

MORE ESSAYS

“*My Ancestors, the Aborigines*”

DAWN publishes below further essays submitted in the National Aborigines' Day essay competition.

These essays, not all of which won prizes, nevertheless are of a high standard, and give a good insight into the way Aboriginal children are thinking of themselves, their people and of current problems.

By PAULA GOREY, aged 12, Santa Teresa Mission, via Alice Springs

The Aborigines were the first people to live in Australia. They did not know about white men and they had their own laws and rules.

As the Aborigines had to get their food from the bush they were very good hunters and trackers. They made their own weapons for hunting and these were very good.

The boomerang was used to throw at birds and the spear was used to hunt kangaroo and emu. The kangaroo was very good food and my ancestors used to dig a hole in the ground and make a fire on top. This was a very good kind of oven.

While the men and boys were hunting the women and girls would also be out looking for “bush tucker”. Berries, yams, roots and eggs were found by the women and girls.

The Aborigines did not always work at hunting their food. At night they would build a big camp fire and then they would dance and sing.

At special times they would hold a corroboree, which is a big dance. Then the men would paint their bodies and dance. Some corroborees were only for men but some of them were for women and children, too.

My ancestors believed there were many spirits around and when someone died they thought some magic had been worked. Then they would try to find the evil person who had made someone die in the tribe.

Today my ancestors from the Arunta tribe nearly all live like white men. All the children go to school and are learning many things.

Lots of them want to be teachers, nurses and office workers when they finish school.

No one seems to want to lead the life that my ancestors did. ●

By CORAL EDWARDS, aged 13, of Cootamundra

I will start by asking the question, “Who were my ancestors?”

The Aborigines are Australian people of medium height with slender limbs, wavy hair, heavy eyebrows, deep-set eyes, brown hair and wide nostrils.

There are many theories on how the Aborigines came to Australia. One theory says that my ancestors are believed to have come from south-east Asia between ten and twenty thousand years ago. They travelled across the islands in bark canoes.

The longest journey between the islands was no more than fifteen to thirty miles. Simple types of water craft were used such as log rafts or bark canoes.

There were 68 tribes of Aborigines in New South Wales and about 680 tribes in Australia. In each tribe there is a number of local groups consisting of closely related men and their families among whom marriage is forbidden.

The women were the food collectors, particularly of plant products. The women also carried out most of the camp duties.

The men are hunters and fishermen. A council of elderly men is responsible for the general maintenance of tribal law and custom.

My ancestors were a stone-age people. Most of their implements were of stone. They were shaped for particular functions, and some of the functions they were used for were boring, chipping, cutting and so on.

The musical instruments were simple. They clapped sticks to furnish the time for dances.

In northern Australia a hollow tube up to 10 feet in length, called a didjeridoo, produces a droning noise when blown. A folded leaf buzzer was used in the south.

The spiritual ancestors of the mythological past includes the Fertility Mother and other ancestral women of Arnhem Land, great snake ancestors in the Kimberleys and Northern Territory bands, of human and animal totemic spirits in central Australia and sky heroes in eastern Australia.

There are a few Aborigines in Australia who are well known, such as Jimmy Little and Harold Blair. I think when I write this that one of the most famous men of all Australia is Albert Namatjira, the artist. His paintings will always be treasured. ●

By DOREEN BUGMY, aged 15, of Cootamundra

The Australian Aborigines are a race of people everyone should be proud of. I think that all people living in the whole world should be treated the same no matter what nationality they are.