Aboriginal people believe that in the very beginning, the spirits of their ancestors created the world and everything in it. Aboriginal Dreaming has nothing to do with the dreams that occur while we sleep. Instead, a person's Dreaming refers to his or her spiritual connection to the very beginning of all things. For Aboriginal people, the Dreaming spirits from the beginning of time are still active in the modern world. Through dancing, painting, singing, and storytelling, people renew their relationship with the spirits and the land.
Dreaming Stories
Modern Aboriginal people tell Dreaming stories about the beginning—a time before there were living things, when the land was flat and dark. As the Dreaming spirits moved through the landscape, they made land formations and living creatures. The spirits had the power to change shape and sometimes took the form of stars, rain, wind, or animals. Other Dreaming stories tell about sacred places and objects that Aboriginal people must treat with respect.

Totems
Animals such as kangaroos and honey ants served as totems—special symbols assigned to Aboriginal families or individuals. Totems helped determine the relationships between people and groups. For instance, groups with totem animals that were enemies could not come into contact with each other.

Aboriginal Christians
European missionaries brought Christianity to Australia in the 1700s and 1800s. Some Aboriginal people converted to Christianity and combined their traditional beliefs with Christian beliefs. For instance, many modern Aboriginal Christians believe that the God in the Bible is also the traditional Great Spirit, the being who gave Aboriginal people their land and law.

THREE SISTERS DREAMING
At the beginning of the world, seven Gundungurra sisters lived with their family at Katoomba near present-day Sydney. The sisters were giants. Three of them loved brothers from the neighboring Dharruk people, but ancestral law did not allow them to marry these men. The brothers attacked the Gundungurra people to claim the women by force. To protect the three sisters, the Clever Man took them to the top of a cliff and turned them into stone. He planned to return after the battle and change them back. But he was killed, and no one knew how to turn the three stones back into living women. The Gundungurra people believe that three rock formations (left) in their region are the stone sisters. The four other sisters went on to have children. That’s why some modern Gundungurra women—descendants of the sisters—are very tall. The Clever Man still watches over the stone sisters. He is known as Witch’s Falls.