**DEFINING THE DREAMING**

In the left column of the table you will find an Aboriginal definition of the Dreaming, and on the right a typical white person’s textbook definition. Highlight those aspects of the textbook definition that also form part of the Aboriginal definition.

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| **Aboriginal Definition** | **White Person’s Definition** |
| Aboriginal spirituality is the belief and the feeling within yourself that allows you to become part of the whole environment around you – not the built environment, but the natural environment ... Birth, life and death are all part of it, and you welcome each.  Aboriginal spirituality is the belief that all objects are living and share the same soul or spirit that Aborigines share. Therefore all Aborigines have a kinship with the environment. The soul or spirit is common – only the shape of it is different, but no less important.  Aboriginal spirituality is the belief that the soul or spirit will continue on after our physical form has passed through death. The spirit will return to the Dreamtime from where it came, it will carry our memories to the Dreamtime and eventually it will return again through birth, either as a human or an animal or even trees and rocks. The shape is not important because everything is equal and shares the same soul or spirit from the Dreamtime.  Aboriginal spirituality is not the equal of the European ideology of reincarnation. The Dreamtime is there with them, it is not a long way away. The Dreamtime is the environment that the Aborigine lived in, and still exists today, all around us. | The Dreaming (also referred to as “Dreamtime” holds the essence of truth of Aboriginal religious beliefs. Dreaming does not refer to a dream that one would have during the night. Instead, the Dreaming holds the Aboriginal view of creation: it is the beginning of everything – the beginning of time, the creation of life, the birth of humanity, and the ordering of all things. It is the remote past of the Spirit Ancestors or Spirit Beings or Ancestral Beings; it is the period, long ago, when Spirit-beings interacted with Aboriginal people. The past lives on in ceremonies that have been passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation for over 140,000 years – the time that the Aboriginal people have lived on this land called Australia.  For Aborigines, the Dreaming explains the origin of the universe, the workings of nature and the nature of humanity, the cycle of life and death. It shapes and structures Aboriginal culture by regulating kinship, ceremonial life, and the relationship between male and female with a network of obligations involving people, land, sea and spirits. It even affects the rights of Aboriginal people to land, through sacred sites.  With the Dreaming, the Creator, through the Spirit-Beings, shaped the land, making its mountains, valleys, hills, gullies, rivers, streams, flora and fauna. These are formed as a result of the action and interaction if Spirit-Beings. As a result the whole of creation is of spiritual significance. Sacred sites are places associated with Ancestral Beings. Aborigines see themselves as part of, and inextricably bound to, the rest of creation.  Dreaming is the centre of Aboriginal religion and life; it is the closest translation of the Aboriginal concept of how the world works. |

By looking at what you have highlighted, make a list of essential elements that should be included in a definition of the Dreaming.

Morrisey and co-authors (2001) define Dreaming as the past, the present and the future. Is this definition appropriate? Explain

