Section 4

Good morning, everyone. I've been invited to talk about my research project into Australlan Aboriginal rock paintings The Australian Aborigines have recorded both (1) ……. of their time on rock walls for many thousands of years. Throughout the long history of this tradition, new images have appeared and new painting styles have developed. And these characteristics can be used to (2) ……. Among these are what we call the Dynamic, Yam and Modern styles of painting.

One of the most significant characteristics of the different styles is the way that humans are depicted in the paintings. The more recent paintings show people in static poses. But the first human images to dominate rock art paintings, (3)……., were full of movement. These paintings showed people hunting and cooking food and so they were given the name 'Dynamic' to reflect this energy. It's quite amazing considering they were painted in such a simple stick-like form. In the Yam period, there was a movement (4)……. to a more naturalistic shape. However, they didn't go as far as the Modern style, which is known as 'x-ray' because it actually makes a feature of the internal skeleton as well as the organs of animals and humans. The Yam style of painting got its name from the fact that it featuted much curvier figures that (5) ……. called a yam, which is similar to a sweet potato. The Modern paintings are interesting because they include paintings at the time of the first contact with European settlers. Aborigines managed to convey the idea of the settlers' clothing by simply painting the Europeans without any hands, indicating the habit of standing with their hands in their pockets! (6)……. The more recent images tend to be life size or even larger, but the Dynamic figures are painted in miniature.

Aboriginal rock art also records the environmental changes that occurred over thousands of years. For example, we know from the Dynamic paintings that over 8,000 years ago, Aborigines would have rarely eaten fish and sea levels were (7)……. In fact, fish didn't start to appear in paintings until the Yam period along with shells and other m… the Yam Period

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of the Yam tradition also suggest that, during this time, the Aborigines moved away from animals as their main food source and began including vegetables in their diet, (8) …… Freshwater creatures didn't appear in the paintings until the Modern period from 4,000 years ago.

So, these paintings have already taught us a lot. But one image that (9)…… …… is known as the Rainbow Serpent. The Rainbow Serpent, which is the focus of my most recent project, gets its name from its snake or serpent-like body and it first appeared in the Yam period 4 to 6,000 years ago. Many believe it is a (10) ……, snake and crocodile. But we decided to study the Rainbow Serpent paintings to see if we could locate the animal that the very first painters based their image on.

The Yam period (11) …… the last ice age. This brought about tremendous change in the environment, with the sea levels rising and creeping steadily inland. This flooded many familiar land features and also caused a great deal of disruption to traditional patterns of life, hunting in particular. New shores were formed and totally different creatures would have washed up onto the shores. (12) …… of the Rainbow Serpent and found that the one creature that matches it most closely was the Ribboned Pipefish, which is a type of sea horse. This sea creature would have been a (13)…… …… the inland regions where the image is found and may have been the inspiration behind the early paintings.

So, at the end of the ice age there would have been enormous changes in (14)…… …… It's not surprising then, that the Aborigines linked this abundance to the new creatures they witnessed. Even today, Aborigines see the Rainbow Serpent as a symbol of creation, which is (15)…… ……in vegetation and the new life forms that featured when (16) …… ……

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