



Australian Government

endeavour250
Reflecting on Australia's History

Hints and secret instructions

Examining the motives, actions and impact of Cook's decision to 'take possession' of Australia.



Year Level: 9



History



Ethical Understandings



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures





Hints and secret instructions

OVERVIEW

Captain Cook's famous Endeavour voyage was commissioned by the Royal Society of London as a scientific mission.

Prior to his departure in 1768, Cook received two sets of directives. The first came from the Society's President, Earl Morton. Morton also gave 'hints' related to how the people of the lands that Cook and his crew encountered should be treated. His hints firmly assert Aboriginal occupants' ownership of the land.

The second set of orders came from the British Admiralty (under the direction of King George III). Upon learning of this voyage, he provided Cook with 'secret instructions' that directed him 'with the Consent of the Natives [to] take possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain'.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students consider the relevance and significance of Captain Cook to contemporary society, and related public controversy.

Students analyse the 'hints' and 'secret instructions' given to Cook, and critically examine his decision to follow the King's instructions and 'take possession' of the 'Great South Land'.

Students understand the contexts informing Cook's actions and explore how his early interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were informed by these directives.

Students evaluate a range of perspectives on the long-term legacy of Cook's decision and actions.

LEARNING AREAS



History



Ethical Understandings



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

DURATION OF LESSONS



4–6 lessons





Australian Curriculum

HISTORY – YEAR 9

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITIES



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

GENERAL CAPABILITIES



Ethical Understanding

- Explore the emergence and nature of significant economic, social and political ideas in the period 1750–1918 ([ACOKFH019](#))



Engage

Why is Captain Cook a controversial historical figure in contemporary society and why do we commemorate him?

There is contemporary debate about Captain Cook: who he was, what he did and why. There is also significant debate in regard to commemoration of the man and his mission. Undeniably this is linked to Cook's decision to 'take possession' of Australia and the intended and unintended consequences of this decision. As it frames this learning sequence, it is important to engage with this debate.

Ask students to identify prior knowledge of Captain Cook and his voyages to the Pacific using the [Think Puzzle Explore](#) thinking routine. Once prior knowledge has been established, ask students to watch this [video excerpt](#) and ask them to record any newly acquired information or puzzles to their existing Think Puzzle Explore.

There are a number of differing, complex perceptions of Cook, ranging from heroic navigator to exterminator of the First Peoples. Use the following online resources to gain an understanding of these opposing views.

- What are the differing public perceptions of Captain Cook? Have these changed over time? [The Pacific: Sam's Diary](#) (see The Plain Facts and Do I like Cook?)
- [University of Technology Big Thinking Forum – Indigenous Australia and Captain Cook: Setting the Agenda for 2020](#) (see from 4.55 to 10.40)
- Why is Captain Cook a controversial figure in contemporary society? [America tears down its racist history, we ignore ours.](#)

After exploring the contrasting perceptions of Captain Cook, demonstrate your understanding of these by undertaking either one of the following tasks.

- Have students (in small groups) develop a P-M-I (Plus-Minus-Interesting) chart identifying positive and negative perceptions of Cook, (as well as who might hold these and why) and areas for further inquiry. To do this, students will need to consider how past and present values and attitudes can differ and shape perspectives. Suggest that students remember this throughout the following tasks.
- So that students demonstrate their understanding of the differing perspectives on Cook, ask them to participate in a [Barometer activity](#) that raises the response to the question posed within the resource named Captain Cook – a god or a devil?

Explore

What directives was Captain Cook given on his voyages to the Pacific?

Cook travelled with two different sets of directives. Ask students to identify and unpack the purpose(s) of Cook's voyages to the Pacific and, as a class, develop a concept map to demonstrate understanding. Use the [Project Zero Map of Understanding](#) to do so. Some useful articles/video excerpts include:

- [Captain Cook's 1768 voyage to the South Pacific included a secret mission](#)
- [HMB Endeavour's voyage of exploration](#) (chapters 2 and 3)
- [Hints offered to the consideration of Captain Cook](#)
- [Secret instructions](#)

When studying history, analysing primary sources enables you to gain a deeper understanding of a historical event. Now that the reasons behind the voyages have been uncovered, ask students (working in small groups), to delve deeper into the reasoning behind Cook's voyages by undertaking a comparative primary source analysis of two very important documents. To do so, use this [SCIM-C](#) template.

The comparative documents can be accessed via the following links:

- [Earl of Morton and Royal Society of London President James Douglas's hints to Cook \(1768\)](#)
- [King George III's secret instructions to Cook \(1768\)](#)

After you have analysed your documents, add any newly gained knowledge of the reasoning behind Cook's voyages to your Map of Understanding, paying special attention to the differing viewpoints you have encountered.



Explain

How and why do these directives differ?

A more complex understanding of historical events can be achieved through an awareness of the time period under investigation. Introduce the geopolitical (American Revolution) and ideological (Enlightenment and egalitarianism) contexts shaping Captain Cook's voyages to the Pacific. Ask students to evaluate the intentions/motivations of both Earl Morton and King George III in view of these contexts. When they have done so, ask students to create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the advice each directive provides about encounters with 'Natives'.

Useful articles for these activities include:

- [Transporting convicts: The impact of the American Revolution on the Pacific](#)
- [Voyages of discovery](#)

An analysis of language used in the past is integral to our understanding of time periods and the mindset of individuals and groups. Ask students to identify and define relevant terminology ('natives', settlement, colonisation, conquest, discovery, invasion, oppression, genocide, etc) and consider how terminology has changed over time. See the [United Nations 2007 Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), in which the United Nations criticises practices like the Doctrine of Discovery.

Ask students to critically discuss the phrase 'with consent of the natives' and the role of the myth of terra nullius in facilitating the act of 'possession' (see the anti-racism resource [Terra nullius](#)). To do so, consider getting students to have a [silent conversation](#), as this will enable all voices to be shared and all ideas to be focused upon.



Elaborate

How did these directives shape Cook's interaction with Indigenous Australians?

How is Cook viewed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today?

Ask students to evaluate the extent to which Cook followed Earl Morton's advice about Indigenous inhabitants. To do so, view excerpts from [The Pacific in the Wake of Captain Cook](#), Episode 3.

In small groups students complete a jigsaw activity examining a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on the significance of Cook.

- [An Indigenous Australian perspective on Cook's arrival](#)
- [Cook and the Pacific](#)
- [Mark McKenna essay: Unkept promises](#)
- [Stan Grant on a 'damaging myth' that Cook discovered Australia](#)
- [Mark Maynard essay: 'I'm Captain Cooked': Aboriginal perspectives](#)
- [Indigenous Languages exhibition features untold story of Cook encounters](#)

As a class, students collate and categorise key phrases and quotes reflecting varied contemporary perspectives on Cook. Use the [Generate, Sort, Connect, Elaborate thinking routine](#) to do so.

Evaluate

How have Cook's decisions and actions shaped perspectives of his legacy?

- Remind students of the initial Barometer activity (Captain Cook – a god or a devil?), which they did at the end of the Engage section in this learning sequence, and repeat it. Discuss alterations to the barometer and students' reasons for changes.
- To have students demonstrate an understanding of the multiple layers of meaning associated with the Cook voyages, ask students to participate in an [Unveiling Stories Global Thinking Routine](#). Set this up as bus stop activity and have students work in small groups to visit five 'bus stops' that unveil each of the stories by answering the following questions with reference to Cook and his voyage: What is the story? What is the human story? What is the world story? What is the new Story? What is the untold story?
- Ask students to collate all their knowledge of the Cook voyages, directives and perspectives, by adding to their earlier Map of Understanding. Be sure to incorporate a range of historical evidence collected in this learning sequence.

ASSESSMENT

- Students design a two-sided commemorative coin that reflects two different views of Cook.
- They provide a 250-word rationale for each side, using the evidence provided in this learning sequence.





Australian Government

Department of Education, Skills and Employment

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Communications**

Copyright

© 2020 Commonwealth of Australia, unless otherwise indicated.



This material may be used in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)) licence, unless otherwise indicated.

Australian Curriculum material: © Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (**ACARA**) 2010 to present, unless otherwise indicated. This material was downloaded from the Australian Curriculum website (www.australiancurriculum.edu.au) (accessed 25/2/2020) and was not modified. The material is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Author

Catherine Hart