The Gold Rush

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Stage 3

History: Year 5

Topic: The Australian Colonies in the 1880s

The founding of British colonies and the development of a colony. Students learn about what life was like for different groups of people in the colonial period. They examine significant events and people, political and economic developments, social structures, and settlement patterns.

Key inquiry question #1: What do we know about the lives of people in Australia's colonial past and how do we know?

Key inquiry question #2: How did an Australian colony develop over time and why?

Key inquiry question #3: What were the significant events and who were the significant people that shaped Australian colonies?

Content summary

The impact of a significant development or event on a colony; for example, frontier conflict, the gold rushes, the Eureka Stockade, internal exploration, the advent of rail, the expansion of farming, drought. (ACHHK095).

Students:

- identify events that have shaped Australia's identity and discuss why they were significant
- use a range of sources to investigate ONE significant development or event and its impact on the chosen colony.

In this unit of work the term 'Indigenous' is used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Background notes

The first mention of gold being found in Australia was by a convict in August 1788. He claimed some gold dust found in his possession was from a source in Sydney Harbour. It was later found he had been filing down a gold coin and using the story to get clothing and other items from ships' crews; he was severely punished.

It is however possible that gold was found within the first thirty years of settlement. Oral tradition in the Macquarie family says that in 1820 Mrs Macquarie (Governor Macquarie's wife) gave gold found in NSW as a wedding present to her niece in Scotland.

The first official mention of the discovery of gold is in 1823, shortly after the Macquaries left. Surveyor James McBrien, who was surveying Fish River, east of Bathurst, wrote in his Field Book that, 'at this place I found numerous particles of gold in the sand'.

In 1839 Polish explorer Count Paul Strzelecki observed gold particles in Gippsland rock but Governor Gipps, who feared convict unrest if they heard of the discovery, asked him to say nothing. Similarly in 1844 when geologist W B Clarke presented Gipps with a gold sample he found near Bathurst, Gipps supposedly told him, 'Put it away, Mr Clarke, or we shall all have our throats cut'.

It was not until 1851 that Edward Hargraves was credited with, and rewarded for, finding a location with a significant quantity of gold. This honour was later disputed by various people including William and James Tom and
John Lister who had worked the site Hargraves claimed to have found alone. In 1891 a Committee recognised these men and not Hargraves as the first people to discover payable gold in Australia.

By this time Australia had changed forever. In 1852 gold was also discovered in much larger quantities in the newly named colony of Victoria. This created massive social upheaval and led to the settlement of new areas. The 1850s gold rushes altered the nature of Australian society permanently. It caused a huge influx of migrants, a sudden increase in wealth, and was significant in bringing about a desire for self-government and the end of the transportation of convicts.

Student Activities

- Activity 1
- Activity 2
- Activity 3
- Activity 4
- Activity 5

Activity 1


Students use extracts taken from Eugene von Guerard's diary, dated from 1852-54 and a portrait painted of him to investigate what life was like on the goldfields.

Number of set tasks: 1
Activity 2

**Satire on gold diggers**

Thomas Harriott drew this satirical cartoon in 1852. Students examine the cartoon and answer questions.

Number of set tasks: 1
Activity 3

The Arrival of the First Gold Escort [6]

The First Gold Escort arrived in William Street, Melbourne in 1852. Students examine the source and answer questions.

Number of set tasks: 1
Activity 4

**Inside William Essington King's tent**

Students examine a sketch of the inside of William Essington King's tent on the Braidwood goldfields in 1852 and use evidence to answer questions.

Number of set tasks: 1
Activity 5

**Mining Camp** [8]

Students examine a painting of a typical mining camp in NSW or Victoria and answer questions and research gold washing cradles.

Number of set tasks: 1
NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum History K-10

- [Outcomes](#)
- [Historical skills](#)
- [Historical concepts](#)
- [LAC](#)

**Outcomes**

A student:

- HT3-1 describes and explains the significance of people, groups, places and events to the development of Australia

**Historical skills**
Students:

Comprehension: Chronology, terms and concepts

- use historical terms and concepts (ACHHS099, ACHHS118)

Use of sources

- locate information related to inquiry questions in a range of sources (ACHHS102, ACHHS121)
- compare information from a range of sources (ACHHS103, ACHHS122)

Perspectives and interpretations

- use historical terms and concepts (ACHHS099, ACHHS118)

Historical concepts

- **Cause and effect**: events, decisions or developments in the past that produce later actions, results or effects
- **Significance**: the importance of an event, development or individual/group

LAC

Learning across the curriculum

- Literacy
- Difference and diversity

Student Activities

- Activity #1
- Activity #2
- Activity #3
- Activity #4
- Activity #5

Activity #1

**The Gold Rush** [4]

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Related content

Holtermann Collection [9]

The Holtermann Collection of 3,500 glass plate negatives from the 1870s has been recognised in the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World register.

Holtermann's Hill End [10]

The preservation and rehousing of over 3500 glass plate negatives in the Holtermann collection is now underway.
Eureka! The rush for gold [11]

The gold rushes and the diggers who worked the goldfields are etched into Australian folklore. Follow the story of the people who sought the glittering prize.

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Links