

## Speaking Through Icons

*An activity of "Why in the world are there so many languages?"*

Read **"Why in the world are there so many languages?"** (Story 16B, *What's Up* April 2020). The writers state, "Truthfully, we'll probably never know the origin of language but we do have a good idea of how different languages appear and change." As spoken language cannot be fossilised, it is hard to know when exactly humans started communicating with complex language. However, we do know that for thousands of years, our ancestors have been using symbols to represent words and concepts.

In Australia, aboriginal artists have, for generations, used symbols in their paintings to tell stories about their history and ancient culture. If you would like to view some of this aboriginal art, check out <https://japingkaaboriginalart.com/articles/aboriginal-art-symbols/>. Here are examples of aboriginal symbols and their meanings:

SYMBOL						
MEANING	campsite, fire	journeys, routes	eggs, fruit,	snake tracks, running water	Boomerang, hunting boomerang	Digging stick, spears
SYMBOL						
MEANING	two men sitting	two women sitting	stars/sun	heavy rain	forest	honey ant

1) Now it's your turn! Create your own symbols for things and activities at home.

SYMBOL					
MEANING					
SYMBOL					
MEANING					

- 2) Create an artwork that tells a story using the symbols you have created. Like the examples in the given link, you can repeat your symbols with as many colors and as often as you like.
- 3) Now, get someone at home to guess what you are trying to communicate through your art! Share your artwork with *What's Up* readers — email a photo or scan of it to [letters@whatsup.sg](mailto:letters@whatsup.sg). Remember to add your name, class, and school.