

# WORLD BOOK ONLINE

## Aboriginal people of Australia Worksheet – World Book Student

Learn about the Aboriginal people of Australia and their unique culture. Use World Book Online to find the answers to the questions below. *Hint: Go to the 'Traditional Aboriginal Society' section.*

### Find it!

1. When did the ancestors of today's Aboriginal people first arrive in Australia, where did they come from and how do scientists believe they came to Australia?
2. Aboriginal people lived throughout the continent and through major climate changes, what does this say about the Aboriginal people?
3. How did Aboriginal people source food?
4. How was Aboriginal society organised?
5. Why was the idea of *country* important to the Aboriginal people?
6. How did the arrival of Europeans impact the Aboriginal people's relationship with their country?
7. What were clans part of?
8. What are *nations*?
9. What was *initiation*?
10. What was the purpose of *initiation*?
11. What was leadership within the clan, tribe, and nation dependent on?
12. How was the Aboriginal system of authority and leadership organised?
13. What types of foods did Aboriginal people eat?
14. Australia is the world's driest inhabited continent, what methods did the Aboriginal people develop to find and preserve water?
15. Why did Aboriginal people develop a few tools that could do many different jobs?
16. What is *firestick farming*?
17. What is the *Dreaming* or *Dreamtime*?
18. Who are the Dreamings?
19. What was *totemism*?
20. What is *songline*?
21. What did Aboriginal people believe happened after death?
22. How did Aboriginal people make paint for their rock art?
23. How was singing used in Aboriginal culture?
24. What evidence is there that Aboriginal peoples traded with each other?
25. *Scroll down to the section on 'Challenges to traditional Aboriginal life: Stolen Generations' to answer the following question.*  
What impact did government policies involving the Stolen Generation have on traditional Aboriginal culture?

### Did you know?

- 15,000 years ago, rising sea levels cut off various parts of Australia by water forming islands, including Tasmania. The people on those islands developed somewhat differently than the Aboriginal people of the mainland. Learn more about the Aboriginal people of Tasmania, here: <https://www.worldbookonline.com/student/article?id=ar548025>

### Learn more:

- Learn more about NAIDOC Week, a week that commemorates the history and culture of Australia's native peoples, here: <https://www.worldbookonline.com/student/article?id=ar756629>
- Learn more about the Stolen Generations and consider the impact government policies have had on Aboriginal people and their culture: <https://www.worldbookonline.com/student/article?id=ar750182>

## Aboriginal people of Australia Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. The ancestors of today's Aboriginal people arrived in Australia at least 50,000 years ago. Scientists believe that these first people came by boat from Southeast Asia.
2. The ability of Aboriginal people to live throughout the continent and through major climate changes shows that they had good skills in learning to adapt to new and changing environments.
3. Aboriginal people were nomadic hunter-gatherers, they travelled and found their food, water, and other resources by hunting or gathering.
4. Aboriginal people divided the Australian continent and its coastal waters into defined areas called *countries*. Each country was inhabited by a group of people called a *clan*. Each clan had a common ancestor, and clan considered one another family.
5. The idea of *country* has always been important for the Aboriginal people because a clan's country provided people with food and water. People had the duty to take care of their country, and they believed that their country had a duty of care to them, too.
6. When Europeans pushed Aboriginal people off their clan's country, they lost their security.
7. Clans were part of larger groups, often called *tribes*.
8. Tribes that spoke closely related dialects often grouped themselves together under a term that identifies their larger group, this is sometimes called a *nation*.
9. Initiation was a rite of passage of admission into Aboriginal society that children underwent when old enough.
10. Children then went onto learning law, adult skills, and the religious and practical knowledge that would enable them to become contributing adults and, eventually, respected elders.
11. Leadership within the clan, tribe, and nation depended on age and knowledge. Aboriginal people gained knowledge through experience and participation in religious ceremonies. As people gained experience and learned more about the country, the seasons, the behaviour of animals, and the locations of plants and water, they became elders.
12. The Aboriginal system of authority and leadership was organised to teach younger people and to keep troublemakers under control.
13. Aboriginal people ate a large variety of foods, including animals, eggs, fish, seeds, fruits, tubers, insects, nuts, gum, honey, and flower nectar.
14. Aboriginal people knew where to dig for water, and they knew the paths of underground rivers. Throughout the deserts and other dry areas, they dug wells. They knew which trees stored water in the roots or in hollows, and they knew what species of frogs stored water in their bodies. They sewed kangaroo skins to be watertight and constructed palm leaf containers, woven baskets, and large coolamons to store water.
15. Aboriginal people avoided collecting large numbers of tools because it was inconvenient to carry the tools as they travelled. Instead, they made a few tools that could do many different jobs.
16. *Firestick farming* is the Aboriginal method of burning the country. Burning the country at the correct time and in the correct way increased the productivity of many plants and the variety of animal habitats.
17. According to Aboriginal beliefs, ancestral beings created the world long ago during a period called the Dreaming or Dreamtime. The story of the Dreaming explains the creation of the present-day landscape, animals, plants, and people.
18. The Dreamings are ancestral beings that travelled across the land, they never died but merged with the natural world. They were shape shifters who could change back and forth between their human shape and their animal shape. They are immortal and live eternally in sacred sites.
19. The Dreaming tradition included a belief called totemism, which distinguishes tribes, clans, or families by linking them to a totem (natural object, usually a plant or animal). For example, one group of Aboriginal people is linked to the kangaroo totem, and is therefore, believed to be related to kangaroos.
20. Songline is one of the Aboriginal names for the route the Dreamings followed. When people performed the Dreaming ceremonies they tried to bring together people from many tribes along the songline and perform songs and dances that celebrated the Dreamings and renewed their power.
21. Aboriginal people believed that people were reincarnated after death. They might be reborn as an animal before coming back in human form, but they expected that death would not be final.

- 22.** To make paint, Aboriginal people crushed and ground red, yellow, black, and white pigments of varying shades and mixed them with water.
- 23.** Singing was an important part of Aboriginal life. Songs were sung in ceremonies, for good luck in hunting, to make a child grow strong, to make rain, or to make someone fall in love. There were songs for funerals and sorrow and grief. Songs also expressed the composer's thoughts or feelings at a particular time.
- 24.** Scientists have documented ancient trade by tracing the sources of particular types of stone used for tools. Some types of stone have been found hundreds of kilometres from their origin.
- 25.** Aboriginal children were taken away from their families and placed in special government institutions, missions or foster homes. Aboriginal children were not allowed to speak their own language or to learn their Dreaming religion and law. Government officials changed children's names and tried to prevent the children from finding their family and returning to their home country. Aboriginal children grew up not knowing their traditional culture.