

What is The Dreaming?

The importance of an historical site of cultural importance or spiritual significance; for example, a community building, a landmark, a war memorial (ACHHK045)



Time line

(Time line of some events in the history of the Blue Mountains.)

RESPECTING THE PAST

- 170 million years ago
A plateau is created by a volcanic eruption. Over time, deep valleys and gorges were cut into it by the effects of rain, wind, heating and cooling to eventually form what is now known as the Blue Mountains
- Aboriginal Australians first to inhabit the Blue Mountains, date unknown (under 50 000 years ago)
- 1788 Named 'Carmarthen and Lansdowne Hills' by Governor Arthur Phillip. Soon after, name changed to Blue Mountains because of the blue haze when viewed from a distance
- 1813 First official European crossing by explorers Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth

R Resources

- Photographs of the Three Sisters rock formation from resource books or the internet.
- Map of Australia and New South Wales.
- The Aboriginal people of Australia* by Anne Bartlett.

Teacher information

Elaboration

Understanding the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dreaming stories and the connection to significant sacred sites

Key inquiry questions

What aspects of the past can you see today? What do they tell us?

Historical skills

- Distinguish between past, present and future (ACHHS048) **AC**
- Explore a range of sources about the past (ACHHS050) **AC**
- Identify and compare features of objects from the past and present (ACHHS051) **AC**
- Explore a point of view (ACHHS052) **AC**

Historical concepts

- Continuity and change
- Cause and effect
- Perspectives
- Significance



Background information

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people have the longest continuous cultural history of any group on Earth, dating back 65 000 years. The Dreaming is the term Aboriginal people use to explain the creation and culture of the land and its people. (Depending where Torres Strait Islander people live, they use terms like 'Before Time' or 'Zogo Time'.) After the spirits of the ancestors created the natural environment, they came to rest within features of the natural environment. These places are considered sacred sites in ATSI culture. Each site is associated with creation stories.
- As ATSI people did not have a written language, they orally passed on their knowledge and wisdom from one generation to the next. This was done through storytelling, song, poetry, drama and dance, as well as art. Each different ATSI group tells creation stories in its own special way, but the stories generally have similarities.



Teaching notes

- This unit will assist students in understanding why sites are significant to Aboriginal people and the role Dreaming stories have for each site.
- Page 35 provides a simple explanation of what the Dreaming means to Aboriginal people.
- Pages 36 and 37 include two versions of a Dreaming story about the Three Sisters rock formation in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. Show students its location on a map. This site is significant to Aboriginal Australians and is also a very popular tourist landmark. The two versions of the story will enable students to explore, in a simple way, different perspectives of different Aboriginal groups. Page 35 can be completed in pairs, small groups or as a whole class. Keywords can be used instead of full sentence answers. Discuss the similarities and differences between the stories.



Additional activities

- A short video of a Dreaming story about the Three Sisters can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWmTRiOloLg>
- Read and discuss different versions of other Dreaming stories relating to significant sites. A common Aboriginal Australian Dreaming story across many groups involves the Rainbow Serpent. Torres Strait Islander creation stories usually involve the Tagai, or warrior, and the sea and stars (as they are seafaring people).

What is The Dreaming? - 1

The Dreaming is part of Aboriginal people's culture. They believe that Earth and everything on it was made during the Dreaming.

In the beginning, there was no sun, moon, land or water. There were no plants, animals or people. Then, during the Dreaming, the spirits they believe were sleeping under the ground came out to make everything on Earth. They made the ocean, rivers, lakes and waterholes. They made the sun, moon and stars. They made the land, islands, mountains, rocks, sand and deserts. People, animals and plants were also made to live on Earth.

When the spirits were finished making everything, they went back into the ground or turned into things such as rocks, creeks, stars or waterholes.

This is why special places are very important in Aboriginal people's lives. These significant sites have a special Dreaming story. Each group of people tells Dreaming stories in its own way but many of the stories are similar. They are all passing their history from one generation to the next.

Answer the questions or fill in the missing words.

1. The Aboriginal people believe that _____ and everything on it was made during the _____.
2. What happened to the spirits when they finished making everything?

3. Why are some places very significant to Aboriginal people?



Two Dreaming stories - 1

The Blue Mountains can be found west of Sydney in New South Wales, not far from the town of Katoomba. In one part of the mountains are three huge rocks, next to each other. They are called the Three Sisters. It is a significant site for Aboriginal people. They have Dreaming stories about how the Three Sisters were made. Dreaming stories are not always the same. Read the two Dreaming stories below.



Dreaming story 1

Long ago, there were three beautiful sisters from the Katoomba group in the Blue Mountains. Their names were Meehni, Wimlah and Gunnedo.

The three sisters fell in love with three brothers from the Nepean group. The sisters and brothers wanted to marry each other. However, they were not allowed to marry because of tribal law.

The brothers were not happy. They decided to capture the sisters. A great battle began between the two groups. The sisters' lives were in danger. A witchdoctor from the Katoomba group turned the sisters into rocks so they wouldn't be hurt. Unfortunately, the witchdoctor was killed in the battle. This meant that the three sisters could not be turned back into girls. Only the witchdoctor had the spell.

Dreaming story 2

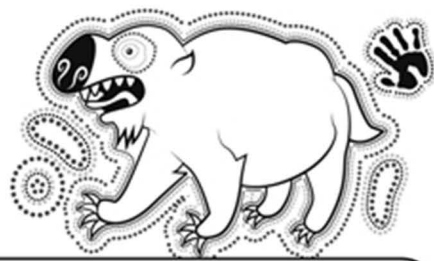
Long ago, in the Blue Mountains, lived three beautiful sisters. Their names were Meehni, Wimlah and Gunnedo. Their father was a witchdoctor named Tyawan.

An evil bunyip spirit also lived in the mountains. One day, Tyawan went hunting and left the sisters safely away from the bunyip behind a rocky ledge. Later that day, a centipede suddenly appeared near to where the girls were playing. They screamed in fright and Meehni threw a stone at it. The stone rolled over the ledge and landed near the bunyip, waking him.

The angry bunyip started to move towards them. Their father saw what was happening and used his magic bone to turn the girls into rocks so they would be safe. The bunyip started chasing Tyawan who turned himself into a lyrebird. He dropped his magic bone and could not find it. This meant the three sisters could not be turned back into girls and Tyawan is still a lyrebird.

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Two Dreaming stories - 2



1. Answer the questions about the two Dreaming stories to find out what is the same and what is different.

	Dreaming story 1	Dreaming story 2
(a) What are the names of the three sisters?		
(b) Where did they live?		
(c) What happened before they were turned into rocks?		
(d) Who turned them into rocks?		
(e) Why were they turned into rocks?		
(f) Why couldn't they be turned back into girls?		



The Three Sisters can be seen from a lookout spot near the town of Katoomba. From left to right, the rocks are 922, 918 and 906 metres high.