

# Basic Detail Report

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## Message Stick

### Date

mid 19th - early 20th Century

### Medium

Wood and pigment

### Description

Message sticks enabled important communications to be passed between various Aboriginal Australian groups. As there are hundreds of different languages and dialects

spoken, a common mechanism for communication was essential. The symbols and markings on the sticks were not a script to be read, but rather a mnemonic device for messengers. Messengers would use these symbols to accurately relay notices, invitations, requests and announcements to a translator. In addition, message sticks served as a type of passport. With it in hand, a messenger could safely pass through the lands of various nations and clan groupings without incident.

### Dimensions

6 1/2 × 1/2 × 1/2 in. (16.5 × 1.3 × 1.3 cm)