



Teacher Resource

# Deep Time

## Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. How long have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupied this land for?
2. Where is the earliest evidence of humans in Australia?
  - a. Budj Bim cultural landscape
  - b. Madjedbebe rock shelter
  - c. Murujuga cultural landscape
3. What evidence did archaeologists find there?
4. What was the mega-continent that included mainland Australia, Tasmania and Papua New Guinea called?
5. Reflect on your understanding of Deep Time since watching the BTN story. How has it changed?

***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document may contain images and names of deceased persons.***

## Activity: Class Discussion

Discuss the BTN Deep Time story in small groups or as a class. Ask students to record what they know about the ancient culture of Australia. What questions do they have? Use the following questions to help guide discussion:

- What do you already know about the history of First Nations people? Record your ideas on a mind map.
- How long have First Nations people been in Australia?
- How do we know this? (artefacts, rock art, footprints, Dreaming stories)
- What are some examples of the earliest evidence of people living in Australia?



What questions do you have?



What surprised you about this story?

### EPISODE 30

28 October 2025

#### KEY LEARNING

Students will explore Australia's deep time history by investigating important archaeological sites and Indigenous creation stories.

#### CURRICULUM

##### HASS – Year 4

Pose questions to investigate people, events, places and issues.

##### HASS – Year 5 & 6

Develop appropriate questions to guide an inquiry about people, events, developments, places, systems and challenges.

Locate and collect relevant information and data from primary sources and secondary sources.

##### HASS – Year 7

Construct significant questions and propositions to guide investigations about people, events, developments, places, systems and challenges.

Apply a methodology to locate and collect relevant information and data from a range of primary sources and secondary sources.

How First Nations Australians are the world's oldest continuing cultures, displaying evidence of both continuity and change over deep time.

How First Nations Australians have responded to environmental processes and changes over time.

The technological achievements of early First Nations Australians, and how these developed in different places and contributed to daily life, and land and water source management.

## Activity: Vocabulary

Students will brainstorm a list of key words that relate to the BTN Deep Time story. Here are some words to get them started.

|           |                       |                |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------------|
| DEEP TIME | FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE  | CREATION STORY |
| ROCK ART  | OLDEST LIVING CULTURE | SITES          |

## Activity: KWLH research

The KWLH organiser provides students with a framework to explore their knowledge on the deep time history of Australia and consider what they would like to know and learn.

| What do I <u>know</u> ? | What do I <u>want</u> to know? | What have I <u>learnt</u> ? | <u>How</u> will I find out? |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                         |                                |                             |                             |

### Deep Time Inquiry

Students will collect and record information from a wide variety of sources. Students may develop their own question for inquiry or select one of the questions below.

- How long have Aboriginal people lived in Australia? Describe one recent discovery that shows this.
- What is the creation process known as? Find one dreaming story that explains the creation of the Australian landscape. Can you find a creation story from your local community to share?
- What are some of the oldest archaeological sites in Australia? What do they tell us?
- What is Sahul? Investigate the ancient mega-continent of Sahul. Find a map of Sahul and make comparisons to present day Australia.
- How has Australia changed over the last 65,000 years? Make a timeline showing major environmental changes (sea levels rising, ice age, drought).
- What does the following sentence mean? Aboriginal cultures are the oldest continuous cultures on Earth.



[ABC News](#)

## Activity: Time

Explore the [Time interactive](#) on the ABC Deep Time website as a class, following the timeline to explore the deep history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

To help understand how far back Australia's history goes, the interactive uses a dot help represent a point in time, with each dot representing 250 years.

Follow the dot as it moves from the present day to the ancient past, recording key points in time. Continue through the interactive and click on the points of interest to learn more about specific events, cultural practices, and stories.

- What did you learn?
- What information was surprising?
- What questions do you have?
- Create a Did you know.



### Journey back in time

This fun and interactive outdoor class activity will help students explore and visualise the deep history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Take your classroom outside, using your school oval to make a giant timeline, to help students visualise the vast scale of history in Australia. First, students will decide on a scale (for example, 1 step equals 250 years in time) and calculate and record the distances using a spreadsheet. Students will walk back in time, counting steps according to their scale. At each key event they will place a marker and/or sign.

Key events to mark:

- 2,800 years ago – beginning of Ancient Greek civilisation
- 5,100 years ago – beginning of Ancient Egyptian civilisation
- 9,000 years ago – Sea levels rise dramatically
- 22,000 years ago – Ice age peaks
- 30,000 years ago – Great drought begins
- 37,000 years ago – Budj Bim volcano erupts
- 50,000 years ago – Megafauna live in Australia
- 65,000 years ago – Evidence of First Nations people in Australia

Further discussion

- What was surprising about this activity?
- What did you learn from doing this activity?
- What major environmental changes have First Nations Peoples survived throughout Australia's 65,000-year history?
- Where do other civilisations fit onto your deep time timeline?
- Why is it important to learn about and share Australia's deep time history?

## Activity: Deep time stories near you

Go to the [Place map](#) on the Deep Time website. Choose a story near you to explore. Which location did you choose? What story is told there?

- What time-period does the story come from?
- How was the landscape and environment different in that story compared to today?
- What does the story tell you about how people used the land, water or sky?
- Why are the stories of the knowledge holders important?
- How did the story you chose make you feel?



### Further Investigation

Students will explore the cultural diversity of First Nations Australians. Individually or in small groups, students will learn about the Indigenous group where they live and present what they have learnt to the class. Students will learn about the geographic location, language, culture, traditions, and histories.

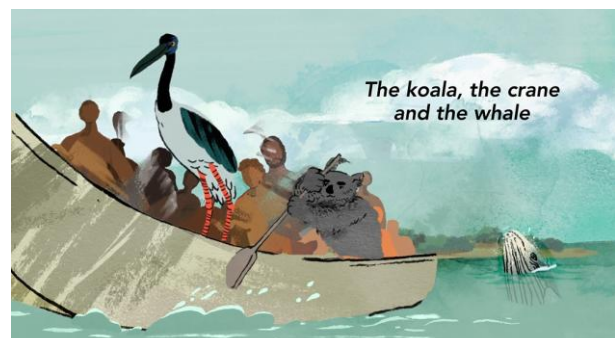
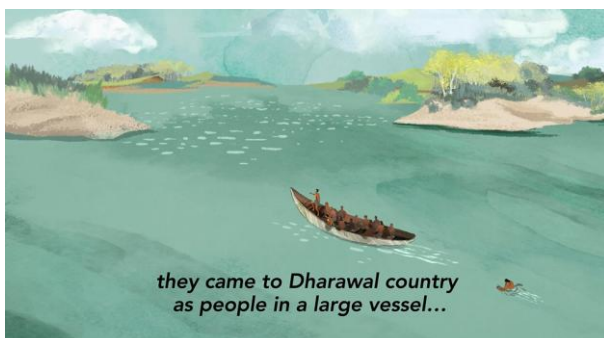
- Find one significant Aboriginal archaeological site in your local community. Why is it important to First Nations people?
- What is the Indigenous language in your local community? Learn some common everyday words and share with your class.
- Where is the Indigenous group located? Mark the approximate boundaries on a map. What are some special sites in the area?
- Learn more about the Indigenous seasons and the plants and animals that are important to Indigenous people. Learn more about the [Indigenous Seasonal Calendar on the CSIRO website](#)
- Look for stories by Indigenous peoples valuing their oral traditions. Can you find stories told through dance, song and other art forms as well as through text?



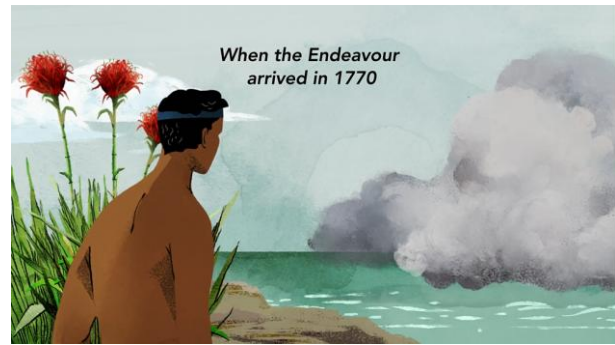
## Activity: Dreaming stories

Dreaming stories pass on important knowledge, cultural values, and belief systems to later generations. Learn about Dharawal country through this [Dharawal Dreaming story](#) made by the National Museum of Australia.

*One tells the origins of our animals ...*



Another Dreaming story tells of how spirits of the dead returned in low lying cloud...



Dharawal Dreaming - [Animation](#) (National Museum Australia)

Spears have an important place in Dreaming stories in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Watch [The Spear](#) together as a class, a Yirritja story that is told in Dalabon language in Central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

After watching the video students will respond to the following:

- What do you think the story is teaching us?
- What were your reactions or feelings during the story?

### Follow-up activities

Teachers can download the 'Dust Echoes' [study guide](#) by ATOM for further follow-up activities.



The Spear, Dust Echoes - (ABC Education)

## Activity: Meet the Megafauna

Students will explore the [Megafauna stories](#) on the [Topics page](#) of the Deep Time website and choose a species of megafauna to explore in more detail. What does the story tell you about First Nations people's connection with megafauna? Students will then create a fact sheet including the following information:

- Common and scientific name
- What type of animal is it? (mammal, reptile, bird)
- Description – size, appearance, special features, adaptations
- Where did it live? Describe the habitat.
- What did it eat?
- When did it die out? What caused their extinction?
- What existing species is it similar to?
- Find evidence of megafauna in First Nations people's culture. For example, in archaeological findings like rock art and the collection of fossils; or in creation stories.



[Diprotodon](#)

## Activity: Rock Art Investigation

Students visit the [Art section](#) on the [Topics page](#) to learn from knowledge holders about rock art. What do the stories tell you about rock art and its significance to First Nations peoples?

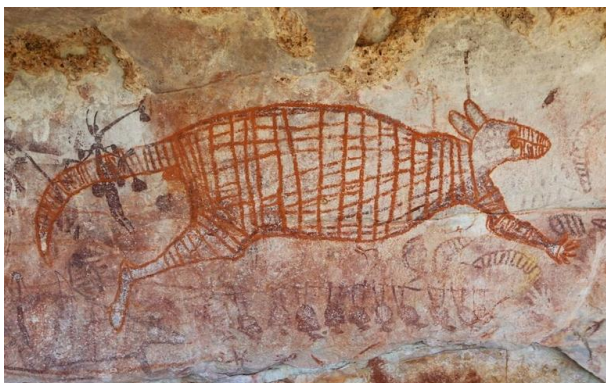
Students will explore one specific example in depth. Students will learn about petroglyphs (rock engravings) and pictographs (drawings) which are a key component of rock art. Below are some examples of rock art around Australia. Alternatively, students may want to find their own example of rock art to study.



Walinynga (Source: [National Museum Australia](#))



Murujuga rock art (Source: [ABC](#))



Rock art in the Kimberley. (Source: [ABC News](#)  
[Supplied by Sven Ouzman](#))



Murujuga rock art (Source: [ABC](#))

### Initial Observations

What do you notice?

- Describe the main features of the rock art. What sorts of colours, lines and shapes do you notice?
- What else do you notice? Can you see people, animals or spiritual figures in the art? Write as much as you can about what you see.
- What do you think the images are telling us?

### Further Investigation

Students will respond to one or more of the following questions:

- Where is it located and how old is it? Locate on a map of Australia.
- What type of rock art is it? Is it a petroglyph or pictograph?
- Find the name of the place in both the Indigenous and English languages.
- What Indigenous language groups have connections to the land where the rock art is located?

- What story does the rock art tell? Is it a traditional Dreaming story? Explain what you know about the Aboriginal story.

### Want to know more about where you live?

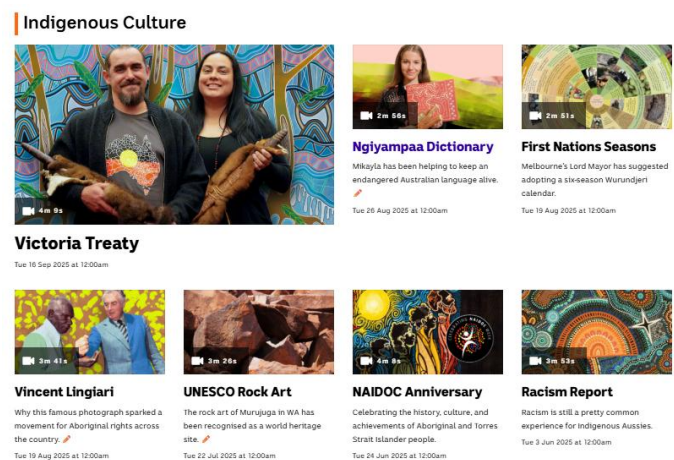
- Check out the [Gambay language map](#) to learn more about traditional languages spoken in your area.
- To learn whose Country you're on, visit David Horton's [Map of Indigenous Australia](#) on the AIATSIS site.
- Cross-reference with other sites, for example your local council or Aboriginal land council.

## Activity: BTN Stories

Visit BTN's collection of stories which focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' history, culture and issues.

After watching any one of the BTN videos ask students to respond to the discussion questions (to find the discussion questions and teacher resources go to the related BTN Classroom Episode and download the Episode Package).

[Collection of BTN stories with a focus on Indigenous culture](#)



## Useful Websites

- [Deep Time](#) – ABC
- [Deep time history of Australia](#) – National Museum Australia
- [Evidence of first peoples](#) – National Museum Australia
- [Deep time history of Australia resource](#) – Australian Curriculum
- [‘We are from here’](#) – Digital Classroom: National Museum Australia
- [The Human Revolution](#) – ABC iView