



Core units: Key understandings – Years 7–8

Illustration 2: Scale in physical geography

More authentic fieldwork

Trying to make fieldwork authentic in regard to scale in physical geography is difficult. It may well be more effective to include a number of different approaches to the studies of landforms in the field. For example, there is scope in the curriculum for an examination of the aesthetic, emotional, cultural and spiritual values that people place on landscapes and landforms.

The Gundungurra People related part of a Dreaming story to an anthropologist in the early 1900s. It concerns the battles between Gurangatch, a half-fish, half-reptile being, and Mirragan, a powerful tiger cat. These Burringilling, or legendary figures, could make rivers, burrow into rocks and perform supernatural acts.

These Burringilling battles or supernatural acts stretched over a large part of the river valleys now occupied by the Wollondilly and Cox Rivers in the Blue Mountains, NSW. The Burringilling left behind significant landforms that allowed Gundungurra People to navigate some 170 kilometres of riverine territory. For example, an outcrop of shiny granodiorite, named Slippery Rock, near Wombeyan, marked where a mighty battle took place. Gurangatch tunnelled into Wombeyan and Jenolan limestone caves, and resurfaced in a fertile patch of volcanic soil. Mirragan then built great quartzite walls along the western edge of the Blue Mountains to prevent Gurangatch's escape over the mountains into the headwaters of the Murray River system.

The story of the travels of Gurangatch and Mirragan etched a powerful mental map into the minds of the Gundungurra People. Landforms are part of their essence, part of their being.