Stage 3
History: Year 5
**Topic:** The Australian Colonies in the 1800s
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:** What were the significant events and who were the significant people that shaped Australian colonies?

**Featured Content**

Mari Nawi: Aboriginal Odysseys

Video of Mari Nawi: Aboriginal Odysseys

[https://www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) [1]
To download the Mari Nawi: Aboriginal Odysseys transcript, click [here](#) [2].

**Content Summary**

The nature of convict or colonial presence, including the factors that influenced patterns of development, aspects of the daily life of the inhabitants (including Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples) and how the environment changed. (ACHHK094)

The activities are designed to introduce students to images as historical records of people, places and events in the past.

Students examine images from the State Library of NSW to investigate the different perspectives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the 1800s.

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

**Background Notes for Teachers**

In 1851 the district of Port Phillip separated from New South Wales and became the colony of Victoria. In 1855 it became self-governing.

The 1850s was the height of the gold rushes in Victoria. Between 1851 and 1861 the population rose from 75,000 to 500,000. Many people were moving to the country to the diggings and elsewhere. At the same time pastoral interests were growing and more and more land was fenced off. All this forced local Aboriginal peoples into increasingly dependant relationships with Europeans.

Johann Joseph Eugene von Guerard was born in Austria in 1812 and studied painting before arriving in Victoria to try his luck on the new goldfields. However he found working as an artist paid better and soon gained a reputation for his beautiful landscape paintings. He travelled widely across Australia and New Zealand for many years producing numerous sketches and pictures. In 1870 von Guerard was appointed the First Master of Painting at the National Gallery School, Melbourne and Curator of the National Gallery of Victoria. He eventually returned to Europe in 1882 and died in London in 1901.

Johnny Kangatong was an Indigenous youth aged between 14 and 15 when he was employed by the pastoralist and friend of Aboriginal people, James Dawson, as a stockman in 1855 at Kangatong station near Port Fairy in Victoria.

In 1855 Eugene von Guerard was commissioned by James Dawson to paint the landscape of nearby Tower Hill and the two met, with von Guerard encouraging Johnny Kangatong to paint and draw. Von Guerard retained and labelled several of these drawings, which are the only known existing artistic output of Johnny Kangatong.

There is conjecture that Johnny Kangatong, the artist, is most likely the same person as the Indigenous boy who was baptised at the Framlingham Aboriginal Station in 1886 as Johnny Dawson (taking his last name after the station owner James Dawson). The Board for the Protection of Aborigines gives his date of birth as 1842.
Johnny Kangatong married and had four children. He died in 1883, aged only forty-two, from 'consumption' (tuberculosis). His wife Sarah died in 1935, aged almost ninety.

Johnny Kangatong's drawings are an invaluable historical source because they provide us with an Indigenous man's view of Europeans. Unlike so many other Indigenous artists of colonial and pre-colonial history, Johnny Kangatong is not a faceless, anonymous person. And fortunately we have other historical records that tell us who he was and even what he looked like. Eugene von Guerard's excellent sketches of Johnny Kangatong provide a two-way perspective of the interactions between Indigenous people and European settlers in the 1800s.

Because most of our impressions and interpretations of exchanges between the two cultures are from the point of view of Europeans, Johnny Kangatong's art is extremely important. The value of such works is their contribution to our understanding of the intelligence and adaptability of Indigenous people in the face of overwhelming change. Having such a window through which to look back at Europeans at this time negates our prejudices that there is only one way to see things or that Indigenous people were only a passive presence in the landscape.

**Student Activities**

- **Activity 1**

**Asking historical questions** [3]

Students use images and written sources to ask and answer historical questions.

Number of set tasks: 4
Activity Notes for Teachers

Activity: Teacher guided visual source analysis.

Step 1

Use inquiry words such as 'who, what, where, how, when and why' to analyse the visual sources provided. (Do not tell students anything about the artist who drew the picture)

Step 2

- Reveal to students the identity of the artists and the subjects of the images:
  - Source 1: 'Women with parasols' by Johnny Kangatong, 1855
  - Source 2: Eugene von Guerard by Johnny Kangatong, 1855
Step 3

- Explain the historical concept of perspective (the point-of-view of a person who lived in the past).
- Discuss the different perspectives of Johnny Kangatong and von Guerard.
- Explain that Johnny Kangatong's drawings give us an insight into his view of the world and how he was trying to make sense of the changes in society he had experienced.

Step 4

Students use Sources 1 to 4 to explain how life had changed for Aboriginal people as a result of British Colonisation and about this artistic encounter of two cultures.

Inquiry Questions

- What do the drawings by Johnny Kangatong and Eugene von Guerard tell us about the relationship between these two people?
- What do they tell us about how life had changed for Aboriginal people as a result of British Colonisation?

Additional Resources

For another image of Johnny Dawson see the Robert Dowling: Tasmanian son of Empire [4], Exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia. The two standing figures to the left are considered to be Johnny Dawson and his wife Sarah, visitors to the camp.


‘Sort of like reading a map’ [7]: a community report on the survival of south-east Australian Aboriginal art since 1834, p. 10-11

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
- HT3-2 describes and explains different experiences of people living in Australia over time
- HT3-5 applies a variety of skills of historical inquiry and communication

Historical Skills

Students:

Research

- identify and pose questions to inform an historical inquiry

Analysis and use of sources

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

Perspectives and interpretations

- identify different points of view in the past and present (ACHHS104, ACHHS123)

Explanation and communication

- develop texts, particularly narratives and descriptions, which incorporate source materials (ACHHS105, ACHHS124)
- use a range of communication forms (oral, graphic, written) and digital technologies(ACHHS106, ACHHS125)

Historical concepts

- Perspectives: people from the past will have different views and experiences
- Empathetic understanding: an understanding of another’s point of view, way of life and decisions made in a different time

LAC

Learning across the curriculum

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
- Literacy

Cross-curriculum links

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
Code Organising ideas - People

OL.9 Australia acknowledges the significant contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people locally and globally.

Teachers should be aware that, in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, hearing names or seeing images of deceased persons may cause sadness or distress, particularly to the relatives of these people.

Student Activities

- Activity #1

Activity #1

**Asking historical questions** [3]

Students use images and written sources to ask and answer historical questions.

Number of set tasks: 4
Related content

Rediscovering Indigenous Languages project [8]

Browse Indigenous Australian language material from our collection.

Eora [9]
Delve deep into the stories of Indigenous Sydney before European settlement, created through a close and innovative interrogation of the European records of early colonisation.


Links