

The First Sunrise (Australia)

The Dreamtime is a way for Australian Aborigines to explain their beliefs about the world and how it was created. It is the beginning of all of their knowledge.

Long ago during the Dreamtime, Earth was dark. There was no light and no heat anywhere. The Earth was cold and black. Clouds hung so low in the sky that they touched the ground and blocked

out the sun. The clouds were so low that Emu had to bend and Kangaroo couldn't hop. All of the animals had to crawl on their bellies. The only animal that was happy was the snake.

Eventually, the animals started to adapt to their dark world. Wombat was so tired of animals bumping into him that he dug a burrow into the ground. Wombats still live in burrows today.

Birds found life the hardest. There was no space for them to fly and they grew worried they would forget how. One of the smartest birds was Magpie. Magpie soon decided that she had had enough and wanted to do something.

Magpie hatched a simple plan. She would use a sturdy stick to push the clouds higher into the sky. Magpie grabbed the longest stick she could find and pushed as hard as she could. The stick wasn't long enough to reach the sky, but the clouds were lifted high enough for Emu to stand and Kangaroo to hop.

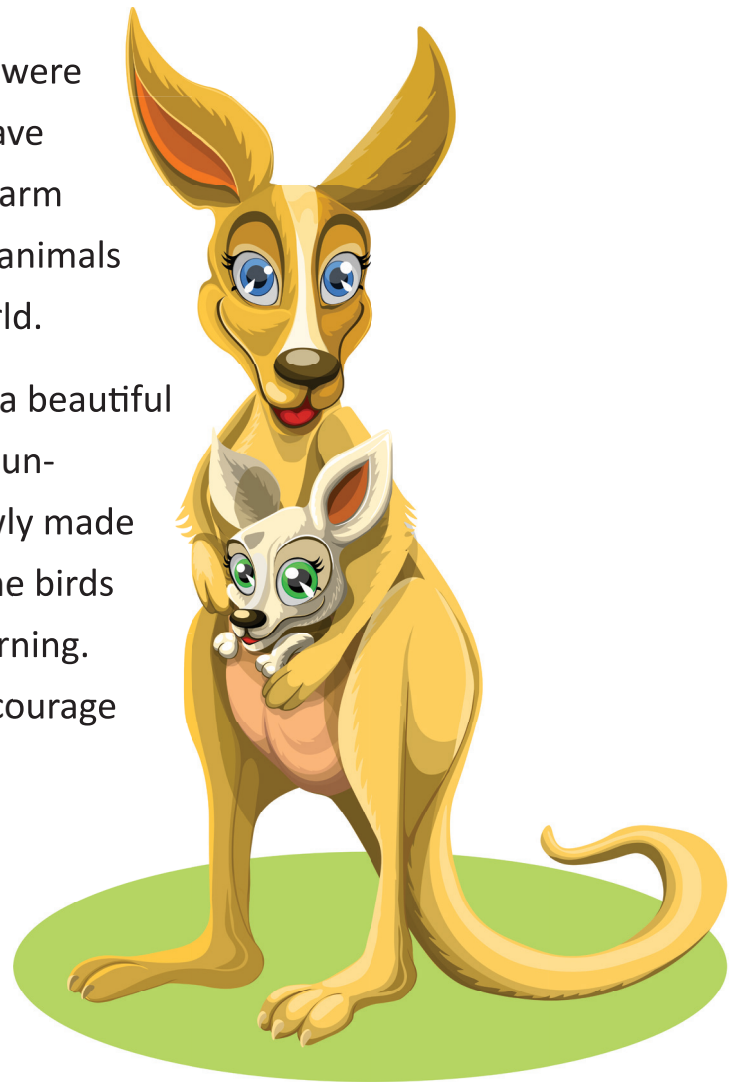
RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Why was the Earth dark to begin with?
2. Who couldn't hop?
3. Why do birds sing in the morning?
4. Who had the idea to lift the clouds?
5. How did the sunlight get through the clouds?

Now there was more space, the other birds joined in. They all grabbed sticks and started to join them together. The birds used their long stick to lever and push the clouds higher and higher.

They didn't stop pushing until the clouds were above the tallest mountain. Then, they gave it one last push and the sky split open. Warm sunlight flooded over the land. All of the animals sang out with happiness in their new world.

Magpie was so happy that she burst into a beautiful song. Her song was so cheerful that the Sun-Woman woke up from her sleep and slowly made her way across the horizon. This is why the birds sing their most beautiful songs in the morning. They must wake the Sun-Woman and encourage her to carry the sun across the world.



VIPERS QUESTIONS

I

Why were snakes happy?

V

Which sentence opener means "after some time"?

I

Why were the birds worried they wouldn't be able to fly?

V

Which word tells you that Magpie thought of a plan?

S

What could Emu do after Magpie used her first stick?

Answers:

1. Clouds were very low and blocked out the sun
2. Kangaroo
3. To wake the Sun-Woman and encourage her to carry the sun across the sky
4. Magpie
5. The sky split open

I: Because they slithered on their bellies anyway

V: Eventually

I: They thought they might forget because they couldn't do it

V: Hatched

S: Stand up