

Discovering Aboriginal Australia

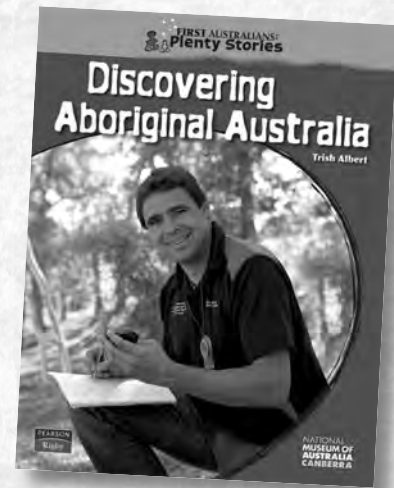
Background

People have been living in Australia for over 50,000 years. Many Aboriginal people have their own stories about Australia 'since time began'. Their stories tell of the creation of people, land, animals and plants. In this book students will discover Australia's long history as they take a journey through time.

For tens of thousands of years, Aboriginal people have occupied the whole of Australia. They have lived in different and changing environments. The many changes included natural cycles of climate change, rising and falling sea levels and changes in animals and plants. Aboriginal people adapted to these changes while maintaining their cultural diversity.

In this book students will be introduced to the histories of some of these groups. Many of these histories have been uncovered across the continent by archaeologists and many histories have been preserved by Aboriginal people through oral tradition. Students will examine both the archaeological evidence and the Aboriginal evidence side by side.

Through exploration of such sites as Lake Mungo, students will gain an understanding of why these sites continue to be special for Aboriginal people and what connection to Country means to them.



Further information

- » maps and atlases
- » encyclopedias
- » state and territory National Parks websites
- » state and territory museums
- » Environment Australia website

Learning activities

Select activities appropriate for your students from each of the following stages of learning.

Focusing

- How do we know about the lives of people who lived long ago?
- Where does the information come from? (It can come from various sources, ranging from oral tradition and retelling to formal studies such as archaeology.)

Engaging

- Before reading the book, show students the cover. Ask: What do you think this man is doing? How might his equipment help him to discover Aboriginal Australia?
- Read the back cover blurb.
- Discuss some or all of the following questions as students read the first section of the book.

Page 2: How have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples passed on their history for generations? What are some other ways Aboriginal people may learn about their history today?

How do archaeologists find out about the history of Aboriginal people?

Pages 3–6: What can archaeologists learn from each of these four types of evidence?

Why do you think stone has been so important to Aboriginal people?

Why are middens found in coastal areas and around rivers?

Read **Page 7**, and locate yourself on the map, before proceeding to a group study of the following pages.

Pages 8–19: Divide the class into six groups, each of which will read about one of the sites described in the book. Each group should then present a short verbal report to the whole class. Students could create their own report format, or use Part A of **BLM 2** as a guide. (Students will later complete **BLM 2** individually about a site they choose.)

After the class reports, allow students time to read about the other five sites. Reading could be silent or in groups as appropriate.

Pages 20–21: What do you think archaeologists use each of these tools for?

Do you think you would enjoy working as an archaeologist? What do you think would be the most rewarding part of the job? What would be the most exciting?

Page 22: Look at the quote from Kevin Gilbert. Why do you think the author chose to put this at the end of the book?

- Ⓐ As a review activity, have students complete **BLM 1**.

Exploring further

- Find out more about the different types of work that archaeologists do. Research at the library or on the Internet.
- As a class, make a collection (real or on paper) of tools that we use in everyday life today. What are they made of? What do we use them for? Which ones are like some of the artefacts described in the book? In what way are they similar? Students could put together an exhibition of hand tools in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries.

A Work in small groups to present episodes of the future TV show 'Amazing Artefacts from 2020'. Each group should choose one item that has been found by archaeologists to have been widely used in the year 2020. They should present the item to the audience, describe what they think it might have been used for, and explain why it is such an exciting find. (Students could choose items ranging from a toothbrush to a computer, a non-stick frypan, dictionary, an umbrella or a car.)

Reflecting

- Discuss the question that forms the page 22 heading 'What does the land mean to you?' What are some of the connections that students have to the land? Do they think that other people respect and care for their special sites?
- A** Ask students to complete **BLM 2**, giving special consideration to Part B.

Sample pages

The Travelling Yamani

Background

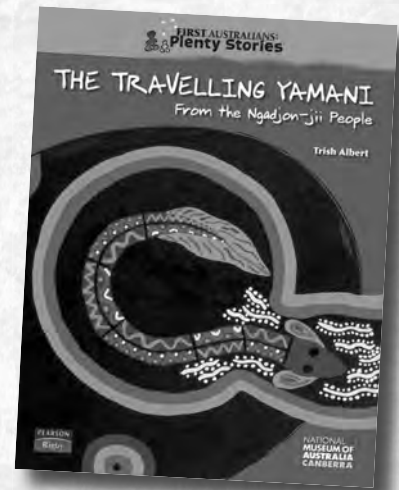
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold a deeply spiritual connection to the land, dating back many thousands of years.

Many Dreaming or Creation stories tell of the journey and the actions of Ancestral Beings who created the natural world. Creation stories carry the truth from the past, together with the rules or law, which is still meaningful in the present. Each story is part of a much longer, more complex story, which is only known by the most respected elders.

When a story is told outside of the Country to which it belongs, it is respected as an Aboriginal Creation Story from that area. Within its Country it remains a significant, sacred and spiritual story. It is important to give recognition to the origins and ownership of any Creation Story.

The story in this book belongs to and was retold by a group of Ngadjon-Jii people. Ngadjon-Jii people are Traditional Owners of parts of the rainforest areas of the Atherton Tablelands.

As well as being able to read the story of the Travelling Yamani in the words of a Ngadjon-Jii person, students can also learn of the importance this story still has for Ngadjon-Jii people through direct quotes from the storytellers.



Further information

- » maps and atlases
- » Atherton Tablelands websites
- » Aboriginal cultural centres, including Brambuk (Victoria); Tjapukai (Queensland); Tandanya (South Australia); Umbarra (New South Wales); Bunjilaka (Victoria); Cooramah (New South Wales); Warradjan (Northern Territory); Muru Mittigar (New South Wales); Minjungbal (New South Wales); Wardan (Western Australia)
Note: all of these cultural centres can be found on the Internet
- » Birds Australia website

Learning activities

Select activities appropriate for your students from each of the following stages of learning.

Focusing

Discuss places that are especially significant to you, or to other people. These might be local places, national (for example, the National Museum of Australia or National War Memorial in Canberra, Uluru–Kata Tjuta) or international (for example, Antarctica, Mecca). What makes these places special? How have you learnt about them?

Engaging

- Before reading the book, show students the cover. Ask: This painting tells part of a story. What do you think the story might be about? What information can you get from the painting?
- Read the back cover blurb.
- Discuss some or all of the following questions as students read the book in sections.

Pages 2–3: Find the Atherton Tableland area on a map of Queensland or Australia. In the photo on page 3, are the people actually in the rainforest area? How can you tell?

Pages 4–13: How did Yamani make himself comfortable at Gadaloff Swamp? Were the birds comfortable?

Do you think that what Bajinjalajila did was right? Why or why not?

Why did Yamani move away from Gadaloff Swamp? Why is the story called *The Travelling Yamani*?

Pages 14–15: What did you learn from *The Travelling Yamani* story?

Do you think that stories like *The Travelling Yamani* are a good way to teach lessons about behaviour and rules? Explain your answer.

Pages 16–17: Do you think that Warren and Andrew were happy to paint the story of *The Travelling Yamani*?

- A** On these pages, Warren and Andrew tell us a bit about themselves. What else would you like to know about them? Write three questions for each of them.

Pages 18–19: Today, Ernie teaches people about the rainforest. How did he learn about this special environment and how his people survived there?

Today, Ernie chooses not to eat some of the traditional animal foods such as cassowaries and possums that he ate as a child. What is Ernie's totem?

Pages 20–21: Why do you think the Ngadjon–Jii elders want people to ask for permission to visit Top Camp?

Why does Emma Johnston have a 'Top Camp smile' in the photo?

Page 22: Look back over the book, and think about all the different ways that the Ngadjon–Jii elders care for their Country. Make a group list or mind map.

Exploring further

- Work in groups to research one aspect of the Atherton Tableland area in Queensland. You could focus on:
 - local industries and agriculture
 - tourism, e.g. crater lakes of Lake Eacham or Lake Barrine
 - climate
 - flora and fauna
 - Aboriginal culture.

Present your findings on a poster, or as a PowerPoint presentation.

A Look in the library or on the Internet to find out more about the birds in *The Travelling Yamani*. Try to find descriptions or recordings of the birds' calls. Compare these to the Ngadjon–Jii names for the birds. Then complete **BLM 3**.

- Find and read Dreaming stories from other Aboriginal groups' Dreaming stories. Compare them to *The Travelling Yamani*.

Reflecting

- Look back at the story part of the book (pages 4–13). Think about the content and the design of the pages. How much of the story is told in the words, and how much in the pictures? Could you work out the story if you couldn't read the English words?

A Imagine you have been on a journey to Ngadjon–Jii Country, with Ernie and the others as your guide. Write a letter to Ernie, thanking him for the tour, telling him what you enjoyed and what you learnt. Perhaps you could add what you would like to do on your next visit, imaginary or real!

Note: Students may wish to send their letter to Ernie explaining why they wrote it and that they had read the book. However, students should understand and acknowledge that they may not receive an answer.

- After learning about Ngadjon–Jii Country in *The Travelling Yamani*, can you imagine what Ernie's Country is like? Close your eyes and imagine exploring it with each of your five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. Then close your eyes, take yourself to a place that is very special to you, and explore it with your five senses. Then record your explorations on **BLM 4**.