

The Frontier Wars: Consequences of colonisation for Aboriginal peoples

Australian Curriculum Links

Humanities and Social Sciences/7-10 History/Year 9/Historical Knowledge and Understanding/Australia and Asia/Making a Nation/ACDSEH020

Australian Curriculum Content Description

ACDSEH020 The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Australian Curriculum Elaboration

Explaining the effects of contact (for example, the massacres of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; their killing of sheep; the spread of European diseases) and categorising these effects as either intended or unintended.

Australians Together Elaborations



The Wound



Our History



Why Me?



Our Cultures



My Response

Essential question

What importance do the Frontier Wars have today for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples?

Introduction

This activity examines the emergence of the Frontier Wars as part of the European colonisation of Australia. Ideally, students require prior knowledge of the circumstances of Europeans' first arrival, and the impact of disease in the first few decades. They examine the case study of the Myall Creek massacre and subsequent trial and punishment of Europeans, and with teacher guidance examine conflict and massacres in their local area. Students will consider Aboriginal perspectives on the Frontier Wars and come up with their own thoughts on how they should be considered as a part of Australian history.

Glossary

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

Capital offence: a crime that's so serious that a death penalty is considered appropriate.

Dispossession/dispossessed: having a possession taken away; often used to describe the forced taking of land off Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Displacement: being moved away from land that's traditionally been lived upon.

Europeans/British/Early settlers/Colonisers/Occupiers/Invaders/Convicts/Free settlers/First Fleet: various terms used to describe Europeans who came to live in Australia.



Frontier settlements: a term used to describe newly created European farm areas on Aboriginal Country. 'Frontier' means 'border' or 'edge'.


Frontier Wars: the organised conflict that occurred between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples defending their Country, and Europeans who wanted to use land for their own purposes.



Intergenerational trauma: the ongoing physical, mental and emotional effects of past violence and injustices.

Missions and reserves: places created by the British where surviving Aboriginal peoples were required to live.

System of protection: a policy that aimed to stop the violence and killing of Aboriginal peoples by moving them away from their Country.

	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>Due to colonisation, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been negatively affected through dispossession of land, displacement and disease. Violent conflicts such as the Frontier Wars between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Europeans resulted in many deaths. The effects and ongoing impact have been felt by generations ever since and are often referred to as intergenerational trauma.</p> <p>Because the Frontier Wars are largely unknown, unrecognised and unacknowledged by most Australians, this continues to invalidate the ongoing experiences and suffering of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today, which is evident through the gap in health, education and life expectancy.</p>	<p>Class discussion or debate</p> <p>Should we have a national day of remembrance for those who died during the Frontier Wars?</p> <p>Research task</p> <p>Often Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' voices are difficult to find in accounts about Australian history. On the internet, see if you can find Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' views and commentary about the Frontier Wars. Write a summary of how easy or difficult you found this process.</p>
 <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"> • The Frontier Wars were the period of violent conflict between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Europeans who wanted to recreate a European system of farming settlements. The Frontier Wars happened at different times across Australia. • Indigenous resistance led to an acceptance among many Europeans that killing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities was a solution. • Europeans in frontier settlements who questioned the killing were often regarded as outcasts. • It's been estimated that hundreds of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were massacred and several hundred European people were killed in conflicts during this time. 	<p>Research task</p> <p>Find out more about the Myall Creek massacre trials. There were a lot of complications during the time. Create a simple, illustrated timeline with your information.</p> <p>Research task</p> <p>Find letters to the newspaper or other primary source documents that show differing opinions towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples during the time of the Frontier Wars. Write a summary using correctly cited quotations from the documents.</p>

	Teacher guidance	Ideas for student activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public discussion among Europeans about the morality of colonisation led to the British government insisting on the system of protection. The Myall Creek massacre in northern New South Wales in 1838 led to a trial with seven Europeans hanged. Protection meant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were further dispossessed from ancestral lands by being moved to missions and reserves. Investigation into the Frontier Wars has shown that massacres occurred as recently as 1930. 	<p>Research task Find out about a European person who was given the position of chief protector in an Australian colony during the 1800s. Write a summary of their background and their actions as protector.</p> <p>Map analysis task Investigate by mapping massacres across Australia. Come up with reasons to describe the spatial distribution of massacres.</p>
 <p>Why Me?</p> <p>Why am I learning this? What do I need to know to understand the issues?</p>	<p><i>This section focuses on student activities that promote an in-depth understanding of the issues.</i></p> <p>The example of what happened in Myall Creek can be used to further explore and understand the experience of dispossession of Aboriginal people in your local area or state.</p> <p>In many parts of Australia, there were resistance fighters who became well-known at the time and whose experiences are being revived by historians. They include Pemulwuy in western Sydney, Yagan in Perth, and Windradyne in Bathurst.</p> <p>The Black War in Tasmania has been extensively researched and has many accessible resources.</p> <p>Archaeologists are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to locate and document the sites of massacres.</p> <p>Explore the following resources to improve your knowledge and your students' knowledge on the topic.</p> <p>Text resources Elder, B 1998, Blood on the wattle: Massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians since 1788, rev. edn, New Holland, Frenchs Forest</p> <p>Each chapter contains detailed accounts of separate massacres, including Myall Creek.</p> <p>Perkins, R & Langton, M 2008, First Australians, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne</p> <p>Web resources The first four episodes of the First Australians video series details events from state to state during the time of the Frontier Wars. http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/</p> <p>Torres Strait Islander peoples experienced massacres during their later colonisation. Read this article to gain an introductory understanding of their experiences. https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/25/asia/aboriginal-massacre-australia-intl/index.html</p>	<p>Extended research task Research killings and massacres from the time of the Frontier Wars in your state. Choose to write an essay or an illustrated educational information brochure for visitors/tourists.</p> <p>Extended creative task Research a resistance fighter from the Frontier Wars. Write a script for a play or film about their life experiences.</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>Teachers need to spend time, when teaching content relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, engaging in a positive and thoughtful examination of culture and knowledge systems.</i></p> <p>The two different groups – Europeans, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – had an incompatible approach to using the land. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had a careful and sophisticated system of managing the scarce resources in their Country. They had areas which they used for cultivation; for harvesting medicines and materials used for day-to-day living; and they generally moved around their Country during different seasons for efficient management of resources. In summary, they ensured that they did not exhaust or deplete what they had available to survive.</p> <p>In contrast, Europeans had no understanding of this way of life, or the close connections between culture and Country. Many assumed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples moved around aimlessly, and when they observed culture, didn't distinguish it from the cultures of other Indigenous communities and groups.</p>	<p>Reflection task</p> <p>Is there any way that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could have kept their traditional way of life alongside Europeans establishing farming communities?</p> <p>Research task</p> <p>Many European farming practices have been harmful to the Australian environment. Research some Indigenous ideas about environmental sustainability. Write a summary about how they could be used by farmers to improve the land.</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"> • Discussing with others why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may have a different perspective of Australian history, due to their dispossession of land, violence, and the intentional removal of children and families. Acknowledge how they continue to experience trauma because of this history. • Learning different perspectives and facts about colonisation in Australia from 1788. • Checking for ways that historical texts and contemporary media sources talk about colonisation and the Frontier Wars. Always consider whether Indigenous perspectives are missing or being minimised. 	<p>Class discussion or debate</p> <p>Should Anzac Day remembrance services (in their modern interpretation) include the resistance fighters of the Frontier Wars?</p> <p>Class discussion or reflection</p> <p>Is it easy to think about how the massacres of ordinary people is part of our history in Australia? How should we think about and remember/commemorate these people?</p> <p>Class discussion or reflection</p> <p>European farmers had been led to believe by their government that they had a right to the land in Australia. Many of them had experienced poverty in Europe and endured terrible hardship in their attempts to establish farms. How should we remember them?</p> <p>Personal reflection</p> <p>Former Prime Minister John Howard famously said that he wanted Australians to remember their history in a positive and uplifting way. Do you understand his point of view? Write a half-page reflection on your thoughts, using evidence from your learning.</p>

	Teacher guidance	Ideas for student activities
Other resources	<p>It's a good idea to locate the most recent information on research into the Frontier Wars, to share with students. News sites often cover new research and discoveries. The following articles are useful examples:</p> <p>The map of Indigenous massacre sites grows every day. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-27/map-of-indigenous-massacres-grows-to-include-more-sites/10040206</p> <p>Evidence of 250 massacres of Indigenous Australians. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jul/27/evidence-of-250-massacres-of-indigenous-australians-mapped</p> <p>Reynolds, H 1998. This whispering in our hearts. Allen and Unwin, Sydney</p>	