

How have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literary texts emerged in Australia?

Australian Curriculum Links

English/Year 9/Literature/Literature and Context/ACELT1633

Australian Curriculum Content Description

ACELT1633 Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts

Australian Curriculum Elaboration

Analysing literary texts created by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (including documentaries, picture books, print texts and other multimodal texts)

Australians Together Elaborations



The Wound



Our History



Why Me?



Our Cultures



My Response

Essential question

How have texts by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples changed throughout Australian history?

Introduction

This topic provides the opportunity for students to explore how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have traditionally been represented in literature in Australia. They examine stereotypes of people and misrepresentations of culture. Students then consider how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples write about their communities and cultures.

Glossary

Terms that may need to be introduced to students prior to teaching the resource:

Assimilate/assimilation: the idea of abandoning your culture and language and taking on all aspects of a new culture and language.

Black Power: a movement in the United States of America that argued African Americans should show pride in their shared history and unique culture. This contrasted with Martin Luther King's more assimilationist, respectable approach.

Decolonisation movements: during the 20th century, many colonised people around the world campaigned for independence, through learning, writing, protesting and military action.

Derogatory stereotypes: ideas about a group of people that assume that they are less intelligent or more likely to commit crime.

Dreaming stories: stories from traditional Aboriginal cultures that teach about the past, and often contain ideas and lessons about expectations and behaviours.

Elder: a person in Aboriginal society who has gained recognition for their knowledge of culture.

Europeans/British/early settlers/colonisers/occupiers/invaders/convicts/free settlers/First Fleet: various terms used to describe Europeans who came to live in Australia.


Inferior: having a lower status.



Missionaries: people who come to live in a different culture to their own with the aim of sharing and promoting their religion.



Primitive/primitivism: a society that is less developed, less advanced or less modern.

Protection: the set of rules brought in to try and end the Frontier Wars. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were under control of the Protector in their area, who had the responsibility for their welfare.

Traditional knowledge/traditional culture: ideas and learning that existed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures before European occupation.

	Teacher guidance	Ideas for student activities
 <p>The Wound</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on the issue</p>	<p><i>It's a good idea to introduce students to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives at the beginning of a study; so, their views don't become peripheral to the topic.</i></p> <p>Derogatory stereotypes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – for example, depicting them as primitive – have existed since colonisation began.</p> <p>Indigenous cultures have been largely misinterpreted in texts by non-Indigenous peoples. For generations, this discriminatory view has led to misunderstanding, and racist policies.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers are attempting to redress this problem.</p>	<p>Class discussion</p> <p>Brainstorm as a class all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors, filmmakers and writers you can think of.</p> <p>Class investigation</p> <p>In the school library, ask each student in the class to locate a book by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander author. Sitting in a circle, take turns showing and introducing each book. If there are insufficient books, ask students to locate a book about Indigenous matters. Discuss the proportions of each during the circle time.</p>

	Teacher guidance	Ideas for student activities
 <p>Our History</p> <p>A background to the issue</p>	<p><i>Below is a summary of the information on the student handout:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europeans have long been fascinated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and ways of living. They frequently assumed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were inferior, which reinforced negative perceptions. • Under the system of protection, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were expected to abandon their languages and cultures. Despite this, traditional knowledge was secretively passed to younger generations. • Due to ongoing disadvantage, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had limited opportunities to higher education. • Since the 1960s; when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors, storytellers, songwriters and performers increased in prominence; Indigenous film, theatre, television and literature has emerged with complex representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 	<p>Reflection and writing task</p> <p>Think about the traditional culture of your own family. Is it the same as mainstream Australian culture? If you are non-Indigenous, is there any remaining culture that has existed prior to your family emigrating to Australia? Discuss why/why not. If you are Indigenous, to what extent has your family been able to maintain traditional culture, knowledge and language? Why?</p> <p>Discussion point</p> <p>What should authors be aware of when they are writing about people of different cultures?</p> <p>Research task</p> <p>Research poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal or activist Charles Perkins. Write an essay about their lives.</p>
 <p>Why Me?</p> <p>Why am I learning this? What do I need to know to understand the issues?</p>	<p><i>Depending on the interests of your students, and the materials you have access to, create a short collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authored texts for students to examine.</i></p> <p>You may choose to include some of the early Black Power-style video texts, and the poetry of Oodgeroo Noonuccal as a point of comparison with more contemporary texts. You could examine song lyrics from influential bands such as No Fixed Address, Warumpi Band or Yothu Yindi.</p> <p>Oodgeroo Noonuccal's poems are available here: https://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/noonuccal-oodgeroo/poems</p> <p>If your school library doesn't yet code or identify Indigenous books, you could discuss with your school librarian ways to make Indigenous texts more visible. You could recommend the following Indigenous publishers:</p> <p>Magabala Books https://www.magabala.com</p> <p>AIATSIS http://aiatsis.gov.au/publications/books</p>	<p>Book report</p> <p>Read a book by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander author. Write a review on it.</p> <p>Comparative analysis</p> <p>Find a text by a non-Indigenous author and a text by an Indigenous author. Compare how each represents Indigenous culture and peoples.</p> <p>Poetry text analysis</p> <p>Read some poems or song lyrics by Oodgeroo Noonuccal or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander poets/songwriters. Discuss how effective poetry and popular song is as a form of protest or disagreement with society/government.</p>

	Teacher guidance	Ideas for student activities
 <p>Our Cultures</p> <p>Are there any ways that more knowledge of Indigenous cultures can help broaden our understanding of this topic?</p>	<p><i>When teaching content relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, teachers need to spend time engaging in a positive and thoughtful examination of culture and knowledge systems.</i></p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have oral traditions to keep and share stories, culture and knowledge. Without this system, the culture cannot be kept alive. That's why it's important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to have ways to share knowledge from older to younger generations.</p> <p>Traditionally in Europe, parts of the world with oral traditions have been regarded as 'prehistoric'. It's important to have the perspective that oral traditions are not a state of primitivism, but rather a part of a culture that's evolved differently.</p> <p>All cultures change over time, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have selected and adapted aspects of other cultures to create modern interpretations and styles.</p> <p>As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors, storytellers, songwriters and performers have increased in number and prominence, more complex representations of culture and identity have emerged.</p>	<p>Research task</p> <p>Conduct a search on the National Library of Australia catalogue for texts on the subject of 'Aboriginal Australians' between 1788 and 1850. Look through the results. What patterns can you find? What language is used, and what subject matter about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is focused on? Write a report on your analysis.</p> <p>Cultural activity</p> <p>Find out about 'yarning circles'. Locate a place outside in the school yard to have a class discussion about Indigenous texts.</p> <p>Cultural activity</p> <p>Invite a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander author/songwriter or expert on culture to your school (paid for their time, of course!).</p>
 <p>My Response</p> <p>How does this lesson help us do our part to work towards justice and reconciliation?</p>	<p><i>This Key Idea concludes the unit and asks students to consider how they would reframe the situation in Australia to bring about justice and equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There are many ways to respond, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become a critical reader. When you're reading a text, think about how the background of the author/s might have influenced how they are writing about groups of people. • Find texts about Indigenous matters or content that are written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. 	<p>Class discussion and debate</p> <p>How much power and influence does literature have to change perceptions of a group in society? What type of text has greater influence – e.g. film or novel?</p> <p>Promotional activity</p> <p>Design a poster for the school library encouraging others to read and engage with Indigenous-authored texts.</p>
<p>Other resources</p>	<p>There are many media articles that describe issues relating to portrayals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in literature, and some of the debates that are currently being had in the sector. Conduct a web search to locate recent, relevant articles. For example: Cultural appropriation in literature https://theconversation.com/australia-literatures-legacies-of-cultural-appropriation-103672</p>	