

1 Listen and read. Choose the correct words to complete the text.

▶ 00:00 04:00

In the beginning, before the world had been created, there were only the Dreaming. The Earth was flat and silent, without form or life. There were no mountains, lakes or valleys, and no animals to live in them. It was a time when our ancestors—supernatural beings who slept beneath the Earth's crust—woke up, broke through the ground and started to move across the uniform, barren landscape. As they traveled, they sang and told stories, conjuring into existence the world we know today: the Sun, the Moon and the stars; trees and plants; and every living creature—kangaroos, emus, terrifying goanna lizards and... beings. When their journey was over, they returned beneath the ground to sleep again.

Some special humans still tell of those travels in a series of songs and stories that recall the features of the new land and the values of the beings who created them: Every living creature and every part of the land is connected. Every plant and animal that exists today is linked to these original creation ancestors. And any living creature might also be related to us and carry the spirit of our forefathers.

In his community in the northwest of Australia, young Victor was to be one of these special storytellers, but he had never known his parents or grandparents, and he was overwhelmed with sadness. How could he be with them and learn their songs and stories? In which creatures were their spirits hiding? So one morning he set out, singing as best he could, and as he roamed, all the animals were drawn to his voice.

First, he came across a fierce-looking goanna. "Can you tell me anything about my family?" he asked. But the goanna shook its scaly head sadly. He did not carry the spirit of Victor's ancestors.

Then Victor reached the banks of a river, where two great fish eyes looked up at him. He asked the fish, a barramundi, the same question. But its eyes just filled with tears and it swam slowly away.

Following the course of the winding river, Victor met a kangaroo and an emu. They both wept when they heard of his loneliness, but they couldn't offer any help.

Onward he walked, and he discovered nothing until, collapsing with exhaustion, he whispered, "Will I never know my mother and father, and their parents, and all the generations that came before them? Must I live and die alone and unknown? Oh, if you can hear my cry, please reveal yourselves!"

Victor lay on his back and stared up at the sky. Although the air was still, two clouds suddenly shifted and swirled and took the form of human heads, heads that seemed to resemble his own. Then, out of the clouds, a flock of birds descended. They were brolgas, white cranes with great outstretched wings. The birds flew down and landed all around him.

Instantly, Victor knew that the spirits of his ancestors inhabited these birds, and that when he passed away, his spirit too would take the form of a brolga.

The kangaroo, emu, goanna, barramundi and all the other creatures he had asked along the way watched the brolgas dance around Victor, and they laughed and cheered for his happiness.