Quirky fact:
The skeletal frames of gunyahs (stick shelters) can still be found in Outback Queensland.

Background Information
Australia's Aboriginal heritage is one of the oldest in the world. Aboriginal people have occupied Australia from around 40,000 to 60,000 years ago. Prior to European arrival Aborigines lived in tribes and clans, their Country or territorial boundaries marked by geographical features of the area such as rivers and mountains. While sharing much in common, the land influenced each group’s distinct culture and heritage and gave rise to an extraordinary diversity among groups across the continent. For example, there were between 200 and 250 spoken languages with more than 700 recorded dialects.

Aboriginal people attribute their survival to living 'as part of the land' rather than 'on the land'. This deep connection with the environment enabled them to observe and adapt to changing conditions. During the last 60,000 years Australian Aborigines survived a major ice age and several other periods of climate change.

All groups hunted and gathered their food, using tools fashioned from rocks, trees and plants. There was no written Aboriginal language. Traditions and histories were passed from one generation to the next through story telling, art and dance. Aborigines expressed art in many ways: through their dance and by painting their bodies to depict characters of The Dreaming, animals and events; through rock paintings, stencils and drawings; and as adornment to their instruments, tools and shields. They used ochre, a rock that is heavily enriched with iron oxide, to make paint. The ochre was ground into a powder and mixed with binding agents such as saliva, blood or animal fat. It was applied either by blowing it as a fine spray from the mouth, using a sharp or flattened end of a stick, or the fingers and hands. Another form of rock art involved engraving surfaces by pecking, grinding and abrading. Aboriginal art is often geometric. Circles, lines and dots were and still are commonly used along with figurative illustrations such as human and animal shapes, boomerangs and other tools, and animal tracks.

### Australian Curriculum Links

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Inquiry Questions

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<td>Geography</td>
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<td>How did the original inhabitants influence their environment?</td>
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<td>How does this compare with the way other cultures connect with their places?</td>
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<td>What is the role of landscape in the culture of this region’s original inhabitants?</td>
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<td>Which aspects of this landscape need to be protected and how can this be done?</td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
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<td>How have the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Outback influenced society?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>What scientific understandings do Aboriginal peoples apply in traditional lifestyles (e.g. materials, physics, chemistry, meteorology, physics)?</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>How do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples apply their knowledge of the properties of different rocks and minerals?</td>
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Points of Interest

- **Visit Baloon Cave Aboriginal Cultural Trail at Carnarvon Gorge**. This 1km return (45 minutes) is a short walk to a small sandstone overhang featuring stencilled Aboriginal rock art. Signs along the trail introduce aspects of traditional use of the area’s resources. The Karingbal and Bidjara people are welcome visitors to Carnarvon Gorge – ‘Carnarvon Gorge is our country. The spirit of our people is at home here. We welcome you to this place’.
- **Artesian Country Tours** (departing from Barcaldine) offers guided tours to one of Australia’s oldest Dreamtime carving sites, lava blowholes, gorges, caves and desert springs.

PO Box 232, Barcaldine QLD 4725
Cost: Fees apply
Hours: By appointment
Contact: Tom Lockie
Phone: (07) 4651 2211
Email: tom@artesiancountrytours.com.au
Website: www.artesiancountrytours.com.au

Most historical Aboriginal sites are in protected areas with restricted access.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
www.aiatsis.gov.au

Australian Archaeological Association
www.australianarchaeologicalassociation.com.au

REFERENCES

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Map of Queensland
Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs
www.dnrnr.qld.gov.au/cultural_heritage/

Australian Government
Australian indigenous cultural heritage
www.australiagov.au/about-australia/
australian-story/australian-indigenous-cultural-heritage

Aboriginal Art Online

Queensland Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing
www.derm.qld.gov.au/parks_and_forests/

FURTHER INFORMATION

Wanpa-rda Matilda
Outback Education Centre
PO Box 21, Barcaldine QLD 4725
Phone: (07) 4651 2530
Email: the.principal@wanpardaeec.eq.edu.au
www.wanpardaeec.eq.edu.au

Carnarvon Gorge National Park,
www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks/carnarvon-gorge/

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