

Bull Roarer

The history of this toy has conflicting explanations as shown in the following quotes from various time periods.

This toy was originally used as “telegraph” or a “message-stick” among primitive peoples all over the world. The ancient Egyptians believed that the “loud rumbling sound would be answered by thunder” and “invoke the rain-gods and send water from the skies.” *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks*. (1901)

The bull roarer was used by the Australian and New Zealand natives, and the American Navajo, Zuni and Ojibwa tribes among others as a message device. *Current Literature* (1899)

“The ‘bull-roarer,’ a toy better known to English than American boys has just reappeared before the English public as the text of a discourse delivered recently by Mr. Tyler before the Royal Institute. . . For it is found always a sacred instrument used in celebrating religious mysteries, not only in ancient Greece, but in New Zealand, New Mexico, Australia, and Africa, and the question is, did it begin as a toy, and through the diabolical character of its noise come to be regarded as a suitable means of impressing such spiritual powers as could be summoned, or did it degenerate into a toy when familiarity had dulled the effect first produced by its use? Possibly the reader may recall a toy, the originator of which is unknown; a toy constructed simultaneously from Maine to Florida and from the Alleghenies to the Pacific slope by every boy. . . .” *Our Continent* (1882)