

# THE RAINBOW SERPENT

## THE RAINBOW SERPENT

by Dick Roughsey

Themes: Australian Culture/Folktale

Grade Level: K-4

Running Time: 11 minutes, iconographic

### SUMMARY

This is the story of Goorialla, the Great Rainbow Serpent, who travels across Australia in search of his people.

When Goorialla finds his people, he is warmly welcomed. He teaches them to dress and dance. One night, during a storm, two boys seek shelter in Goorialla's tent. When Goorialla cannot accommodate them, he thinks to open his mouth and shelter them in his body. Worried that the rest of the tribe might be upset, Goorialla runs away with them.

When the tribe discovers Goorialla on a mountain top, they cut open his stomach and free the boys, who have turned into rainbow colored birds. Goorialla becomes very angry, and tears the mountain apart. This causes the death and injury of many tribespeople. The story ends with Goorialla vanishing into the sea, and as the tale goes, he continues to survive as a shooting star watching over all living things.

### OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about Australian culture.
- Children will learn about myths and their origins.
- Children will learn about the survival

techniques of Australian tribespeople.

### BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book, *THE RAINBOW SERPENT*, with children. Locate Australia on a map. Talk about how large a continent it is and how diverse the people are who live there - including the Aborigines.

Talk with children about the kinds of homes we live in, our food sources, the ways we protect ourselves. Have them compare these things with the life style of the tribespeople in the story. Ask:

- What would you have enjoyed most about living with the tribespeople?
- What would you have liked least?

Discuss the nature of myths, fairytales and folktales with children. Ask:

- Do you think the things that happen in fairytales could really happen? Why? Why not?
- What parts of the story seemed like make-believe?
- What parts seemed as if they really could have happened?

### AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Supply sheets of white construction paper, paint and scissors that children can use to create their own rainbow serpents. Later, talk about the slippery, sliding movement of these reptiles. Have children think of adjectives to describe their creations. Then help children use their descriptions to create

some slithery serpent poetry!

Review with children the survival techniques used by the tribespeople in the story that you discussed in the "Before Viewing" activities. Ask:

- What things do you think the tribespeople could have used to build other kinds of shelters?
- What do you think their weapons were made out of? Where might they go to look for food?
- How would they stay warm in cool weather?
- How would they protect themselves from dangerous animals and other tribespeople?

Talk with children about the flat plains area and the mountainous areas described in the story. Help children understand that terrain varies from region to region. Take a walk outdoors with children. Have them point out hilly, treed or flat areas surrounding the school. Encourage children to notice differences in the kinds of vegetation growing around the school area. Have children look for some of the different kinds of trees or hilly areas they might find near their own homes. Help children build an awareness of the environment that surrounds them.

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