4 Australia (1750–1918): Colonisation and conflict

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 LINKS WITH OUR TIMES

On 29 May 2015 a Sydney Swans footballer, Adam Goodes, performed an Aboriginal war dance after kicking a goal. Goodes explained his dance by saying, 'It's Aboriginal Round. I'm proud to be Aboriginal and to represent.' While Goodes' actions were an important expression of his identity as an Aboriginal man, the dance sparked controversy.

In later matches opposition supporters booed Goodes, showing that racism was still a feature of Australian society. Many Australians joined the 'I stand with Adam' campaign in support of Goodes and in defense of his pride in his Aboriginal heritage. Nevertheless, the issue continued to raise some important questions about relations between Australians.

These questions are not new.

BIG QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the experiences of Aboriginal Australians between the late eighteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century?
2. What policies did the colonisers adopt towards Aboriginal peoples?
3. What were the consequences of the European presence for Aboriginal peoples? Were these intended or unintended?
4. How did Aboriginal people resist the occupation of their lands? How significant was this resistance?
5. In what other ways did Aboriginal peoples respond to the European presence?
6. How were other non-European people treated in Australia?

STARTER QUESTIONS

1. Australia's national day, Australia Day, is celebrated each year on 26 January. What do we celebrate on this day?
2. Why might Aboriginal Australians object to celebrating what this day commemorates?
3. Do you think Australia should choose a different national day? If so, what would it be called? When would it be held?
4. How would you feel if a foreign power took control of Australia?
4.2 Examining the evidence

4.2.1 How do we know about race relations in colonial Australia?

In this topic you will study the consequences of contact between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans in Australia up to the early twentieth century. Some consequences were intended and others were unintended. In both cases, they were usually disastrous for Australia’s Aboriginal peoples. Non-European immigrants also suffered discrimination during this period. Most hostility was directed against the Chinese who came to work on the goldfields from the 1850s, but there was also strong prejudice against Pacific Islanders who were brought over to work on Queensland’s sugar plantations.

4.2.2 Written sources

Most of our written sources for these events, including official reports, diaries, letters and newspaper articles, derive from the colonisers. This means that for many events we have heard only one side of the story. We have to be wary of bias in such sources. However, it is important to remember that even the most biased sources can be useful because of what they might tell us about the attitudes of the people who created them.

We also need to be aware of gaps in our evidence. When settlers were killed by Aboriginal people, such killings were recorded and usually punished by white authorities. Most killings of Aboriginal people by settlers went unrecorded and unpunished, or were recorded in ways that distorted the truth.

We should not assume that all Europeans saw these events in the same way. Among those who came to Australia in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were people who recognised the injustice suffered by Aboriginal peoples and other non-Europeans and who were angered by it.

SOURCE 1 A letter from Arthur Phillip, the first governor of New South Wales, to the Marquis of Lansdowne in England

My Lord

... the few extracts from my journal, is all the information I am able to give your Lordship, at present, of the Natives; who never come to us & with whom I have never been able to remain but a very short time ...

It has been my determination from the time I landed, never to fire on the Natives, but in a case of absolute necessity, & I have been so fortunate as to have avoided it hitherto ... They do not in my opinion want [lack] personal Courage, they very readily place a confidence & are, I believe, strictly honest amongst themselves ...

A Phillip, Sydney Cove, July 3d. 1788

SOURCE 2 From Captain John Hunter’s Journal (1793), in which he described contacts in the new settlement’s first week. Hunter was the second governor of New South Wales.

In the different opportunities I have had of getting a little acquainted with the natives, who reside in and about this port, I ... think that it will be no very difficult matter ... to conciliate their friendship and confidence ... whenever we have laid aside our arms, and have made signs of friendship, they have always advanced unarmed ... I am inclined to think, that by residing some time amongst them, or near them, they will soon discover that we are not their enemies; a light they no doubt considered us in on our first arrival.

4.2.3 Oral history

For some events we have records that were handed down by word of mouth through generations of Aboriginal people. These records tell of loss of land, massacres and other injustices. In many cases there is other evidence to support such records.
Visual records

Because Aboriginal art was mainly concerned with spiritual beliefs we have few Aboriginal artworks that record contacts and conflict with Europeans. The fate of Aboriginal peoples did not interest most European artists. However, some paintings and drawings by European artists do provide useful evidence. From the mid-nineteenth century we also have photographic evidence.

**SOURCE 3** *The annual meeting of the native tribes at Parramatta, New South Wales, the Governor meeting them*, a watercolour painting by Augustus Earle, c. 1826. From 1814, under Governor Macquarie, Aboriginal people were invited to annual feasts and conferences at Parramatta, near Sydney. Hundreds of Aboriginal people attended the gatherings, which continued into the 1830s.

**SOURCE 4** *The Persecuting White Men*, a lithograph thought to be made by George Hamilton between 1848 and 1858.
SOURCE 5 A scene in South Australia by Alexander Schramm (1813–1864)

SOURCE 6 Australian Aborigines — War. The image was published in The Illustrated Melbourne Post on 27 May 1867. The caption alongside it read, ‘Fortunately, outrages of this kind are now almost unknown.’
4.2 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

1 SOURCE 1 is an extract from a letter by Governor Phillip less than six months after he arrived in Australia.
   a What does Phillip write about how he intends to treat Aboriginal people?
   b What impressions had he formed of Aboriginal people?

2 In SOURCE 2 what does Captain Hunter say about the Aboriginal people he had encountered?

3 What does Hunter hope will be the future for European relations with Aboriginal people?

4 What does the scene shown in SOURCE 3 suggest about relations between the Europeans and Aboriginal people?

5 Describe the scenes in SOURCES 4 and 6. Explain what these sources suggest about the reasons for the violence.

6 Describe the scene in SOURCE 5. Identify elements of the image that indicate friendly relationships between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples.

7 SOURCE 7 is a famous image of Melbourne in 1839, only four years after the Europeans’ arrival in Victoria. What does this image suggest about the relationships between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples?

8 Compare and contrast SOURCES 1–7, using the following questions as a guide.
   a Identify what the sources suggest about the relationships between the Europeans and Aboriginal peoples.
   b How might you explain the variety of relationships they show?
   c How useful is each source in helping us understand the relationships between Europeans and Aboriginal Australians? Choose two or three sources and explain their strengths and limitations. Discuss in class what makes a source valuable.
   d Explain what the sources indicate about the consequences of the European presence for Australia’s Aboriginal peoples. Identify one intended and one unintended consequence. Combine your answers in a class discussion.
4.3 Two civilisations meet

4.3.1 The Europeans arrive
For tens of thousands of years before British colonisation Aboriginal Australians lived undisturbed in a range of different landscapes and climates. The seeds of conflict were sown soon after the first colonists arrived because the British authorities had no understanding of the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and their land. Instead, the British imposed their own understanding of land use and ideas of ownership.

Some Aboriginal Australians had contact with people from overseas from at least the start of the seventeenth century. Macassans (from Indonesia) had often visited Australia’s northern coast and some Torres Strait Islands for fishing and trade. Also, some Dutch and English explorers made landings in Australia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The last was Captain James Cook, who charted the east coast in 1770. Cook named the country New South Wales and claimed it for the English king, George III.

SOURCE 1 Aboriginal languages map
They may appear to some to be the most wretched people on earth, but in reality they are far happier than we Europeans . . . [The] earth and sea . . . furnish them with all the things necessary for Life . . . [They] live in a fine Climate and enjoy a very wholesome Air, so that they have very little need of Clothing . . . [They] . . . set no Value upon anything we gave them . . . this in my opinion argues that they think themselves provided with all the necessaries of Life.

SOURCE 2 From Captain James Cook’s journal of his first expedition (1770)

SOURCE 3 A colonial artist’s depiction of the response of the Aboriginal people of Botany Bay to the arrival of Captain James Cook in 1770. This colour lithograph was made in 1872.

4.3.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Examine the map of Aboriginal Australia at the start of this topic. What does the map tell us about the Aboriginal peoples’ ownership of land? If there were clear boundaries and territories amongst Aboriginal peoples, how might they have reacted to the European presence? Discuss this issue in class.
2. Describe Cook’s reactions to Aboriginal people in SOURCE 2.
3. Study SOURCE 3. What does it suggest about Cook’s landing at Botany Bay?
4. As you work your way through this topic, draw the places that are discussed on a blank map of Australia.

4.3.2 Occupation begins

The First Fleet from England to colonise Australia is believed to have carried nearly 1500 men, women and children, most of them convicts. Its commander, Captain Arthur Phillip, was to be the first British governor of New South Wales. He explored Port Jackson (Sydney Harbour) and founded the first British settlement there on 26 January 1788.

Eight days earlier the Cadigal Aboriginal people had seen the British fleet at Botany Bay. They had also witnessed the arrival of two French ships commanded by La Perouse. The French fired upon an Aboriginal band in February but sailed away on 10 March. The local people could not have known that the arrival of these strange Europeans would eventually lead to the end of their sole ownership of a continent that they had enjoyed for 60 000 years.
‘Respecting Natives’

New South Wales was founded as a penal colony. Some historians think that it was just a dumping ground for Britain’s unwanted convicts, some consider it a strategy to exploit the continent’s resources, while others think that it was a second chance for those who had broken the law. Despite the many possible reasons, there was no doubt that the early colonial governors had wide powers, similar to those of someone controlling a prison. Their orders from Britain were to cultivate friendly relations with Aboriginal people and to offer them the protection of British law. In 1807 the third Governor of New South Wales, P. G. King, wrote a memo for his successor titled ‘Respecting Natives’. In this advice he stated that he had been unwilling to force the Aboriginal people to work because he regarded them as the ‘real Proprietors [owners] of the Soil’. However, Governor King had also given the settlers permission to ‘fire on any natives they see’. The Europeans’ fear of Australia’s Aboriginal peoples, as well as their desire to possess the land, often became more important than their intentions of respect.

A wasteland?

Aboriginal lifestyles varied widely, as did the ways in which different Aboriginal language groups managed the land. In his recent book The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia, the historian Bill Gammage describes how Aborigines did much more than just wander as nomads: ‘They travelled to known resources, and made them not merely sustainable, but abundant, convenient and predictable.’

However, the colonists did not acknowledge this management of the land or the variations in lifestyles, even when they became aware that Aboriginal peoples had a strong attachment to the land and a clear sense of ownership.

The British saw only that the land was not used in a European way; that is, it was not productively ‘farmed’ as they saw it. So they described Australia as a wasteland, an important concept in British law that described unoccupied or unproductive land that could be taken without asking for permission. This understanding would be expressed late in the nineteenth century as terra nullius, a Latin term for ‘nobody’s land’ that would be used frequently in the legal and political debates about land rights in modern Australia.

As far as the colonists were concerned, however, they needed food for farming and they desired the wealth that could be produced by grazing sheep for wool. Both activities required the taking of Aboriginal land. If they could justify this by arguing that they were ‘making wasteland productive’, the colonists could do so with a clear conscience. There was often little consideration or understanding that this was taking away not only access to sacred sites but also the food and water sources from Aboriginal communities, many of whom were reduced to starvation.

4.3.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What were Governor King’s attitudes to local Aboriginal people?
2. Explain what the British understood by the term wasteland.
3. Why was the idea of the Australian continent as a wasteland, or terra nullius, so significant for the British colonists and Australia’s Aboriginal peoples?

4.3.3 Culture clash

Before long the people of the main language groups around Sydney — the Darug, Kuringgai and Dharawal people — saw the new arrivals clearing land, fencing waterholes and hunting grounds, fishing without permission and trampling around sacred sites. They were breaking laws that Aboriginal people had lived by for thousands of years. They were clearly invaders, not visitors, and were acting as if they had a right to occupy the land without negotiating with the rightful owners.

For their part, Europeans had a range of reactions to Aboriginal people. In line with the ideas of the time, the more educated Europeans tended to see Aboriginal people as ‘noble savages’, primitive people who lived in harmony with the natural world (see SOURCE 4). However, most...
of the new arrivals were uneducated convicts and soldiers who probably feared the people whose land they had entered. These Europeans could not understand Aboriginal kinship systems or why they did not behave like Europeans and have farms, towns and churches.

The British did not consider the fact that different parts of the country belonged to different language groups. They assumed that Aboriginal people could simply move on to another area when their land was taken. Later, when Europeans gained some understanding of such matters, they continued taking land regardless.

**SOURCE 4** A View of Sydney Cove, New South Wales, engraved by Frances Jukes in 1804

**SOURCE 5** First Government House, Sydney, a watercolour painted by John Eyre around 1807
4.3.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What different ideas about Aboriginal Australians did educated and uneducated Europeans hold?
2. What might the local Aboriginal peoples have thought about the actions of the Europeans after their arrival at Sydney Cove? Discuss their possible responses in class.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3. What do SOURCES 4 and 5 tell us about the changes that Europeans made to the country of Aboriginal peoples?
4. What do the sources suggest about the differences between European and Aboriginal peoples and their ways of living?
5. What do these images reveal about relations between the two groups?
6. Explain what you think the artists thought about the place of Aboriginal peoples in colonial society.

4.3.4 Early encounters

In May 1788 Aborigines killed two convicts at Rushcutters Bay, and there were several other clashes. At first Governor Phillip was willing to blame the convicts rather than the Aboriginal people for the violence.

Phillip wanted to develop contacts between cultures. When Aboriginal people continued to avoid the settlement, he resorted to kidnapping Aborigines in the hope that these individuals could be influenced to encourage their people to accept British ways. Arabanoo was the first to be captured, but within six months he died of smallpox. In November 1789 Bennelong and Colebee were captured. Colebee escaped but Bennelong was later sent to England. Tragically, on his return to the colony in 1795 he was unable to fit into either Aboriginal or European society. He died in 1813.

SOURCE 6 From David Collins, An Account of the English Colony of New South Wales. The event described occurred in March 1788.

Several convicts came in from the woods; one in particular dangerously wounded with a spear ... these people denied giving any provocation to the natives; it was, however, difficult to believe them; they well know the consequences that would attend any acts of violence on their part ... any act of cruelty to the natives being contrary to his Majesty's ... intentions.

SOURCE 7 From a report of events in January 1800 by Governor John Hunter

Two native boys have lately been most barbarously murdered by several of the settlers at the Hawkesbury River, not withstanding orders on this subject have been repeatedly given pointing out in what circumstances only they were warranted in punishing with such severity.

Rising tensions

In the first few decades of the colony, tensions grew on both sides. Aboriginal people were shot at when they crossed European farmland to hunt and gather food. But these farms had been established by taking Aboriginal land. In retaliation, Aboriginal warriors attacked European settlers and convicts. More and more Europeans arrived and ever more Aboriginal people died of smallpox and other introduced diseases, including whooping cough and influenza.

SOURCE 8 From the Sydney Gazette, 25 June 1814

The mountain natives have lately become troublesome to the occupiers of remote grounds. Mr. Cox's people at Mulgoa have been several times attacked within the last month and compelled to defend themselves with their muskets, which the assailants seemed less in dread of than could possibly have been expected. On Sunday last, Mr. Campbell's servants at 'Shancomore' were attacked by nearly 400.
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completely eradicating the yam daisy (murrnong), one of the most nutritious and plentiful foods

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thousands of deaths over the next hundred years: influenza, tuberculosis, typhoid, measles and even leprosy posed a fatal danger to Aboriginal communities. As populations were decreasing, sexually transmitted infections also affected the communities’ abilities to reproduce. In some parts of Australia, Aboriginal populations decreased by as much as 80% and two-thirds of these deaths were due to European diseases.

The land itself was also changed dramatically. Within 100 years of the arrival of the First Fleet, more than 100 million sheep were eating their way across Australia, consuming native herbs and grasses, displacing traditional Aboriginal food sources (such as kangaroo) and almost completely eradicating the yam daisy (murrnong), one of the most nutritious and plentiful foods before European occupation. The hard hooves of sheep and cattle also compacted the soil while other introduced animals (such as rabbits) also created problems, driving some native animals to extinction.

Aboriginal communities had occupied the continent of Australia for thousands of generations and had carefully managed its resources, looking after the land and ensuring the survival of their own society and customs. Their negotiation with British settlers, and especially their ability to resist the imposition of European society, was severely weakened by these dramatic changes to the land and the impact of disease on their communities.

4.3.5 A landscape and society transformed

Whenever British settlers arrived in the territory of an Aboriginal community, the traditional custodians not only had to deal with the presence of the new people but also the changes that occurred. Introduced animals, plants, weeds and diseases devastated the land and its people.

Aboriginal people had lived in isolation for tens of thousands of years and had no immunity to the diseases that had developed in Europe and Africa. The first major epidemic around Sydney was smallpox in 1789 and the first colonists estimated that around half of Sydney’s Aboriginal population died. There is also evidence that the disease travelled into Aboriginal communities that had not even had contact with the Europeans. Captain David Collins observed in 1803 that some of the Aborigines he met in Port Phillip Bay near Sorrento had scars similar to those caused by smallpox, despite the fact that those men had not seen Europeans before.

It was not only smallpox that was deadly. A range of other European diseases also caused thousands of deaths over the next hundred years: influenza, tuberculosis, typhoid, measles and

UNCORRECTED

In this extract from his journal of 10 April 1816, Governor Lachlan Macquarie gave his reasons for sending expeditions to crush Aboriginal resistance in that year.

I therefore, tho’ very unwillingly, felt myself compelled from a . . . sense of public duty . . . to inflict terrible . . . punishment upon them without further loss of time; as they might construe any further forbearance or lenity [leniency] on the part of this Government [as] fear or cowardice.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Using SOURCES 6, 7, 8 and 9 as your evidence:
   a Describe the range of attitudes of colonial authorities toward Aboriginal peoples.
   b Explain what the sources suggest about the changing nature of the relations between Aboriginal peoples and the colonists. Make sure you note the date of each source.

1 Describe how the Aboriginal peoples’ traditional food sources were affected by the arrival of the Europeans.

4.3 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

1. Working with a partner, find other examples of colonial art that depict Aboriginal peoples. Try the works of Augustus Earle, William Bradley, Joseph Lycett, John Eyre, Benjamin Duterrau or S. T. Gill.
   a. Using specific examples from these works of art, comment on whether colonial artists had a negative or sympathetic view of Aboriginal people.
   b. Do these works of art have a value in helping us to understand the past?
   Support your answer with examples.
   2. Working in a small group, find more images of Cook’s landing at Botany Bay in 1770 and compare them to SOURCES 2 and 3. For each of your images, consider:
      a. What does it suggest about the landing?
      b. How does it portray Cook?
      c. What does it say about Australia’s Aboriginal peoples?

3. Do the images support the idea that Cook’s landing in 1770 was a significant event in our history? Choose one or two images to present to the class with your conclusions.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

4. Which image best expresses your own view of Cook’s landing? Why?

4.4 Resistance

4.4.1 Pemulwuy

Many stories about the conflict between European colonists and Aboriginal people suggest that it was very one-sided. However, although Aboriginal people may not have had the guns of the Europeans, or often their manpower, they did not lack courage or skill. Their bush skills, for example, could not be matched by the Europeans and in many instances the resistance of Aboriginal peoples caused the Europeans great fear and anxiety. Here are the stories of two Aboriginal men who fought back.

The Bidjigal warrior Pemulwuy, sometimes called the Rainbow Warrior, belonged to the Eora language group (the coastal area in Sydney). Between 1790 and 1802, he led many attacks against colonial farms and settlements, some of which were highly organised, large-scale guerrilla operations. These raids were probably motivated by hunger or as ‘payback’ for atrocities committed by Europeans. He and his men fought fiercely in a battle in 1797 near the newly settled town of Parramatta. Seriously wounded, Pemulwuy was put in leg irons and taken to hospital for treatment. He escaped the following month. Many of his people believed that firearms would not kill him.

SOURCE 1. Pimbloy: Native of New Holland in a canoe of that country, a print from an engraving by S. J. Neele. The man in the picture is believed to be Pemulwuy. Despite being continually sought by soldiers, Pemulwuy kept eluding them. He survived repeated wounds. In one attack, he was hit by seven bullets. Some Aboriginal people believed he escaped by turning himself into a bird.

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Governor King became increasingly frustrated by Pemulwuy. He offered rewards, including a free pardon, to any convict who would bring him his head. That happened in 1802; Pemulwuy was murdered. His decapitated head was sent to England to be studied by scientists. They had heard a lot about the native Australians, but had never seen one. Although glad he was dead, Governor King had a grudging respect for Pemulwuy. He said of him: ‘Altho’ a terrible pest to the colony, he was a brave and independent character and an active, daring leader of his people’.

**4.4.1 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Explain why both British and Aboriginal people might have considered Pemulwuy to be a heroic leader.

2. What might have motivated Pemulwuy to engage in violence against the Europeans?

**4.4.2 Yagan**

Yagan was part of the Nyungar tribe of south-western Western Australia. A tall man (described as being over 1.8 metres), he was both feared and admired by the British colonists.

At first, his tribe lived in harmony with the Europeans, who had established a colony on the Swan River in 1829. However, arguments soon arose over land and resources. The British mistook the Nyungar tradition of burning the land as an act of aggression. In 1831 a Nyungar was shot while taking potatoes from a settler’s garden. The settler saw it as theft; the Nyungar would have seen it as taking the land’s resources, to which he was entitled. Yagan sought revenge for this killing. After more battles, a reward was offered for his head.

**SOURCE 2** This statue of Yagan was erected on Herrison Island in the Swan River.

When Yagan was finally captured, a European named Robert Lyon fought hard to spare his life. He admired Yagan’s courage and wished to study him. Yagan was exiled to a small rocky island,

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Until recently, the remains of many Aboriginal Australians were still held in several British museums, causing great distress to Aboriginal communities who believe the souls of their ancestors cannot rest until their bodies are returned. In recent years, some British museums have commenced the process of returning such remains to their communities.
but escaped after six weeks. The colonists were angry about this; as punishment, they killed Yagan’s father and brother, and increased the reward on Yagan’s head.

For 12 months Yagan managed to avoid capture, continuing to fight for his people. Then, in July 1833, he approached two shepherds he knew, asking for flour. When his back was turned, one of them, William Keats, shot him. A reward was given for the killing of Yagan, but the editorial of *The Perth Gazette* described it as a ‘wild and treacherous act’: ‘We are not vindicating [forgiving] the outlaw, but, we maintain it is revolting to hear this lauded [praised] as a meritorious [good] deed.’

Yagan’s head was sent to England in 1835. The hair was combed, and black and red cockatoo feathers were tied to the head as decoration. It was exhibited in Liverpool until 1964 when it was buried in Everton Cemetery. In 1997, almost 165 years after being sent to England, Yagan’s head was returned to Australia for a proper burial.

### 4.4.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Why was Yagan both feared and admired?
2. What might have motivated Yagan to engage in violence against the Europeans?

### 4.4 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

1. What do SOURCES 1, 2 and 3 suggest about the respect these men have generated?

**DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

2. Look at SOURCE 4 below. It was taken on 3 March 2005 in the North Head Sydney Harbour National Park. The remains of a number of Aboriginal people that have been handed back to their people are being buried.

**SOURCE 4**

- **a** How do you think the Aboriginal people in the photograph might be feeling?

3. a. From the list of adjectives (describing words) below, select those you think most European colonists in the early nineteenth century might have used to describe people like Pemulwuy and Yagan. Then select those most Aboriginal people might have used to describe them.

   - troublesome
   - insubordinate
   - wild
   - brave
   - violent
   - fearless
   - savage
   - rebellious
   - bold
   - clever
   - uncontrollable
   - courageous
   - irritating
   - noble
   - intelligent
   - motivating

   b. Write two paragraphs about one of these Aboriginal men from each point of view. Build your adjective word choices into what you say.

**ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT**

4. Explain whether you think there is any value in recognising the lives of people like Pemulwuy and Yagan with monuments or statues.

5. What do the examples of Pemulwuy and Yagan suggest about the possible causes of violence on the Australian frontier?
4.5 Tragedy in Van Diemen’s Land

4.5.1 A people destroyed

In 1816 Aboriginal resistance around Sydney was crushed by military expeditions sent by Governor Macquarie. By this time British settlements had already been founded beyond the Sydney area. In 1803 and 1804 the settlements of Hobart Town and Port Dalrymple (later Launceston) were established in Van Diemen’s Land, which became a separate colony in 1825.

There is no reliable evidence of how many Aboriginal people lived in Tasmania before colonisation. The most common estimate is between 4000 and 7000 people. But by 1832 there were just 203 survivors and by 1856, when Van Diemen’s Land was renamed Tasmania, there were even fewer. Some historians regard what happened there as genocide (the deliberate wiping out of a race). So complete was the destruction of Tasmania’s tribes that today’s surviving Aboriginal Tasmanians are mostly the descendants of Aboriginal women who were kidnapped and enslaved by white settlers. How could almost an entire population disappear in such a short time?

Hundreds of Aboriginal Tasmanians were killed in 1803, when they attempted to stop soldiers and convicts building huts near the present site of Hobart. Over the next few years, gangs of escaped convicts raided Aboriginal camps, killing men and kidnapping women. There were killings and kidnappings by lawless kangaroo hunters, sealers and whalers. European diseases also took a heavy toll. Another problem for the first Tasmanians was that whites slaughtered the native animals that were their main source of food. There were reports of shepherds being speared and attacks on settlers’ huts. Settlers often shot any Aboriginal people who came near their dwellings.

War in the 1820s

Official government policy was to treat Aboriginal Tasmanians with friendship but, by the 1820s, there was a state of war in eastern Tasmania. In 1828 Governor Arthur ordered Aboriginal people out of all settled districts. In 1830 more than two thousand soldiers, convicts and settlers were formed into lines for a drive to capture all the Aboriginal people in the area of conflict or drive them through the narrow strip of land that forms Eaglehawk Neck and into the Tasman Peninsula, where they could be kept away from the settlers. Despite the scale of this operation, only two Aborigines were captured.

Two historians’ perspectives

Keith Windschuttle and Henry Reynolds are two Australian historians who disagree about the fate of the Aboriginal people of Tasmania. Brief extracts of their views are below.


The Aborigines were never starving or even seriously deprived of traditional food . . . How many Aborigines died violently at the hands of colonists in Van Diemen’s Land? . . . Over the entire period from 1803 to 1831, they [Aborigines killed by colonists] average just four deaths a year . . . far fewer than the colonists who died at Aboriginal hands . . .

The orthodox story is that Aboriginal society was devastated by the arrival of the British colonizers . . . [We] should regard the total pre-colonial Aboriginal population of Tasmania as less than 2000 . . . Hence it was not surprising that when the British arrived, this small, precarious society quickly collapsed . . .

SOURCE 2 From Reynolds, Henry (1995) Fate of a Free People, Penguin, pp. 4, 81–2, 185

How many Aborigines were killed by the settlers? We will never know with any certainty . . . There is no doubt that in the earliest years of settlement from 1804 to 1824 the Europeans took more lives than the Aborigines. But in the period of the Black War — from 1824 to 1831 — the mortality rate on each side was more even: perhaps somewhere between 150 and 250 Tasmanians were killed in conflict with the Europeans after 1824 (with another 100 to 150 dying before that date), while they killed about 170 Europeans . . .

It seems very likely that the mortality rate on Flinders Island was merely a continuation of a catastrophic pattern of death [from diseases] which had begun even before the first permanent settlements in 1803 and 1804 . . . As Robinson traveled across Tasmania he was told by his Aboriginal companions of whole communities, which had become extinct.
Exile, disease and despair

From 1829 to 1834, George Augustus Robinson, a Methodist lay preacher, working on behalf of the government, travelled among the survivors. Robinson believed that they would be wiped out if they remained in Tasmania and he convinced some of them to agree to what they believed would be a temporary move to an island off the Tasmanian coast. They were deceived. Between 1821 and the early 1840s survivors from many different language groups were moved to Flinders Island, where they were guarded and forced to wear European clothes and to attend sermons on Christianity. By 1847 most had died of disease and despair. Forty-seven survivors were resettled at Oyster Bay near Hobart but they continued to die. From 1869 Truganini was the only survivor at Oyster Bay. She died in 1876.
The [Aboriginal] children have witnessed the massacre of their parents and their relations carried away into captivity by these merciless invaders, their country has been taken from them and the Kangaroos, their chief subsistence, have been slaughtered wholesale for the sake of filthy lucre [money]. Can we wonder then at the hatred they bear to the white inhabitants? . . . We should make atonement for the misery we have [caused] the original proprietors of this land.

SOURCE 4 From journals written by George Augustus Robinson in the 1830s

SOURCE 5 Mount Wellington and Hobart Town from Kangaroo Point, painted by John Glover (England 1767–Australia 1849) in 1834, oil on canvas, 76.25 × 152.4 cm. Glover was in Hobart in 1831–32, when Robinson brought in the last of the people of the Big River and Oyster Bay regions. Just 10 days after arriving in Hobart, they were shipped to Flinders Island.

4.5.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 What were the consequences of the European arrival in Tasmania for Aboriginal Tasmanians?
2 Identify the two ways that it could be said that a state of war existed in Tasmania in the 1820s.
3 Explain what Windschuttle says about the population loss of Tasmania’s Aboriginal people.
4 In what ways does Reynolds provide a different point of view to Windschuttle?
5 Examine SOURCE 3 carefully. What was the message of this poster to the people of Tasmania?

4.5 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1 Suggest some reasons why historians disagree on this issue.
2 Read SOURCE 4. For which interpretation in SOURCES 1 and 2 could this source provide supporting evidence?
3 The poster (SOURCE 3) was intended to tell Aboriginal people that they had the same protection as Europeans under British law. In what ways did British law fail Tasmania’s Aboriginal peoples? Explain why you think it did fail.
4 Look closely at SOURCE 5. It depicts the Oyster Bay and Big River people who came into Hobart to celebrate a negotiated peace. Considering all the sources in this section, explain why the history of Tasmania’s Aboriginal peoples is significant for all Australians.
5 Explain why the arrival of the Europeans was such a disaster for Tasmania’s Aboriginal peoples.
4.6 1835: Conquest — The great land rush to Port Phillip

4.6.1 ‘Australia Felix’ — the southern land of happiness

The year 1835 is not one that is celebrated, commemorated or even much discussed in Australian history. Yet this year marked a significant turning point in the European occupation of Australia. For years, the woolgrowers of Tasmania had thought about increasing their flocks and they looked across Bass Strait to the Port Phillip District (now known as Victoria), a place that had seen no permanent European colonists. It seemed open, available and free for the taking.

Businessmen seeking profit in the wool industry, and the British government’s approval of this pursuit, started a rush for land unequalled in world history. Frantically competing with one another, ‘squatters’ raced to occupy the open grasslands of Victoria, moving supplies and stock at an amazing rate. By 1838 there were already 300 000 sheep in the district, a number that would rise to more than a million by 1841 and 5 million by 1851. Determined on expansion and profit, these men seemed to have little concern for the Aborigines of Port Phillip and their land. This pattern of occupation was copied across the entire continent of Australia. As trails were forged inland, squatters took more Aboriginal land. Trees were cut down to clear land for grazing and native animals were shot as pests. In some areas Aboriginal food supplies were destroyed. Many Europeans regarded the land they gained as their own and they were reluctant to allow the original owners to use it for hunting, gathering or ceremonies.

**SOURCE 1** From 1835: The founding of Melbourne and the Conquest of Australia, by James Boyce, published in 2011

In 1835 an illegal squatter camp was established on the banks of the Yarra River. This brazen act would shape the history of Australia as much as would the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, because it was now that the continent was fully open to conquest … Melbourne’s birth, not Sydney’s settlement, signalled the emergence of European control over Australia … Between 1835 and 1838 alone, more land and more people were conquered than in the preceding half century. By the end of the 1840s, squatters had seized nearly twenty million hectares of the most productive and best watered Aboriginal homelands, comprising most of the grasslands in what are now Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and southern Queensland.

**SOURCE 2** Country NW of tableland, Aug 22, by S. T. Gill
4.6.2 Batman arrives

Victoria has a distinct and unique history. It was originally named the Port Phillip District by the British, but Europeans were banned from living there by the NSW governor. When John Batman arrived in 1835, he was a trespasser even in terms of British law. Individuals were not allowed to intrude on what the British government considered unoccupied land. But in 1835, a group of Tasmanian businessmen financed John Batman’s exploration of Port Phillip Bay in search of suitable land for sheep farming. Batman was excited by what he found, and by the prospect of considerable wealth. In his negotiations with local Aborigines, Batman offered the Kulin people of central Victoria a treaty, promising an annual payment of goods (blankets, knives, tomahawks, scissors, mirrors, flour, handkerchiefs and shirts) as well as ‘protection’. In return, Batman would become the owner of 234,000 hectares of land. It is the only treaty ever offered to Australia’s Aboriginal peoples.

**Batman’s ‘treaty’**

There is disagreement about the meaning of the treaty. **Some consider it a trick, Batman’s attempt to defraud the Kulin of their land. Others think that it was a political strategy to convince the British government that they were respectable ‘settlers’ willing to act fairly in their relations with Aboriginal people. As far as the Kulin were concerned, it seems that ownership of their country was never part of the agreement. It was possibly an act of hospitality, an agreement to allow Batman and his party the temporary use of the land and its resources. In this way it was also a strategic act on the part of the Kulin, representing a decision to negotiate with the white intruders rather than attempt to expel them. It would not be the only time in Victoria that Aboriginal leaders would seek to engage, manage and control their relationships with the Europeans.**
Thereof, I understand that it was a form by which they delivered to me the tract of land.

purchase . . . and they each delivered to me a piece of the soil for the purpose of putting me in possession

comprehend my proposals . . . I then explained to them the boundaries of the land which I wished to

an annual tribute as a compensation for the enjoyment of the land. The chiefs appeared most fully to

them the same as my own natives, and also to clothe and feed them, and I also proposed to pay them

bring to this country, sheep and cattle. I also explained my wish to protect them in every way, to employ

country, that I intended to settle among them with my wife and seven daughters, and that I intended to

I joined this tribe about twelve o’clock and staid with them until about twelve o’clock the next day, during

are the marks that the ‘Aboriginal chiefs’ allegedly made as a sign of their agreement. Similar marks

 Batman’s treaty, often referred to as ‘The Melbourne Deed’. In the bottom right-hand corner
 are the marks that the ‘Aboriginal chiefs’ allegedly made as a sign of their agreement. Similar marks
 appear in Batman’s journal.
In the end the New South Wales Governor Sir Richard Bourke declared the treaty illegal, asserting that it was the Crown of England that owned the land. He warned that any further attempts to purchase land from the Aboriginal peoples would be pointless and that those who did so would be trespassers on Crown land. If the woolgrowers wanted land, they would have to deal with the British government.

### 4.6.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Working with a partner, find out what you can about the Kulin people.
2. Describe the deal that Batman says he made with the Kulin people.
3. Examine SOURCE 8. Identify elements in the image that convey that this meeting was friendly and mutually respectful.

### 4.6.3 Ravaging the environment

It was not just the Aboriginal peoples of Victoria that the Europeans disregarded. As the Aborigines were displaced from the land, their careful management of the land went with them. Some of the settlers recognised the beauty of the land and appreciated that the Aborigines had shaped the landscape.

More than five million sheep and cattle ate the native grasses close to the ground and their hard hooves compacted the soil, creating dust plains in summer and muddy bogs in winter. The traditional herbs and vegetables that had sustained Aboriginal life for thousands of years simply disappeared. Water supplies were spoilt, domestic dogs and cats went bush and attacked both sheep and native animals. Soil erosion from the widespread felling of trees became widespread.

Not all of the damage resulted from the pursuit of profit and not all of it was intended. In many instances the original flora and fauna was destroyed as the Europeans replaced them with plants and animals of their own. Often unable to see the beauty of their new environment and homesick for the lands they had left, Europeans attempted to remake their new home. In trying to recreate what was familiar, the Europeans permanently changed the landscape that the Aboriginal peoples had made. Some of the changes were beneficial, but there was little consideration of managing a sustainable environment.

Other changes were quite deliberate and destructive. The much admired Batman’s Hill, a popular park and vantage point, was levelled to make way for the new train station (now Southern Cross) and the material was used to fill the Blue Lake, a natural wetland with abundant wildlife just north of central Melbourne. Perhaps the most obvious casualty of the European arrival was the Yarra River. The waterfall that marked Melbourne’s first point of settlement was blasted away and the river was soon turned into a rubbish dump.

### 4.6.3 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Make a list of the environmental changes that the Europeans brought to Victoria. See if you can find some of your own to add to the list.
2. Which changes were intended and which were unintended?
3. Share your answers with a partner and add to a class summary on the whiteboard.
### 4.6 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE</th>
<th>DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Using the sources in this section, discuss whether all Australians should know about Victoria’s history.</td>
<td>4 As a class, discuss the idea that 1835 is a more important date in Australian history than 1788. Consider how important it was at the time and now. How was the history of Australia affected by this event? How many people were affected? Were the changes produced long-lasting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Examine all of the sources in this section. Choose three sources and explain how they are useful in helping us understand the relations between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples in this period.</td>
<td>5 Was Batman’s treaty important? Support your conclusion with evidence from the sources, then compare your answer with a partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Identify one intended and one unintended result of the settlement of Melbourne. Should we condemn the actions of the colonists? Discuss this question in class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### 4.7 Violence on the frontier

#### 4.7.1 Trouble at Port Phillip

One after another, Aboriginal groups across Australia fought to save their land and often resisted the Europeans with great effect. However, by the end of the nineteenth century Europeans controlled most land that was of any use to them. In several areas this was achieved through much bloodshed.

A pattern of conflict was repeated across the continent. Some settlers tried to live peacefully alongside Aboriginal people but others killed them, drove them away or exploited them. In retaliation for rapes and other acts of violence committed against their people, Aboriginal groups speared stock and shepherds and attacked homesteads. At times soldiers and police were used to crush resistance. Colonists also organised armed bands, supposedly to punish the attackers but often killing any Aboriginal people they could find.

There is disagreement about the extent of the violence. Some historians believe that violence was one of the most common and persistent features of life in Australia for 140 years after the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. Other historians acknowledge that violence occurred but express concern that it should not be exaggerated. However, most agree that violence between European colonists and Australia’s Aboriginal peoples was widespread and represents a terrible part of Australia’s history. The examples in this section are just a few drawn from the many and various conflicts.

It was not long after John Batman’s arrival in Port Phillip Bay in 1835 that violence occurred. In March 1836 two of Charles Swanston’s shepherds were killed, as well as a number of sheep. In July one of the squatters, Charles Franks, and another shepherd were found dead on the banks of the Werribee River.

Almost immediately, John Batman’s brother, Henry, organised some armed men and rode west of Melbourne to punish the ‘guilty’ Aborigines. Reports of what happened vary. Henry Batman testified that he didn’t see any Aborigines killed, others claimed from 10 to complete annihilation of the entire clan group.

In another incident, Aborigines near Benalla made several attacks against the Europeans and their property in 1838, possibly motivated by the abuse of their women. In one instance the Aborigines killed seven Europeans. In a second example, George Faithfull described how he had been ambushed: ‘The natives rushed upon us like furies, with shouts and savage yells.’ Other colonists reported that they had been forced to abandon their ‘runs’ or were kept in great fear by the presence of Aborigines.

While Melbourne was relatively peaceful, in 1840 a large group of about 300 Aborigines were surrounded by soldiers and police in their camp on the south side of the Yarra. They were accused of a series of thefts. One of the leaders, Windberry, was shot dead as he defended himself. The rest were rounded up and eventually 30 were jailed for a month without trial; 10 were eventually found guilty.
4.7.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Identify the causes of violence between Europeans and Aboriginal people in Port Phillip.
2 Examine the sketch of Windberry in SOURCE 1. What impression of Aboriginal people is expressed by this image?

4.7.2 New South Wales — a state of conflict

Windradyne and the Wiradjuri massacre
In the Bathurst Plains in New South Wales in the 1820s a leader named Windradyne led resistance by the Wiradjuri people (see SOURCE 2). Governor Brisbane declared martial law in 1824. During that year probably two-thirds of the Wiradjuri were killed by groups of settlers and soldiers. At least a hundred were killed in a single massacre. The skulls of 45 of the victims were shipped to England.

Major Nunn’s massacre
In the early 1830s the Liverpool Plains district, west of modern-day Tamworth, was occupied by Europeans and the Kamilaroi people resisted the loss of their land. In 1838 the Mounted Police, led by the colony’s senior military officer, Major Nunn, massacred at least a hundred of them at Vinegar Hill on the Namoi River.

SOURCE 2 A native chief of Bathurst, a hand-coloured print by R. Havell & Son, 1820. The man pictured is believed to be Windradyne.

SOURCE 3 Mounted police and blacks, a lithograph print by Godfrey Charles Mundy, published in London in 1852. The print depicts British troops killing Kamilaroi warriors on the Liverpool Plains in northern New South Wales in 1838. Reports of the number of Aboriginal people killed ranged from 60 to 300. None of the troopers were killed.

The Myall Creek massacre
The Myall Creek massacre is unusual because it marked the first, and almost the last, time that whites who murdered Aboriginal people suffered consequences under British law. This unprovoked and premeditated act is possibly one of the most shameful examples of the mistreatment of Aboriginal people in this period of frontier conflict. It is also one of the best documented.

In 1838 more than thirty women, children and elderly men of the Wirrayaraay group were camped on Henry Dangar’s Myall Creek Station near Inverell in northern New South Wales. They were friendly with the local whites and the young men of the group were away helping another station owner to cut bark. The station manager, William Hobbs, was also away, moving cattle to better pastures. Two assigned convicts, George Anderson and James Kilmeister, were the only Europeans left at the station on 9 June when 11 armed stockmen, also mostly assigned convicts or ex-convicts, rode up.
The armed men claimed that they were hunting Aboriginal people to punish them for frightening cattle. With Kilmeister joining them, they rounded up the defenceless Wirrayaraay, tied them together, dragged them away and murdered them. Anderson did not take part and he managed to hide one small boy and save his life.

Most of the victims were butchered with swords. The next day the killers returned to burn the bodies and remove as much evidence as possible. They probably never imagined that they might be punished. This was because they knew that, as non-Christians, any Aboriginal witnesses could not be sworn in to give evidence in court. However, in this case four things made it possible for the killers to be brought to trial. Anderson wanted to give evidence against the killers. Hobbs, the station manager, reported the murders to a magistrate. The magistrate acted properly, and New South Wales Governor Gipps wanted justice.

The Myall Creek trials
When 11 of the Myall Creek killers were brought to trial, there was public outrage that the government should want to punish white men for killing Aboriginal people. At the first trial the accused were supported by many wealthy squatters, including a magistrate, and were found not guilty. However, seven of the men were then charged with the murder of an Aboriginal child whose remains were found at the massacre site. At a second trial the seven were found guilty and they were hanged in December 1838.

One outcome of these hangings was that others who committed massacres made sure that no witnesses lived to give evidence. Killers could still avoid justice. Major Nunn’s force had massacred more people than the Myall Creek killers in the same year, but attempts to get evidence for a trial had been unsuccessful.

SOURCE 4 The memorial stone marking the site of the Myall Creek massacre, in which at least thirty Wirrayaraay women, children and elderly men were murdered in 1838.

4.7.2 Activities
CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 What was unusual about the Myall Creek massacre?
2 Identify two outcomes of the Myall Creek trials.
4.7.3 Violent conflict in Victoria

Gippsland in Victoria was another area of frontier conflict. In July 1843 Ronald Macalister, nephew of a prominent local settler, was speared to death near Port Albert in Gippsland. Angus McMillan, an explorer and local squatter, led a party of whites to avenge his death. In a series of massacres, it is believed that possibly 100 Aborigines were killed at Warrigal Creek with up to another 50 at other locations nearby. All evidence was hastily buried to keep the killings a secret. McMillan later became a member of the Victorian Parliament and a statue was erected to honour him as a pioneer. A seat in the federal parliament is named after him. Two of the pastoralists have left chilling accounts of what happened there.

SOURCE 5 Neil Black was a prominent squatter in Gippsland who was in no doubt about what was required for success. N. Black. Journal of the first few months spent in Australia, 30 September 1839–8 May 1840. From www.kooriweb.org/sl/j/kurnai.htm.

The best way [to procure a run] is to go outside and take up a new run, provided the conscience of the party is sufficiently seared to enable him without remorse to slaughter natives right and left. It is universally and distinctly understood that the chances are very small indeed of a person taking up a new run being able to maintain possession of his place and property without having recourse to such means ... I believe, however, that great numbers of the poor creatures have wantonly fallen victims to settlers scarcely less savage though more enlightened than themselves, and that two thirds of them does not care a single straw about taking the life of a native, provided they are not taken up by the Protectors.

SOURCE 6 Henry Meyrick was one of a number of Scottish colonists who attempted to acquire land in Gippsland. In 1846 he wrote home to his mother. Quoted in Watson, Don 1984 *Caledonia Australis: Scottish Highlanders on the Frontier of Australia*, William Collins, Sydney, p. 170.

The blacks are very quiet here now. Poor wretches. No wild beast of the forest was ever hunted down with such unsparing perseverance as they are. Men, women and children are shot whenever they can be met with ... I have protested against it at every station I have been in Gippsland, in the strongest language, but these things are kept very secret as the penalty would certainly be hanging.

For myself, if I caught a black actually killing my sheep, I would shoot him with as little remorse as I would a wild dog, but no consideration on earth would induce me to ride into a camp and fire on them indiscriminately, as is the custom whenever the smoke is seen. They will very shortly be extinct. It is impossible to say how many have been shot, but I am convinced that not less than 450 have been murdered altogether.

I remember the time when my blood would have run cold at the mention of these things, but now I am become so familiarised with scenes of horror from having murder made a topic of everyday conversation.

4.7.3 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. What do both Black and Meyrick admit about the violence in Gippsland?
2. How are their attitudes to violence the same? How are they different?

4.7.4 Fear and violence

Many of the accounts of the frontier suggest that the Aborigines were helpless in the face of European occupation. This is far from the truth. The next two sources suggest that the presence of Aboriginal peoples created an atmosphere of fear and anxiety. They also indicate how fear was an important cause of the violence.


The western districts of Victoria were the scene of many a bloody fray in the early days of the settlement; for here the Aborigines were numerous, and the white settlers, being comparatively few, lived in constant terror of their attacks. Among other sufferers was a Mr M–... He was riding through the bush, accompanied only by his overseer, when he was met and attacked by a party of blacks, who probably owed him a grudge ... Both gentlemen were captured and killed, and a few days later the body of Mr M– was casually found, cut open and horribly mutilated ... it is not surprising that when the revolting murder was discovered it was amply avenged by the settlers, possibly on the innocent as well as the guilty.
These, however, are not all the atrocities committed within a brief period of eight weeks by the “poor blacks”, (as certain philanthropic gentlemen designate this race) who possess all the worst passions of man but hardly any of his redeeming qualities. During the past four months, 3500 sheep have been destroyed, four men have been killed and two men seriously wounded. To use the graphic language of one gentleman possessing large /f_l ocks in the district: “the country might as well be in a state of civil war, as few but the boldest of the settlers will move from their home stations.” We earnestly implore the attention of His Excellency Sir George Gipps to the fearful list of murders we have narrated. Can it be expected that any man will sullenly fold their arms and look passively on while their friends, their servants and themselves know not the hour nor the day when their peaceful homes may be turned into houses of wailing, dismay and despair. We very much fear that a cry of vengeance will shortly ring throughout the length and breadth of the land.

SOURCE 8  An article that appeared in the Portland Mercury in 1842

How many killings?
About 2000 Europeans were killed by Aboriginal people during the colonial period. Historians estimate that at least 20 000 Aborigines were shot or poisoned by Europeans. There were also several Aboriginal men hanged for murders of Europeans. Massacres of Aboriginal people continued into the twentieth century. The last occurred in the 1920s in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Both of these massacres were committed by police and in both cases the atrocities went unpunished.

SOURCE 9  Aboriginal prisoners in chains at Heavitree Gap police camp, Alice Springs, on 23 June 1906. Charged with stealing beef, all ten men were sentenced to six months in Port Augusta jail.
4.8 Reserves, missions and responses

4.8.1 ‘Becoming civilised’

From 1788 the British government’s policy had been to treat Australia’s Aboriginal peoples with friendship and kindness. However, the central fact that the British were there to occupy what they considered to be ‘empty land’ made this impossible. As settlement spread after 1835, increasing concern in London about Aboriginal peoples saw a recognition in 1837 that Aborigines had a ‘plain and sacred right’ to the land and that, as subjects of the Queen, they should be protected by law. They should also be educated, taught Christianity and ‘civilised’.

There were many attempts to make Aboriginal people think, behave and work like Europeans; Aboriginal people responded to these attempts in a variety of ways.

In 1816 Governor Macquarie set aside five areas around Sydney for Aboriginal people who wished to become farmers. The offer provided government assistance for six months and some Aboriginal farmers were also provided with convict labour. Macquarie wanted to end Aboriginal resistance by encouraging them to take up British ways. Several Darug families were granted land in western Sydney in an area that came to be known as the Black Town. An Aboriginal fishing village was also set aside at Elizabeth Bay. But, much later, after Macquarie left the colony, Elizabeth Bay was given to wealthy settlers.

Schools and missionaries

In 1814 Governor Macquarie set up an Aboriginal school at Parramatta, calling it the Native Institution. Macquarie thought that once Aboriginal people were educated, they would abandon their traditional lifestyles and stop resisting colonisation.

The Native Institution gave Aboriginal children elementary schooling, job training and lessons in Christianity. It had successes, such as Maria Locke, an Aboriginal girl who won first place in the Anniversary Schools Examination in 1819, ahead of 20 other Aboriginal children and 100 white students. But generally when students went back to their communities they found very little of what they had learned had any use or meaning for their lives. By 1833 the only remaining Aboriginal school in the colony had just four pupils.

By the 1830s Christian missionaries were taking on the role of bringing Christianity and European ways to Aboriginal people. They concentrated on converting children whom they separated from their parents on mission stations. At least one missionary resorted to kidnapping children.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Until about the 1970s Australian school textbooks did not mention Aboriginal resistance leaders, such as Pemulwuy and Yagan. In fact, some school texts ignored Aboriginal history almost entirely.
### SOURCE 1
The Parramatta Native Institution Admission List: 1814 to 1820

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<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>DATE OF ADMISSION</th>
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I deemed it an act of justice, as well as humanity, to make at least an attempt to ameliorate [improve] their condition, and to endeavour [try] to civilise them.

SOURCE 2 From Governor Macquarie’s report to Lord Bathurst, Secretary for Colonies in the British government, 1822

You must absolutely secure the young, wean them from parental influence, and infuse [fill] them with new ideas and opinions ... We had an institution here, in Governor Macquarie’s time, where the native children were educated, and turned out of it at the age of puberty good readers and writers; but ... their native instincts and ideas still remaining paramount [strongest], they took to their old ideas again as soon as freed ... 

SOURCE 3 From Two Years in New South Wales, by Peter Cunningham, published in 1827

SOURCE 4 A sketch of Elizabeth Bay, Sydney, by Edward Mason, 1853, showing bark huts for the local Aboriginal people

4.8.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Examine SOURCE 1. How many children were admitted to the Parramatta Native Institution each year? What sort of names were they given?
2 What do SOURCES 2 and 3 suggest about the attitudes of Macquarie and Cunningham and their understanding of Aboriginal people?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3 What do SOURCES 1 and 3 indicate about Aboriginal responses to attempts to ‘civilise’ them?
4 Using SOURCE 1–4, explain whether the Europeans’ attempts to change the Aborigines were successful.
4.8.2 Cultural resistance, negotiation and adaptation

The Native Police Forces

As more colonies were founded, British law failed to protect Aboriginal people. By the middle of the nineteenth century Aboriginal populations across much of Australia had been greatly reduced through violence and disease. The survivors despairs at the loss of their land and their traditional ways as they were forced to become dependent on white society.

Some young Aboriginal men found a place in this changing world by joining the Native Police Forces that were established in Port Phillip in 1842, New South Wales in 1848 and Queensland in 1859. In Queensland especially, Aboriginal troopers were used to kill people from other Aboriginal groups, and they played a brutal role in the defeat of resistance. However, they did not necessarily join the Native Police to protect settlers' property and uphold the law. In Victoria they evaded pursuing their fellow tribesmen, though they did commit atrocities against tribes outside their traditional boundaries. Many joined because it gave them guns, uniforms, money and, above all, horses. Access to status and authority was understandably attractive to young Aboriginal males.

SOURCE 5 William Strutt's portrait of Munight, a member of Victoria's Native Police

SOURCE 6 Black troopers escorting prisoner from Ballarat to Melbourne, 1851, by William Strutt

4.8.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Identify the reasons Aboriginal males might have joined the Native Police.
2. Based on Sources 5 and 6, what do you think the artist, William Strutt, thought about them?

4.8.3 The Port Phillip protectorate

In the 1830s the British government was increasingly concerned about the treatment of Aboriginal people, especially in the Port Phillip District. A protectorate system was set up. Four Protectors were appointed to investigate crimes committed by settlers against Aboriginal people, but in this they had little success. In each Protectorate, land was set aside for a station where people of the surrounding Aboriginal groups were encouraged to stay. Those who accepted the offer did so for a variety of complex reasons.
Some people of Port Phillip you should know
Not all Aboriginal people used violence in their resistance to the European presence, and many Europeans sought to engage Aboriginal people in a number of ways. The historian Richard Broome has written extensively about these responses in his book *Aboriginal Victorians*. The examples below show how individuals moved in and out of white society as it suited them, choosing to live and work in a manner that met their immediate needs while still keeping their own cultural preferences. Some appeared to adopt white society as their own, but the real situation was often more complex.

**SOURCE 7** From *Aboriginal Victorians* by historian Richard Broome, 2005

‘Across the colony by the 1850’s, Aboriginal people dressed like, worked like, ate like and, in some cases, acted like European rural workers … Yet they were not the same, remaining staunchly Aboriginal in their identity and core culture.’ (p. 113)

Here are some examples of these complex responses as Victoria’s Aboriginal peoples negotiated their new world.

**Billibellary**

Billibellary was a *ngurungaeta* (or headman), who was one of the signatories on Batman’s treaty. He was also known as Jika Jika and was the chief of the Wurundjeri-willam clan, who owned the land north of the Yarra from Melbourne to Lancefield. He was the most respected elder of the Melbourne region. His clan was one of five like-minded landowning groups, forming loosely as Woiwurrung people. About 1500–2000 in number, they intermarried within a loose confederation of four other similar groups from central Victoria, all calling themselves Kulin.

As a close friend of William Thomas (Protector of Aborigines), Billibellary reported the despair that Aborigines felt at the loss of their land: ‘Blackfellows all about say that no good have them Pickaninnys now, no country for blackfellows like long time ago.’ Billibellary is remembered as a man of peace who sent his own children to the Europeans’ schools and joined the Native Police Forces along with several other clan heads, increasing their own power and authority. He was a tall athletic man who tried to find a way forward without violence. He died from a respiratory disease on 10 July 1846, leaving his friend Thomas to grieve the loss of this ‘valuable councillor’.

**SOURCE 8** A portrait of Charles Never by William Strutt. Charles’s original name was Murrumwiller and he was probably from the Murray district.

**Charles Never**

Charles attended a school for Aborigines at Merri Creek, initiated by the Baptists of Melbourne in 1845, and remained there while the school was in operation until 1848. He soon made a plan to enter white society in its upper ranks, perfecting his spoken English and the manners of a gentleman: ‘I like to be a gentleman. Black gentleman as good as white.’
Thomas Bungeelene

Thomas was one of the other students at the Merri Creek Aboriginal School. The historian Richard Broome writes: ‘The journey into the European world often left Aboriginal people disoriented and disappointed.’ Tommy was troublesome at first, but soon got used to lessons, church and singing hymns. He was baptised on 1 January 1852 and even got to shake Governor Hotham’s hand when he arrived in Melbourne, June 1854. He finished his education in Fitzroy before becoming a messenger for the Department of Lands. He eventually became a map tracer for the Department of Mines, working within white society as the best way to survive. He sometimes denied his Aboriginality, even to the point of washing his hands frequently to make them whiter, claiming that his parents were white. He died from gastric fever in January 1865. His last words were to request a reading from Psalm 23: ‘The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want . . . surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.’

Simon Wonga

Simon Wonga was born near Healesville in the 1820s. He was the son of Billibellary. When Wonga was in his mid teens, he severely injured his foot while he was hunting and was cared for by Assistant Protector of Aborigines William Thomas. Wonga soon befriended Thomas and his son. Wonga shared much of his understanding of traditional culture, language and beliefs with Thomas. He also learnt from Thomas how European society worked – information that would help him to develop into the skilled and respected negotiator he became in later life.

By 1851 Wonga had become ngurungaeta or headman of the Wurundjeri people. He used his knowledge and friends in the European community to support his people when they were treated unfairly. He tried to regain the land settlers had taken. In 1859, he took a small group of Taungurong men from the Goulburn River to see William Thomas, acting as their interpreter and mediator. In a letter to Redmond Barry, Thomas quotes Wonga: ‘I bring my friends Goulburn Blacks, they want a block of land in their country where they may sit down plant corn potatoes etc. etc., and work like white man.’

After this meeting, a deputation was sent to the Commissioner of the Land and Survey Office, where they met with officials and secured a portion of land for the Taungurong. A precedent had been set, and in 1860, Wonga returned to Thomas to ask for a piece of land for his own Wurundjeri people. The land he asked for later became the Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission. Wonga died there in 1875.

William Barak

William Barak was born into the Wurundjeri clan of the Woiwurrung people in 1823, in the area now known as Croydon, in Melbourne. Originally named Beruk Barak, he adopted the name William after joining the Native Police as a 19-year-old. Barak was a natural leader: his father was a clan head and his uncle was Billibellary.

Barak emerged as a politically smart leader, skilled mediator and spokesperson for his people. In partnership with his cousin Simon Wonga, Barak worked to establish and protect Coranderrk. He became a prominent figure in the struggle for Aboriginal rights and justice. When Wonga died in 1875, Barak succeeded him as clan leader. While at Coranderrk, Barak recorded Koorie culture through storytelling and art, and invited white settlers and dignitaries to visit the reserve. Skilled in the arts of diplomacy and friendship, over time he gained growing respect and fame within his own culture, in settler society and even...

SOURCE 10 A photograph of William Barak, taken around 1868, Museum Victoria
abroad. In 1886 he petitioned the Victorian government for better rights and land on behalf of the residents, stating: ‘We Blacks of Aboriginal Blood, wish to have now freedom for all our life time.’

4.8.3 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Identify the ways that Billibellary responded to the presence of the Europeans
2. How did Charles Never show that he wanted to join white society?
3. In what ways did Thomas Bungeelene adopt European ways of life?
4. Identify the ways that Simon Wonga adapted to white society while still retaining his Aboriginality.
5. Identify what William Barak did for his people.
6. What does **SOURCE 10** suggest about Barak’s character?

4.8.4 Coranderrk

One of the most successful schemes to turn Aboriginal people into farmers was the Coranderrk Reserve, set up near Healesville in Victoria in 1863. The Kulin people who moved to Coranderrk cleared and fenced the land and, by the 1870s, they were successfully growing hops, raising cattle and running a dairy. Despite this, the law did not recognise the people as the owners of this land. When the Board for the Protection of Aborigines attempted to close Coranderrk in 1874, its Kulin residents marched in protest to the Victorian Parliament. Their action saved Coranderrk, but only for a time. From 1886, under the *Victorian Aborigines Act*, many people of mixed descent were forced to leave the reserves. This cut Coranderrk’s workforce to a level that was too low to run the farms. Finally, in 1924, Coranderrk was closed.

**SOURCE 11** The Kulin people at Coranderrk grew and sold arrowroot, hops and vegetables. As well as tending their fields, they earned money working on nearby properties.

**SOURCE 12** From the *Report of the House of Commons, Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements)*, 1837

[The] native inhabitants of any land have an *incontrovertible* right to their own soil; a plain and sacred right. Europeans have entered their borders uninvited, and, when there, have not only acted as if they were undoubted lords of the soil, but have punished the natives as aggressors if they have [tried] to live in their own country.
'All the rights of British subjects'?
South Australia's governor, John Hindmarsh, proclaimed that the Aborigines of South Australia had all the rights of British subjects. Despite such intentions, Aboriginal land was sold without consent just as it had been in other colonies, and only small areas were set aside as reserves. It was hardly surprising that conflict soon developed, with killings on both sides. Because they were not Christians, Aboriginal people had not been allowed to give evidence in colonial courts. To give Aborigines more protection under the law, in 1843 the British government allowed the courts to accept Aboriginal evidence. As a result, in 1846 a European was hanged for the murder of a South Australian Aboriginal man. Despite this, squatters continued to use violence to drive Aborigines off the land.

SOURCE 13 45 Natives driven to the Police Court by the Police for Trespassing, a watercolour/drawing by W. A. Cawthorne, 1845

4.8.4 Activities
CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Describe the purpose of a protectorate.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
2 In what ways did British authorities attempt to improve the lives of Aboriginal peoples?
3 Identify the different ways that Aboriginal peoples responded to European colonisation.

4.8 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1 Describe some of the things Europeans and Aboriginal people thought about one another.

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
2 In what ways did Europeans cause a decline of Aboriginal civilisation?

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
3 Explain what you think is most important for students to know about relations on the frontier in colonial times.
4 Research the community of Coranderrk. Considering both Aboriginal and European points of view, in what ways might it be considered a success? In what ways might it be considered a failure? Discuss with your class.
5 Find out more about some of the Aboriginal individuals mentioned in this section, such as Barak, Wonga, Bungeelene, or the Europeans, such as Angus McMillan, Henry Meyrick, William Strutt. What does your research tell you about what has been left out of this section of the topic? What do you think should be added to improve the usefulness of this text as a historical source?
4.9 A long, forgotten war

4.9.1 Violence in Western Australia and the Northern Territory

In the 1880s most people in Australia lived in cities and were increasingly proud of their civilisation and progress. With surges in population and booming economies, there was abundant optimism and widespread prosperity. There was talk about the states uniting to form a federation, artists and writers began to explore and celebrate what it meant to be ‘Australian’, and with the celebration of the centenary in Sydney, people looked back with great satisfaction on 100 years of pioneering achievement. When the London journalist George Augustus Sala described Melbourne as ‘marvellous’ in 1885, the people of the city felt justifiably proud. However, it was the title of his article for London’s Daily Telegraph, ‘The Land of the Golden Fleece’, which seemed to summarise Australia.

Outside the cities, life in Australia was very different. 1885 also marks probably the most violent year on the Australian frontier. In the remote parts of South Australia, across the Kimberley district in the west and throughout the northern reaches of Queensland and the Territory, the same pattern of occupation, Aboriginal resistance and terrible European reprisal was repeated. But in this decade, modern weaponry, bush-bred horses and efficient Native Police, coupled with a general acceptance of the inevitability and necessity of the violence, produced a dreadful toll.

The exact numbers of those killed in the 1880s will never be known, but it is reasonable to assume that at least 2000 Aborigines died in armed conflict with the settlers, though it was probably more. The number of violent settler deaths is also hard to estimate and included not only Europeans but also Chinese miners, Pacific Island labourers and other Aborigines who had chosen to work with the settlers. The documented figure is 158 in Queensland during the 1880s, but it is also likely to be higher. In 1885 alone there were 25 violent settler deaths on the Queensland frontier.

The Kimberley

After being explored by Alexander Forrest in 1879, European occupation of the Kimberley was relatively slow until 1885, when gold was discovered at Halls Creek and cattlemen arrived from the eastern states with herds looking for pasture. Competing for resources in rough, isolated country, Aborigines robbed tents and attacked travellers. This sparked fear and attacks by the Europeans. One leader of the Bunuba tribe, Jandamarra, caused widespread panic when he defected from the police force, captured guns and planned a military defence of his country. He led several attacks over three years before being shot dead at Tunnel Creek on 1 April 1897. So many Aboriginal people were killed in the Kimberley district between 1881 and 1905 that Aboriginal people of the region called that period the ‘Killing Times’. The last Kimberley massacre took place in 1927, when police murdered at least twenty Aboriginal people and possibly many more.

A notorious incident in the Territory

In 1884 four well-respected copper miners were attacked and killed in the far north-west of the Northern Territory, inciting outrage from the settler community. The Northern Territory Times asserted that Aboriginal people were ‘murderers and robbers by nature, and nothing but the most severe punishment will have any lasting effect on them’. Private parties rode off in search of vengeance, with one group cornering a group of Aboriginal people in a lagoon. The official report stated that 20 or 30 Aboriginal men were killed; others indicated that it was possibly more than 150 men, women and children. What makes this example even more remarkable is that those who killed the miners were already known and later arrested and convicted. Henry Reynolds makes the point that the slow process of the law was not enough to pacify the settlers’ rage and desire for vengeance.

SOURCE 1 From Pedersen, Howard (2007) transcript, First Australians, SBS television series, episode 5

In 1888, the Western Australian Government responded to the incidents of resistance right throughout the Kimberley by putting … a whole network of police stations, to try and quell this growing Aboriginal opposition to European settlement. By the early 1890s a quarter of the whole Western Australian police force is based in the Kimberley, where there’s only one per cent of the European settlement population.

SOURCE 2 While official police action was responsible for much of the violence in the Kimberley at this time, it was individual settlers who also typically engaged in the killing. The historian Henry Reynolds, who has studied relationships on the frontier for much of his life, made this point about how settlers were able to engage in this violence and maintain a clear conscience in his book Forgotten War, p. 214:

Many more punitive expeditions were likely mounted than were ever reported. ... The prominent pioneer pastor Leo Ross observed that it was a breach of northern etiquette to ask a man whether he had shot a blackfellow or not. He also expressed the view common amongst his contemporaries that they were not primarily responsible for the widespread violence on the frontier, writing that “There are few, if any, of the Northern pioneers who would not prefer to live at peace with the natives. But the hostilities are, in the majority of instances, forced upon them.”

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4.9.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What were the factors that made frontier violence more disastrous for Aboriginal people in the 1880s?
2. What made Jandamarra more dangerous than other Aboriginal leaders?
3. Examine SOURCE 1. What does this suggest about the nature of frontier violence in the Kimberley?

4.9.2 Violence in Queensland

Colonisation of Queensland began in 1825 and it became a separate colony in 1859. Between the 1860s and the 1890s detachments of Queensland Native Police led by white officers made several brutal attacks on Aboriginal camps, killing indiscriminately. Where they could, Aboriginal people fought back. The largest battle occurred in 1884.

SOURCE 3 The defeat of the Kalkadoons at Battle Mountain marked the end of effective Aboriginal resistance in Queensland.

A. Battle Mountain lies about 80 kilometres north-west of Mount Isa. The country is rocky and hilly. Boulders, giant termite mounds and tufts of porcupine grass pepper the landscape.

B. Warriors prepared for battle by painting three stripes around their upper arms and legs and a boomerang shape on their chest. The leader wore a thick string around his neck, tied to another around his waist, and a white feather-down headdress.

C. Each detachment in the native police force comprised about six native troopers headed by a European officer.

D. The landowners were often heavily armed, carrying both .45 Colts and carbines. Native troopers carried carbines but were not trusted to carry revolvers.
From the 1860s squatters had begun to occupy land between Cloncurry and Camooweal in western Queensland. This was the land of the Kalkadoon people, who waged a guerrilla war of resistance for 13 years. At Battle Mountain in 1884 around 600 Kalkadoon warriors made their last stand against 200 armed whites and Native Police. The Kalkadoons fought bravely but spears, stones and boomerangs were no match for repeating rifles and revolvers. Almost 85 per cent of the Kalkadoons were killed.

4.9.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Describe the conflict at Battle Mountain in your own words.
2 Explain why the Kalkadoon people were defeated.

4.9.3 Exploitation and protection policies
After the Australian colonies gained self-government from 1856, the new colonial parliaments showed much less concern for Aboriginal people than had the British government. An enormous amount of ‘Crown land’ was now held by squatters in the form of pastoral leases. On many of these leases, squatters exploited Aborigines as cheap labour.

Rather than protect the rights of Aboriginal people to use their land, the colonial governments preferred to force them onto reserves. From the late nineteenth century Protection policies were introduced in most of the colonies (or, from 1901, states). Under these policies, many Aboriginal people were controlled by reserve or mission administrators. Protection policies were based on the belief that Aboriginal people were dying out and that all that could be done for them was to prevent unnecessary suffering. From as early as the 1880s some Aboriginal children were taken from their families under these policies.

Gradually, colonial and state governments passed laws that gave them legal rights to remove or separate Aboriginal children from their families without having to show good reason in a court. Such laws operated in Queensland from 1897, in Western Australia from 1905, in South Australia and the Northern Territory from 1911 and in New South Wales from 1915. As early as 1910, Inspector Thomas Clode, a South Australian police officer who was given the position of Sub-Protector of Aborigines, described such policies as ‘nothing short of kidnapping’. Children taken away under these laws were deprived of ties with their families, communities, cultures and languages, and many also suffered abuse and exploitation.

The Kalkadoon warriors were described as ‘the elite of the Aboriginal warriors’ and as ‘tall, muscular men of magnificent physique and endurance, many of whom towered over their European opponents’.

DID YOU KNOW?
A royal commission in Western Australia found in 1905 that it had been the practice for the past 30 years to keep Aboriginal prisoners in heavy neck chains for the entire length of their sentences. It also found that Aboriginal women on cattle and sheep stations were often captured by white stockmen, raped and used as slave labour.

pastoral lease
land that is leased for the purpose of grazing sheep or cattle.

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Aboriginal voting rights

How did Aboriginal people fare as Australia’s colonies gained democratic rights? All adult white men gained the right to vote for the lower house of parliament in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia during the 1850s. After campaigns for equal rights, adult white women also gained voting rights between the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. Federation took place on 1 January 1901. It marked the creation of a nation from the six British colonies in Australia (see topic 6).

In the first federal elections in 1901, South Australian Aboriginal men and women could vote, Aboriginal men of New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania could vote, but not the Aboriginal people of Queensland and Western Australia. The Franchise Bill was proposed to extend voting rights at federal elections to women and Aboriginal people in all states. However, most elected members of the Federal Parliament opposed Aboriginal voting rights. They extended the right to vote at federal elections to all women but not to Aboriginal Australians. Instead, many Aboriginal people who had voted in the first federal election had that right taken away from them during the following two decades.

4.9.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What did colonial governments prefer to do with Aboriginal people?
2. Explain why Aboriginal children were taken from their families. Describe the impacts of this policy.
3. Describe what happened to Aboriginal voting rights around the turn of the century.
4.9 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES
1. What reasons did Europeans give for their own involvement in frontier violence?
2. Read ‘A notorious incident in the Territory’ from subsection 4.9.1 again. Explain what point Reynolds makes in SOURCE 2 about settler attitudes to the law.
3. What are the problems of establishing the truth of what happened on the frontier?
4. Identify three significant things that students should know about frontier conflict in Australia towards the end of the nineteenth century. Explain why you have chosen each point and present your conclusions to the class.

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
5. Describe the ways in which frontier conflict in northern Australia was similar to other parts of Australia earlier in the century.
6. Explain how it was different.

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT
7. Research why Aborigines were denied voting rights in the new Commonwealth of Australia. When did they eventually gain the vote?
8. Working with a partner, suggest some reasons why the history of the Australian frontier was not taught to most Australians until recently. See if you can find out why this has changed. Make a list of recommendations to teachers about how to teach Australian history.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
9. How much of the story of the Australian frontier should be taught to students in Australian schools? Explain your answer, using evidence from all the material covered so far in this topic.
10. Research the experiences of Aboriginal children who were taken from their families. Discuss with your teacher how you might conduct this research and how to structure your report. Consider background information, circumstances of removal, the life led after removal, the chances of ever finding family, cultural and geographic dislocation, long-term consequences for families.

4.10 The Torres Strait Islanders

4.10.1 Early contact

The Torres Strait Islands are the hundreds of islands, many tiny, scattered between the tip of Cape York, in Queensland, and Papua New Guinea. Many have been inhabited for thousands of years. No two islands are identical, each having its own landscape and history.

The Torres Strait Islanders are a separate people in origin, history and way of life. Today they live in 18 permanent communities on 17 islands, though they still frequent their traditionally owned islands for fishing, gardening and recreation. The Torres Strait Islanders (hereafter called Islanders) traded with Cape York Aborigines and the people of Papua New Guinea before the Europeans arrived. There were five distinct cultural groups and each nation had its own name. Because they were gardeners and fearless defenders of their territories, Islanders were well regarded by European visitors.

Initial European contact was made in 1606 when the Spanish navigator Luis Vaez de Torres sailed through what is now called the Torres Strait.

After 1770, when Captain Cook proclaimed part of Australia’s eastern coast as Crown land, many British ships favoured Torres Strait as a passage to the Pacific. While the first European settlement was established on Albany Island in 1863, a ‘pearl rush’ in 1870 brought thousands of people from all over the world. A year later the London Missionary Society brought Christianity to Darnley Island and the Islanders’ lives were transformed. The first Christian service was performed on 1 July 1871, and that day is still celebrated as ‘The Coming of the Light.’ Missionary teachers incorporated traditional ritual and belief but ended the practice of reciprocal killing and the trading in human heads. They also imposed a new language, Torres Strait Creole (currently called ‘Ailan Tok’) which was embraced as a shared language by the Islanders. Islanders also accepted Christianity as a fulfillment of their existing religious beliefs rather than the imposition of a new one.
SOURCE 1 Portrait of priests Joseph Lui Snr. and Poey Passi at their graduation ceremony on Moa Island, 1925. The weaving of pre-colonial beliefs and traditional Christianity is an important part of Islander culture.

SOURCE 2 Pearling was an important industry for the Islanders in both cultural and economic terms. Islanders were exploited as cheap labour, but this enabled them to contribute to their own community.

4.10.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Describe the main characteristics of the Torres Strait Islands and their people.
2. What changes did the Europeans bring to the Islands?

4.10.2 Discrimination and control

Between 1872 and 1879, the government of Queensland progressively claimed the Torres Strait Islands in the name of the Crown. Initially, the Islanders enjoyed more independence under European control than did mainland Aboriginal people. This was mainly because the then Queensland Government Controller, John Douglas, would not allow Islanders to be classified as Aboriginal people under the Queensland Aborigines Protection Act 1897.

An extraordinarily tolerant and enlightened man, Douglas exerted his authority with minimal disruption to the Islanders’ lives. He created a system of island councils, responsible for maintaining law and order, essential services and schools. Douglas’ death in 1904 made the Islanders more vulnerable to outside control by the Queensland government, placing them ‘under the dog Act’ as they put it. Soon Islanders’ lives were restricted by a curfew and pass system, their wages were controlled by the Protector, they had to ask permission to withdraw money and children were expected to go to government primary schools before either going to work on the boats (for boys) or doing domestic work (for girls).

Islanders also became subject to the same racial discrimination that operated throughout Queensland. Schools, swimming baths, theatres and even dances were racially segregated and Islanders were not allowed to enter hotels. Marriage, sexual relations and friendships between races brought official disapproval. While the Catholic school on Thursday Island defied the rules of segregation, the ‘white’ state school admitted Europeans, Japanese and Chinese, and the ‘coloured’ school took everyone else.

Frustrated by the loss of ability to run their own affairs, Islanders working on government-owned boats rebelled against the Queensland government in 1936 by staging a strike. It lasted nine months; the outcome was that Island Councils were allowed to have more substantial input into the management of their boats and other affairs.

The Islanders also benefited in 1939 when the Queensland Government passed the Torres Strait Islanders Act, for the first time legally recognising the Islanders as a separate people.
Many Islanders also served in the Australian armed forces during the Second World War. They were initially paid only one-third of the wage of the Europeans. They went on strike in 1943 and again in 1944 to demand the end to discrimination. The government doubled their wages, eventually. Over 800 Islanders served in the armed forces. After the war, many Islanders who served in the armed forces still faced discrimination and exclusion.

SOURCE 3 Thursday Island, 1945. A squad of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion training in their company lines, 1945.

4.10.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 What controls did the Queensland government impose on Torres Strait Islanders?
2 Explain how Islanders negotiated with the government and identify the outcomes.

4.10 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1 What do the sources in this section suggest about the changes the Europeans brought to Islander society?
2 Explain whether you think these are positive or negative changes.
3 What do the sources suggest about Islander responses to change?

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
4 Research the traditional lifestyles of Torres Strait Islanders and their history. You can access the history of individual island communities at www.qld.gov.au

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
5 Explain why John Douglas is important for his contribution to the history of the Torres Strait Islands.
### 4.11 A Celestial Presence: the Chinese in Australia

#### 4.11.1 Chinese arrive on the goldfields

Mak Sai Ying (also known as John Shying), who arrived to Australia in 1818, was the first recorded Chinese immigrant to Australia. After a decade of farming, Ying was listed as the publican of The Lion, a hotel in Parramatta, possibly signifying his social and economic success. Material advancement was a powerful motive for most migrants to Australia and this is also true for the Chinese. However, immigration from China was very limited in the first half of the nineteenth century. The labour shortage in Victoria in the 1840s brought 1700 convicts but it also encouraged squatters to engage small bands of Chinese workers as shepherds on four-year contracts. Paid only half the wages of local shepherds, the Chinese were initially welcomed into Victoria. However, once gold was discovered in 1851 and large numbers of Chinese appeared on the goldfields, in direct competition with Europeans, prejudice and discrimination became common.

The Victorian gold rushes produced a second transformation of the society that had been established at Port Phillip in 1835. The traditional hunter-gatherer society of up to 60 000 Aboriginal people had been displaced by a prosperous pastoral economy of 77 000 Europeans and over 6 million sheep by 1851. Only 10 years later, the population was a staggering 540 000. Melbourne was a large and renowned city surrounded by other successful inland towns, and people had come from around the world to find their fortune. Many of these people came from China.

Like most other miners, the Chinese came for material wealth and security. 90 per cent of the Chinese came from the Guangdong province in southern China, an area that had experienced war, rising rents and land shortages, so like the European migrants, there were many who had much to gain from making a living in Victoria.

Although miners came from around the world, the Chinese were a distinctive national group, different in language, religion, culture, dress and appearance. They also travelled together in large groups and were virtually all male. The Chinese were also very determined men who worked hard and

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**SOURCE 1** Lum Khen Yang in “The Wesleyan Chronicle, 1 Feb 1859” quoted in *Colonial casualties: Chinese in early Victoria*

Our money and property were plundered, we had not the means of purchasing a morsel to put into our mouths and there appeared no way by which we could extricate ourselves from poverty … We happily heard intelligence regarding a new gold-field in an English colony. We were told that men from all parts of the world were congregated there … that the people were peaceably disposed, and that the country abounded in everything. The idea of going to such a country was delightful … I then made an effort to get as much money as would pay my passage to this productive country.

**SOURCE 2** Flemington, Melbourne, by S. E. Brees, painted around 1856. Long columns of Chinese men travelling to the goldfields aroused fear and hostility amongst European miners.
were set on returning to China with their wealth. All of these factors were used as excuses for hatred and discrimination by some of the Europeans, though it was possibly the Melbourne newspapers and their articles about ‘an invasion from China’ that stirred a lot of the hostility. There were other complaints against them: many Chinese worked on Sundays, some smoked opium (which was legal at the time but morally frowned upon) and gambling was popular. They seemed to be a strange and threatening presence.

**SOURCE 3** The description of the Chinese miners by the Polish digger Seweryn Korzelinski

Small in stature, with small eyes and long plaits of hair, made even longer by a piece of string with a tassel tied at the end of it. They are very funny to watch when they walk overland, for they usually travel in large groups of a hundred or so, one behind the other in a long line like wild geese. They don’t walk normally but take short steps and appear to be running very slowly. Each one carries a long pole over his shoulder with baskets of victuals hanging at both ends.

### 4.11.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Identify two important reasons why Chinese people came to Australia in this period.
2. List the reasons why Europeans resented the Chinese.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

3. Do any of the three sources suggest a threatening presence? Explain your answer.
4. How does Lum Khen Yang feel about coming to Australia?
5. How does Korzelinski feel about the Chinese?

### 4.11.2 Conflict on the goldfields

Alarmed at the increasing numbers of Chinese migrants, the Victorian government passed the first of a number of racial discrimination laws in 1855, imposing an extra tax on every Chinese person landing in Victoria. Undeterred, ships began landing at Robe in South Australia. Long streams of Chinese miners then trekked from South Australia to the goldfields in Victoria. Conflicts soon arose as European miners drove Chinese from productive claims and the Chinese fought back. The government stepped in to organise Chinese Protectorates (similar to the Aboriginal Protectorates), with separate living areas, elected representatives, interpreters and access to legal rights. There was a great deal of official prejudice expressed against the Chinese.

**SOURCE 4** The description of the Chinese immigrants by the Report of the Victorian Goldfields Commission of Enquiry, 1855

Their generally filthy habits are repulsive to the Christian population. The question of ... such large numbers of a pagan and inferior race is a very serious one.

Three years later John Fawkner, one of the founders of Melbourne, demanded that the government act to stop ‘the Gold Fields of Australia Felix from becoming the property of the Emperor of China’ and that they represented ‘great social evils, immorality and crime ... bringing about results highly detrimental to the habits of the rising generation’.

Some groups of miners went beyond words. As the numbers of Chinese swelled to over 25,000 by 1857, a serious anti-Chinese riot erupted at Buckland River, when 30 to 40 miners pushed the Chinese from their claims, robbed them and then burned their tents. Four Chinese miners drowned in the freezing Buckland River. A similar riot occurred in New South Wales at Lambing Flat, near the town of Young, in 1861.
SOURCE 5 The Roll Up banner around which a mob of about 1000 men rallied and attacked Chinese miners at Lambing Flat in June 1861. The banner is now on display in the museum at Young.

SOURCE 6 From the Sydney Morning Herald, 20 July 1861

...the crowd of rioters took the road to Lambing Flat... every Chinese resident in the township on whom hands could be laid was attacked and maltreated... Unarmed, defenceless, and unresisting Chinese were struck down in the most brutal manner by bludgeons... and by pick handles... every article of property they had endeavoured to take with them was plundered.

4.11.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Identify the actions the Victorian government took to manage the Chinese presence in Victoria.
2 How did the European miners act toward the Chinese?

4.11.3 Contested history

There are many aspects of studying history that lead to debate and argument. Students need to be aware that sources and accounts all present particular perspectives that need to be interrogated by looking at other sources. This is also true in this topic. In many history books the riots, resentment and hostility directed towards the Chinese has created an image of Chinese passivity and helplessness. This may not be the case. The following sources suggest that many Chinese, despite the conditions under which they lived and worked, went on to become successful members of the community.

SOURCE 7 The website www.egold.net.au emphasises the diverse experiences of Chinese people and their contribution to Victoria.

The Chinese, who at one stage during the late 1850s accounted for one in 10 Victorians, settled in the key goldfields centres of Bendigo, Ballarat and Castlemaine. They brought with them their distinctive way of life and specialised mining techniques. Some encountered hostility and racist attitudes but as a group the Chinese were renowned for their industry.

Although best known for their role in the gold mining industry they were involved in many other pursuits on the goldfields. Many worked as herbalists, merchants, and restaurateurs. Others played an important role in the development of the region by working as market gardeners and continued to do so well into the twentieth century.
Lee Heng Jacjung was one individual who made a life for himself in Victoria. After arriving from California, Lee Heng settled on the Fryers Creek diggings, where he acted as an official interpreter. He married and settled near Mount Alexander. He became a valued member of his community. Similarly James Acoy was an interpreter and prominent businessman in Castlemaine, which had one of the biggest goldfield Chinese communities. In 1855 he married a 17-year-old German girl, built a house in Castlemaine, and together they had 10 children. While imprisoned for corruption in 1869, he had many supporters across the community who believed his conviction was unjust.

SOURCE 8 From R.W. Dale, Impressions of Australia, published in 1889

…it is going to be different.

SOURCE 9 The Chinese also conducted a sustained series of protests and petitions against unfair taxation from 1855 to 1861, in some cases winning concessions from the government. The following appeared in Natives of China residing in Victoria petition, 4 August 1857; Chinese Resident in Castlemaine petition, 18 August 1857.

Nearly all of us left our native land at the solicitation of Europeans, to seek abroad that prosperity which we could not find at home, on the assurance that since our arrival, we have been subjected to a series of insults and oppressions from the ignorant, the cruel, and the malicious, though we are not conscious of having merited such injustice... Every nation is allowed to come into this colony – why not the Chinese? At first the government was very good to our petitioners but now it is going to be different.

4.11.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. List the various occupations that Chinese people had other than goldmining.
2. In SOURCE 9, identify the complaints the Chinese are making.

4.11 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1. Create two lists of evidence, one identifying poor relations between European and Chinese miners and one identifying mutual acceptance. Which list is stronger? Explain your answer.
2. Find your own evidence of relations between Europeans and Chinese at this time and add them to your list. Include both written and visual sources.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
3. Evaluate whether the Chinese suffered significant and persistent hostility on the goldfields.
   a. In what ways were they treated differently by the government? And by other miners?
   b. How many people were affected?
4. Explore the idea of Chinese helplessness. Research the ways Chinese people resisted the taxation imposed by the government. In what ways did they respond to European aggression on the goldfields?
5. Research the contribution of the Chinese community in Victoria up to 1901.
6. Find out what role the Chinese community played in the celebrations of Federation in 1901. How does your research alter your understanding of this topic?
4.13 The ideal of ‘White Australia’

4.13.1 Defending Australia — the crimson thread of kinship

Towards the end of the nineteenth century many Australians believed that Australia would benefit from only having one race of people as ‘Australians’, mainly those of British origin. The idea of a ‘White Australia’ was openly discussed and it was an idea that was supported by all political parties. White Australia is one of the most controversial topics in Australian history. Most think of this idea as a shameful and regrettable part of our history. There are also historians who, looking at the full extent of the historical circumstances, note that it was an expression of a desire to protect workers’ wages and conditions and create a society that was united and harmonious, misguided though the policy may have been. While both may be true at the same time, it is certainly worth examining the ways in which Australians thought and the efforts they made to create a society, ‘free from the ills of the old world’. It was clear that politicians at the time sought to create a ‘better Britain’, while still maintaining a close relationship with Britain.

After the gold rush, colonial governments encouraged and assisted a smaller but steady stream of British migrants to come to Australia. This helped to preserve what was referred to as the ‘crimson thread of kinship’, the close cultural and sentimental ties between Britain and Australia. These familial bonds were important but Australians also looked to Britain for security and defence.

SOURCE 1 Edmund Barton speaking in support of sending troops to aid Britain in the Sudan, reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, 21 February 1885. Barton was later to be Australia’s first prime minister.

... I want to know whether we want to consider ourselves English or not? ... If her quarrels are not to be ours, when are our quarrels to be hers? [Cheers.] When the time of trouble comes and we do not stand shoulder to shoulder with our fellow subjects of Great Britain can we expect them to do so for us? ... we will rally round the old flag, and we will recollect that the cause of the Empire is our own. [Cheers.]
Defence fears
Most white Australians felt isolated and fearful of invasion. Believing that Australia could rely on the British Navy for protection, they clung to Britain and to the empire. The colonists and their governments were alarmed when France annexed New Caledonia in 1853. From the 1860s to the 1880s sensational stories of possible Russian invasion appeared in the colonial press. In 1883 Queensland hoped to stop German expansion in the south-west Pacific by annexing New Guinea. Britain opposed this move because of Queensland’s dreadful record in dealing with native peoples. But in 1884 Britain took possession of eastern New Guinea shortly before Germany seized northern New Guinea.

Fighting the empire’s wars
Each Australian colony developed its own defence forces, but it was also generally believed that if Australians fought for Britain, then Britain would come to Australia’s aid if it was threatened. Australians took part in the wars of the British Empire during the Sudan Campaign in North Africa in 1885. When New South Wales sent 734 troops to this conflict, many people saw it as a chance to prove loyalty to Britain. Much the same reasoning saw Australian colonial forces involved in Britain’s wars in South Africa and China at the end of the century.

**SOURCE 2** *The departure of the Australian contingent for the Sudan*, painted by Arthur Collingridge in 1885.
It has been estimated that two-thirds of Sydney’s population gathered to farewell the Sudan Contingent.

**4.13.1 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. What is the meaning of the term ‘crimson thread of kinship’? Explain why it is important.
2. Create a map that lists the takeovers of European powers in the Pacific region in the late nineteenth century.
3. How did Australians feel about fighting for the British Empire?
4.13.2 ‘Purifying’ Australia

Many Australians thought of Britain as the ‘mother country’, even though they had never been there. However, this did not mean that Australians agreed with all of the policies of the empire. The White Australia policy brought about conflict with the British government and its multiracial empire. Britain favoured a much freer movement of goods and people, something that was completely opposed to the restrictive racial policies of the Australian states. Increasingly, colonial governments became determined to exclude non-European migrants. In 1888 the colonial leaders united in an appeal to Britain to stop Chinese immigration to Australia. After Australia federated in 1901, the new federal government was concerned that a racial policy would be disallowed by Britain. However, it got around Britain’s opposition by introducing a ‘dictation test’ for migrants, making it appear that migrants would be selected on education level rather than race. Migrants who failed to write down 50 words exactly as dictated to them by an official could be refused entry to Australia.

SOURCE 3 ‘John Bull’ pressures the Australian Prime Minister Edmund Barton to accept non-white migrants. ‘John Bull’ represents England.

Pacific Islanders in Queensland

Between 1863 and 1904 about 50 000 Pacific Islanders came to northern Australia to work on sugar plantations, one of colonial Queensland’s most important industries. In the early years many Islanders were tricked or kidnapped from their homes, in a process called ‘blackbirding’, which was strictly illegal and amounted to little more than slavery. Estimates vary, but about
10 to 15 per cent of Islanders were captured in this way. Most came from the island of Vanuatu (then called the New Hebrides) or the Solomon Islands, but all were referred to as 'Kanakas'. As the labour trade became more established, many of the mostly male Islanders were drawn by the promise of European goods and a freer lifestyle. However, in Queensland they were ruthlessly exploited by plantation owners as cheap labour, suffered poor living conditions and an incredibly high death rate from European diseases. About 30 per cent of the Islanders who came to Australia died from disease. After federation, it was the Australian government's desire to return all Islanders to their homes, though by 1904 many had been in Australia for many years, had Australian-born children and knew little of their homelands. In the end thousands were deported, though many were allowed to stay on humanitarian grounds. Those who were allowed to remain in Australia were refused the right to work and were treated like second-class citizens. Nevertheless, by 1938 there were 1100 descendants of South Sea Islanders still working in the Queensland sugar industry.

**SOURCE 4** A group of male and female Pacific Islander farm workers on a sugar plantation at Cairns in 1890 (State Library of Queensland)

4.13.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. What was the ‘dictation test’ and why was it introduced?
2. Describe the ways that Islanders were ‘recruited’ to work in Queensland.
3. What was the Islanders’ death rate from disease?

4.13.3 Promoting White Australia

It is hard to believe that such open racism was not only accepted but also promoted in Australian society. This fact begins to make more sense if we look more closely at national and international politics of the time, when many national groups around the world defined themselves by race and similar laws were passed in many other nations. The following sources illustrate some of the thinking at this time and the variety of ways it was expressed.
SOURCE 6 Australians were able to support the White Australia policy by buying goods produced by white workers, such as the pineapples labelled below. This gave everyone the chance to support higher wages for white workers.

SOURCE 7 The White Australia policy was also an expression of fear and Australia’s incapacity to defend a vast coastline. This fear was put in dramatic form in the play advertised below.

SOURCE 5 A poster advertising the playing of a ‘National Policy Song’. Some of the words are printed inside the map and include, ‘Sunny South of old Britannia’s sons, Australia the white man’s land, Defended by the white man’s guns, Australia! Australia!’
4.13.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Which of these sources expresses a political concern? Which are concerned with the economy? Which sources express a social concern?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
2 Identify the hopes and fears that are expressed in each source.

4.13 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1 What would a nation consisting of one race have looked like in comparison to our own multicultural nation of today? Use the sources to develop some ideas, then share your ideas in a class discussion. Find out what other countries thought of the White Australia policy over the twentieth century.

2 Based on the sources in this section, explain whether you think Australia was an optimistic or pessimistic country in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Refer to at least five sources in your answer.

3 Examine SOURCES 5–7 again. How reliable are these sources in helping us gain an understanding of Australians’ attitudes to other races?

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
4 Identify three attitudes to race that have been expressed in this section. Explain whether you think these attitudes are still present in Australian society today. Support your answer with some current examples and try to explain why attitudes may have changed or remained the same.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
5 Is the desire for a White Australia simply a product of blind hatred towards other races, or was it a product of other social issues it attempted to redress? Debate this question in class.

4.14 Review

This final subtopic provides a range of opportunities for you to review and respond through:

i revising and checking your historical knowledge
ii demonstrating your ability to apply historical concepts and skills.

Review contents

• A timeline of events relevant to the topic
• A summary of the knowledge presented in each topic
• A multiple choice test
• Short answer or extended writing responses
• A review of the big questions introduced at the beginning of the topic

The image is a page from a book, titled Topic 4 Australia (1750–1918): Colonisation and conflict, containing a section on historical activities and review opportunities.