The didgeridoo is one of the oldest musical instruments known.

It consists of a long tube, without finger holes, through which the player blows.

It is sometimes fitted with a mouthpiece of beeswax.

Didgeridoos are traditionally made from the wood of eucalyptus (gum) trees.

In tribal situations the didgeridoo is played only by men, usually as an accompaniment to ceremonial or recreational singing, or, much more rarely, as a solo instrument.

Skilled players use the technique of circular breathing to achieve a continuous sound, and also use techniques for creating multiple harmonies.

Although the instrument was not formerly widespread around the country—it was only used by Aboriginal groups in the most northerly areas—today it is commonly considered the national instrument of the Australian aborigines and is known around the world as an Australian icon.

Famous players include Djalu Gurruwiwi, Mark Atkins, William Barton, David Hudson and Joe Geia, as well as white virtuoso Charlie McMahon.

**Talk about or Write about**

1) How many syllables does the word didgeridoo have, and what are they?

2) Mention a few ways in which the didgeridoo is different from some other wind instruments you know.

3) Why might beeswax be used on the mouthpiece?

4) Didgeridoos are played only by men. What could be reasons for this?

5) How do didgeridoo players achieve a continuous sound?

6) What is meant by ‘an Australian icon’?

7) What is a virtuoso?
This painting is entitled ‘Hunters and Gatherers of the Savannah’. It depicts an Aboriginal family hunting and gathering and shows tracking the kangaroo (as a food source); camp sites (represented by circles) can also be seen.

**Talk about or Write about**

1) What do you see in the picture?

2) What weapon(s) were used to capture the kangaroo?

3) How is the kangaroo being carried?

4) To where might these people be walking?

5) How would you think these Aboriginal people might feast on their catch? (where, what time of day, eating utensils?, camp fire?)

6) An aboriginal woman is carrying a bowl on her head. What might be in this bowl?
Our First People

7) How are the Aborigines dressed? Why do they not wear much clothing?

8) The people in this picture are tribal Aborigines. What does *tribal* mean?

9) What do you think is meant by ‘hunters and gatherers’?

10) Savannah (usually spelt without the h) is flat land where the main plant-life is grass (not trees or flowers).
(a) Which Australian animals or birds might live on the savannah? Say why.
(b) Which Australian animals or birds could not live here? Say why not.

11) What are some differences in the way we obtain and eat our food to how tribal Aborigines obtain and eat theirs?

12) What foods might tribal Aborigines have that we don’t?

13) What foods might we have that tribal Aborigines don’t?
Artefacts: **Boomerang**

Boomerangs have many uses and for Aborigines they have always been valuable possessions. They could be used to hunt game, create fire, as digging tools and as musical instruments.

At a corroboree (tribal gathering), two boomerangs would be clapped together to accompany song and dance.

The boomerang’s most common use was as a hunting weapon. It would be thrown into a flock of birds with the chance of bringing down more than one, or in hunting larger land animals.

The boomerang was shaped from wood. In central Australia mulga wood was commonly used. In other parts of Australia black wattle, bat willow, needlewood or mangrove were used.

Boomerangs were often painted with ochre and were sometimes decorated with designs showing spirit heroes. Other boomerangs were painted with dots arranged in circles - these were symbols of meeting places or campsites- and joining the dots together were the travel lines (paths) the tribes took to each meeting place.

Ancient Aboriginal stories describe how the Australian landscape was formed and shaped by the ancestors in the Dreamtime. In this time, many features of the land were created by mythological spears, clubs and boomerangs which were hurled into mountains, deserts, rivers and the sea.
**Talk about or Write about**

1) Describe the appearance of a boomerang.

2) Boomerangs are used to hunt game. What is ‘game’?

3) What would you say a corroboree is?

4) What would be the reason that boomerangs were not always made from the same type of wood?

5) Ochre, which comes from clay in the earth, is a natural substance that can be yellow, orange or brown (‘earthy’ colours). What is the difference between a natural substance and an artificial substance?

6) What did the dots and lines on some boomerangs represent?

7) What is meant by *the Australian landscape*?

8) What does *mythological* mean?

9) The final paragraph shows that Aboriginal people are very spiritual. (a) What does it mean to be spiritual? (b) Can you think of any reason(s) why the Aborigines were so spiritual?

10) Sketch and decorate a boomerang using Aboriginal symbols (dots, lines, animals,..). Discuss your decorations (what they mean and what they show) with classmates.
“The story of the Rainbow Serpent is a story from the Dreamtime, told by Aboriginal people long, long ago. Children in the tribe learnt the story from the older people. In those days there were no computers, and not even books. Paper had not yet been invented so nothing was written down. All stories were passed on by telling, often around a fire in the desert at night.”

The Aborigines told of a gigantic snake that came up from beneath the earth, winding from side to side. This was the Rainbow Serpent, who lived in deep waterholes. The sun beating down on the great snake’s wet skin gave it a rainbow colour.

When the Rainbow Serpent came from beneath the ground it created huge ridges, mountains and gorges as it pushed upward. The snake’s twisting movements made the great rivers flow from its path.

The aboriginal tribes sprung from the Rainbow Serpent’s body; all the animals and birds of Australia came into being in the same way.

The Rainbow Serpent was spoken about in a hushed voice because if you made it angry by not obeying tribal rules it would harm you. But it would protect all the people who did the right thing.

The various aboriginal tribes had different names for the Rainbow Serpent. The Gunwinggu people in Australia’s north called the great snake Ngalyod.
Talk about or Write about

1) Why was the Rainbow Serpent always wet?
2) How did the Rainbow Serpent get its colours?
3) How were the great rivers formed?
4) Do you think the Rainbow Serpent was good, evil or both? (say why)
5) Try saying these words: Gunwinggu Ngalyod

6) Either draw the Rainbow Serpent coming out of a waterhole, showing mountains and gorges being created or draw the Rainbow Serpent slithering along the ground, forming great rivers.
Our First People

Indigenous Art

*Teacher shows students pictures of aboriginal art from school library book(s).*

The first people to live in our land were the Aborigines. They made beautiful art. Some of the aborigines used symbols in their paintings.

Note to teachers: The symbols were not universal; they varied over time and from tribe to tribe. Teachers may wish to sketch some or all of these symbols on the blackboard or whiteboard.

Can you make a painting (or drawing) using some of these symbols? Give your painting some bright colours. When you’ve finished, show your drawing to your classmates; tell them what’s happening in your picture.

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Anthropologists and other researches aren’t in agreement as to when and from where the Aboriginal people first came to Australia. Not only that, there are those who think that Australian Aboriginals’ origins are diverse and they are not, in fact, one distinct race.

**Waves of Migration**

As recently as the 1950s, scholars thought that Australia had only been occupied for about 8 000 years. Now, however, we have evidence of human habitation extending back more than 40 000 years. For at least 30 000 of these years, recurring ice ages raised and lowered the sea levels between Australia and Asia, eliminating the Arafura Sea and Torres Strait more than once and reducing the furthest distance needed to cross deep water between Asia and either Australia or New Guinea to less than 100 kilometres.

Some believe there were three major waves of migration of quite different ancient people who came to the Australian continent from southeast Asia.

The theory is that more than 40 000 years ago, when sea levels were much lower and Australia, New Guinea and Tasmania comprised one landmass (called Sahul) the first people to arrive were very small with dark skin and very frizzy hair. They were Negritos (a Spanish word meaning “little negro”).

About 20 000 years ago, a second type of people arrived from Asia. These newcomers, called Murrayians, were comparatively lightly skinned, wavy-haired, stocky in build, with a lot of body hair. They drove away the Negritos, forcing them to retreat to the highlands of New Guinea, the rainforests of North Queensland and to then ice-capped Tasmania. The Murrayians became the dominant population on the east coast of Australia, and the open grasslands and parklands of the south and west of the continent.

Then, about 15 000 years ago, a third wave of hunter-gatherers arrived. They were comparatively tall, straight-haired and dark skinned, with very little body hair. Named Carpentarians, they colonised northern and central Australia.

All three of these ancient Australian races, according to the ‘Waves’ theory, originated in Africa in the very distant past (DNA studies show that modern humans’ oldest ancestor is the 200 000 year-old African woman, “Mitochondrial Eve”).

Continued next page
**Australian Pygmies**
What is not in doubt is that there were pygmies in Australia. They lived in North Queensland, in the wilds of the tropical rainforests. Some of their tribes were the Djabuganjdji, Mbarbaram and Yidinjdji, all of whom shared similar languages and culture. These were a small, curly-haired people whose languages had distinctive features. The adult males were only about 140-150 centimetres tall while females were some 15-30 centimetres shorter. They have been described as being small and slightly-built with dark skin and hair that was tightly curled and woolly.

The first real contact between Europeans and Australian pygmies occurred in the 1890s just south of Cairns, Queensland. These people were not just small but were very unlike any other Aborigines in Australia though their child-like faces were remarkably similar to those of the now extinct Tasmanian Aboriginals. In the mid 1950s the Australian anthropologists Norman Tindale and H.A. Lindsay produced two books for schoolchildren. ‘The First Walkabout’, a story about a family of Negrito pygmies migrating to Australia, won the award as best Australian book of the year for children in 1956.

Some researchers, such as Josephine Flood, disagree that the pygmy Australians were racially different from other Aborigines. She (Flood) claims that the pygmies’ small stature could be explained by genetic mutation and/or adaptation to different climates and environments. Though Flood admits that Australian Aborigines are among the world’s most physically varying people she says they had one common origin, only evolving differently when separated from other, larger populations. Flood makes a similar point about Tasmania: “The differences observed between Tasmanian and mainland Aborigines in historic times are now considered to result from genetic change
in a small, isolated population.” In other words, the Tasmanians didn’t have their frizzy hair and different-looking faces when they arrived there, but these features evolved during the eight-to-ten thousand years that Tasmania had been separated from the mainland. Similarly, the tribes around Cairns were not short, slender, frizzy-haired and of Negrito appearance when they first came to the district; these characteristics evolved naturally over the period they lived in the rainforests.

The fact that there are many who say that Australian Aborigines are all one people, while others disagree, is interesting. Someday, with new discoveries (burial sites, tools, rock art, etc) and better, more accurate methods of analysing and dating, the question of the ‘oneness’ or otherwise of our indigenous people might be more fully understood.

**Talk about or Write about**

1) There is evidence of human habitation in Australia extending back more than 40 000 years. What kind of evidence could this be?

2) What made it possible for Australia’s original people to reach our continent from south-east Asia?

3) Does it really matter whether or not Australian Aborigines are not all descended from one original wave of humans who came to our land? Why/Why not?
Uluru, also known as Ayers Rock, is a large sandstone rock formation in central Australia. Rising 348 metres above the surrounding land, Uluru is almost 2 km wide and just over 9 km around the base. The climbing track (which crosses an important Aboriginal sacred site) is 1.6 km long. Uluru is notable for appearing to change colour as the different light strikes it at different times of the day and year, with sunset a remarkable sight when it briefly glows red.

A World Heritage Site, Uluru has many springs, waterholes, rock caves and ancient paintings. Rock engravings (petroglyphs) at Uluru were created by removing part of a rock surface by incising, picking, carving, and abrading.

**History**

Archaeological findings to the east and west indicate that humans settled in the area more than 10 000 years ago. Ernest Giles and William Gosse were the first European explorers to the area. While exploring the region in 1872, Giles sighted Kata Tjuta from a location near Kings Canyon and called it Mount Olga; the following year Gosse observed Uluru and named it Ayers Rock, in honour of a South Australia dignitary, Sir Henry Ayers.

**The Anangu, Tjukurpa and Tjukaritja**

Uluru is sacred to the Anangu, the local Aboriginal people. The Anangu are often referred to as the Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara people (Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara are actually the two languages spoken by the Anangu). The Anangu do not climb Uluru because of its great spiritual significance. They request that visitors do not climb the Rock either, as the path crosses a sacred traditional Dreamtime track. The visitors guide says “the climb is not prohibited, but we prefer that, as a guest on Anangu land, you will choose to respect our law and culture by not climbing.” The foundation of Anangu life and society is *Tjukurpa*. This is the creation period when ancestral beings, *Tjukaritja*, created the world as we know it, and from this the religion, Law and moral systems.

**Fauna**

In the surrounding land the Anangu continue to hunt and gather animal species, including the Red Kangaroo, Bush Turkey, Emu and lizards such as the Sand Goanna and Perentie. Other mammals living near Uluru include the marsupial mole and at least seven bat species that live within the Rock’s caves and crevices. 73 species of reptiles have been recorded, among them the Woma Python and Great Desert Skink. Four species of frog live at the base of Uluru.
Flora
Plants are an important part of *Tjukurpa*, and there are ceremonies for each of the major plant foods. Many plants are associated with ancestral beings. The flora around Uluru consist of Punu (trees), Puti (shrubs), Tjulpun-tjulpunpa (flowers) and Ukiri (grasses). Trees such as the Mulga and Centralian Bloodwood are used to make tools such as spearheads, boomerangs and bowls. The red sap of the bloodwood is used as a disinfectant and an inhalant for coughs and colds.

Climate
Uluru receives little rainfall, just over 300mm per year. The average maximum temperature in summer (December–January) is 37.8 °C while the average minimum temperature in winter (June–July) is 4.7 °C. The local Aboriginal people recognise five seasons: (1) Wanitjunkupai (April/May) - cooler weather (2) Wari (June/July) - cold season, with morning frosts (3) Piriyanjutu (August/September/October) - animals breed and food plants flower (4) Mai Wiyaringkupai (November/December) - the hot season when food becomes scarce and (5) Itjanu (January/February/March) - sporadic storms can roll in suddenly.

Myths, legends and Aboriginal traditions
The Anangu, traditional landowners of Uluru, have several stories relating to the formation of Uluru. One story that has been passed down through countless generations tells of two tribes of ancestral spirits who were invited to a feast, but were distracted by the beautiful Sleepy Lizard Women and did not show up. In response, the angry hosts sang evil into a mud sculpture that came to life as the dingo. There followed a great battle which ended in the deaths of the leaders of both tribes. The earth itself rose up in grief at the bloodshed, becoming Uluru.

Talk about or Write about
(1) What could be the reason(s) for Uluru changing colour at different times of (a) the day (b) the year?
(2) Uluru is a World Heritage site. What does this mean?
(3) William Gosse was the first non-indigenous person to sight Uluru. What thoughts, feelings and impressions might have passed through Gosse’s mind then?
(4) Uluru is sacred to the Anangu. What does this mean?
(5) Following on from the previous question, why do you think the Anangu regard Uluru as sacred?
(6) The Anangu request that visitors do not climb Uluru as the path crosses a sacred traditional Dreamtime track. The Anangu would know that this track has spiritual importance only to Aboriginals so do you find it surprising that they request non Aboriginals not to cross the track?
(7) It may be said that the fauna and flora around Uluru offer Aboriginals a wealth of bush tucker. What is meant by this statement?
(8) What are the three uses Anangu people make of the flora near Uluru?
(9) Thinking back to the two previous questions can you understand why *Tjukaritja*, those ancestral beings whom the Anangu believe created the world - including animals and plants - are so revered by the Aboriginals in and around Uluru?
(10) What adjustment to their lifestyle might the Anangu make during the cold Wari season, when morning frosts arrive and temperatures drop below 5°C?
(11) Food becomes scarce during the hot Mai Wiyaringkupai season. Why might this be?
(12) The Anangu story about two tribes of ancestral spirits who were distracted by the Sleepy Lizard Women reveals the close relationship that Aboriginals have with their environment. What, in the story, provides clear proof of this relationship?
Recreation: Marn Grook

Marn Grook (also spelt marngrook), literally meaning “Game ball”, is a collective name given to a number of traditional Indigenous Australian recreational pastimes believed to have been played at gatherings and celebrations of up to 50 players. It is often confused with a separate indigenous game, Woggabaliri.

Marn Grook was a football game which featured punt kicking and catching a stuffed ‘ball’. It involved large numbers of players, and games were played over an extremely large area. The game appeared to lack a team objective, having no real rules, scoring or winner. Individual players who consistently exhibited outstanding skills, such as leaping high over others to catch the ball, were often commented on.

Evidence supports such games being played primarily by the Djabwurrung and Jardwadjali people and other tribes in western Victoria (which are commonly associated with the name “Marn Grook”); however, according to some accounts, the range extended to the Wurundjeri in the Yarra Valley, the Gunai people of Gippsland region in Victoria and the Riverina in south western New South Wales. The Walpiri tribe of Central Australia played a very similar kicking and catching game with possum skins known as Pultja.

The earliest accounts emerged decades after the European settlement of Australia, mostly from the colonial Victorian explorers and settlers. The earliest anecdotal account was in 1841 while the written account dates back to 1857. Although the consensus among historians is that marn grook existed before European arrival,
not enough is known by anthropologists about the prehistoric customs of Indigenous Australians to determine how long the game had been played in Victoria or elsewhere on the Australian continent. Some historians claim that Marngrook had a role in the origins of Australian rules football. This connection has become culturally important to many Indigenous Australians, including celebrities and professional footballers from communities in which Australian rules football is highly popular.

**Eye-witness accounts:** William Thomas, a Protector of Aborigines in Victoria, stated that in about 1841 he had witnessed Wurundjeri Aborigines playing the game.

*The men and boys joyfully assemble when this game is to be played. One makes a ball of possum skin, somewhat elastic, but firm and strong. The players of this game do not throw the ball as a white man might do, but drop it and at the same time kick it with the foot, using the instep for that purpose. ...the tallest men have the best chances in this game. ...some of them will leap as high as five feet from the ground to catch the ball. The person who secures the ball kicks it. ...this continues for hours and the natives never seem to tire of the exercise. (adapted)*

The game was a favourite of the Wurundjeri—william clan and the two teams were sometimes based on the traditional totemic moeties of Bunjil (eagle) and Waang (crow). Robert Brough-Smyth saw the game played at Coranderrk Mission Station, where ngurungaeta William Barak discouraged the playing of imported games like cricket and encouraged the traditional native game of marn grook. An 1857 sketch found in 2007 describes an observation by Victorian scientist William Blandowski, of the Latjilatji people playing a football game near Merbein, on his expedition to the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers. However the Australian Sports Commission considers this sketch to be depicting Woggabaliri, a football game more closely resembling soccer than Australian Rules Football. The image is inscribed:

*A group of children is playing with a ball. The ball is made out of typha roots (roots of the bulrush). It is not thrown or hit with a bat, but is kicked up in the air with a foot. The aim of the game – never let the ball touch the ground.*

**Historian Greg de Moore comments:**

*What I can say for certain is that it’s the first image of any kind of football that’s been discovered in Australia. It predates the first European images of any kind of football, by almost ten years in Australia. Whether or not there is a link between the two games in some way for me is immaterial because it really highlights that games such as Marngrook, which is one of the names for Aboriginal football, were played by Aborigines and should be celebrated in their own right.*

In 1889, anthropologist Alfred Howitt wrote that the game was played between large groups on a totemic basis — the white cockatoos versus the black cockatoos, for example, which accorded with their skin system. Acclaim and recognition went to the players who could leap or kick the highest. Howitt wrote:

*This game of ball-playing was also practised among the Kurnai, the Wolgal (Tumut river people), the Wotjoballuk as well as by the Woiworung, and was probably known to most tribes of south-eastern Australia. The Kurnai made the ball from the scrotum of an “old man kangaroo”, the Woiworung made it of tightly rolled up pieces of possum skin. It was called by them “mangurt”. In this tribe the two exogamous*
divisions, Bunjil and Waa, played on opposite sides. The Wotjoballuk also played this game, with Krokitch on one side and Gamutch on the other. The mangurt was sent as a token of friendship from one to another.

Relationship with Australian Rules Football and Soccer:
Tom Wills monument in Moyston makes a strong claim to the Marngrook connection…
“While playing as a child with aboriginal children in this area (Moyston) he (Tom Wills) developed a game which he later utilised in the formation of Australian Football.” —as written by Col Hutchison on the plaque at Moyston donated by the Australian Football League in 1998.

Some commentators say that Tom Wills could have been inspired by Marngrook. The tribe was one that is believed to have played marngrook and the relationship of the Wills family with local Djabwurrung people is well documented.
Wills was raised in Victoria’s western districts. As the only white child in the district, it is said that he was fluent in the local dialect and frequently played with local Aboriginal children on his father’s property, Lexington, outside of the town of Moyston. This story has been passed down through the generations of his family.

Comparisons with Australian Rules Football:
Catching of the kicked ball (the mark) and the high jumping to catch the ball (the spectacular mark) are attributes of both games.

In Popular Culture:
Due to the theories of shared origins, Marngrook features heavily in Australian rules football and Indigenous culture. In 2002, in a game at Stadium Australia, the Sydney Swans and Essendon Football Club began to compete for the Marngrook Trophy, awarded after home-and-away matches each year between the two teams in the Australian Football League. Though it commemorates marngrook, the match is played under normal rules of the AFL, rather than the traditional aboriginal game.
The Marngrook Footy Show an indigenous variation of the AFL Footy Show began in Melbourne in 2007 and has since been broadcast on National Indigenous Television and Channel 31.
Dreamtime and Dreaming

The **Dreamtime** for Aboriginal people is the time which the earth received its present form and in which the patterns and cycles of life began. The term is commonly used to refer to the ‘time before time’, or ‘the time of the creation of all things.

**Dreaming** is used to refer to an individual’s or group’s beliefs, especially the actions of Ancestral Beings who created the natural world.

When an Aboriginal Dreaming story is told outside of the region to which it belongs, then it is respected as a story from that area; within its own region it remains a sacred Dreaming story and it is important that others give recognition to its origins.

Dreaming stories give meaning to human life. The stories deal with Aborigines’ close relationship with the land. It is believed by many Aboriginal people that the same spirits who created the land, sea, waterways, animals and plants are involved in the conception and birth of every child. Hence today a direct link to Ancestral Beings and all life (including human) continues.

Dreaming stories were spoken, sung, danced, painted and carved. Some stories explain the origins of human life on Earth. Often these have been called Creation stories as they are concerned with the creation of human beings and of life in general.

Most Aboriginal people believe that they came from the land. Ancestral Beings who created the land, seas, waterways, people, flora and fauna are known by different names depending on the local language group. These Ancestral Beings should be regarded with respect as their actions provide the knowledge and understandings that guide rules for living; treating other people in a socially responsible manner, managing resources, care of the environment, and religious and cultural ceremonies. The Ancestral Beings reveal themselves in rock formations, animals, plant life, waterways and seas, all these serving as constant reminders of Creation and the spirits of the Ancestors.

**Talk about or Write about**

For all Aboriginal people **The Dreamtime** is the time of creation. **The Dreaming**, on the other hand, is a set of beliefs held by Aboriginals within a certain region, and consists of stories passed down through the generations; as tribal groups separated by large distances had different languages and could not communicate with one another it is easy to see that Dreaming stories had some variations and that certain stories were probably unique to particular tribes.
**(1) It is commonly thought that all Aboriginals believe in Ancestral Spirits of the Dreaming, even though tribal groups with different languages were spread far and wide throughout our vast land. What kinds of evidence could show that Ancestral Spirits are important in the belief systems of all Aboriginal tribes, no matter which region of Australia they inhabited and no matter which language they spoke?

(2) Do you think that Aboriginals are more spiritual than non-Aboriginals? Say why/why not.

(3) What thoughts, feelings and emotions might you have if you were an Aboriginal child sitting around a campfire at night listening to an elder telling a Dreaming story?

(4) You live in a house or apartment. When the sun goes down in the evening you turn on the lights and go about your night-time activities (dinner, reading, homework, computer, television, Playstation, etc etc). Your family probably has all the ‘home comforts’ (electrical appliances such as heater, air conditioner, oven, stove and maybe even a coffee-making machine). For entertainment you watch TV or DVDs (at home) or take in a movie at the cinema. Contacting friends and relatives is quickly and easily accomplished by phone or computer. A vacuum cleaner and maybe a dishwasher are on hand to assist with daily cleaning chores. Your family car makes it easy to visit friends and family who don’t live close by; if the car is out of order most of us have either buses, trains, trams or even ferries available to help us get around. Outside at night there are street lights which enable us to see while walking or driving. There are shops close by so obtaining food each day is easy (and what a variety of foods and drinks we are able to choose from!); warm clothing for winter days and nights is readily available in department stores while specialist shops offer goods for sporting and other leisure pursuits. We have schools nearby where learning certain life skills and gaining knowledge of the world is carried out in a very organised manner. We have parks with playing equipment and barbecue facilities. Trains, buses, ships and planes allow us to enjoy wonderful holidays in far-away places. Most adults have jobs in safe and secure workplaces and this employment allows them to maintain a lifestyle of comfort and abundance.

Now turn your thoughts to Australia’s Indigenous people and the way they’ve lived from day to day down through the years. Is it any wonder they’ve always been more ‘in tune’ with the environment (animals, plants, rivers, rocks, mountains…..)? While we’re inside a warm house at night watching television Aboriginal people sit by a fire and look up at the stars. And as they gaze upwards they ponder the hows and whys of everything, including how and why the world (and everything in it) began. Then, when they awake in the morning, they’ll begin to plan their new day: a day of hunting and gathering, tracking, exploring, making artefacts, playing, dancing, listening to stories.

Which is the better life, the richer life, the happier life, the more fulfilling life, the healthier life? (Key words and considerations: weather, shelter, adventure, routine, laws, family life, time, safety, nature, pollution, creativity, environment, health and fitness, stress, comfort, life skills, communication, survival)

**Teachers: evidence could include rock art from different regions, anecdotal evidence such as encounters with Europeans in different parts of the country, etc.