TEACHING FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVES

You Can Teach That: 'White Australia has a Black history'

Emeritus Professor Richard Broome

Important notice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers: Pages linked throughout this resource may contain names, images, and footage of persons who are now deceased. We acknowledge the significance and sensitivity of this content and advise reader and viewer discretion.

Curriculum overview

Through subject English, students explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural knowledge, traditions and experiences as they are represented and communicated through text. Specifically, subject English provides students with the opportunity to:

- Appreciate and investigate texts created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and illustrators
- Analyse and respond to texts that explores the histories, cultures and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Examine texts that include events, Country/Place, identities and languages, and
- Discuss the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

In the Victorian Curriculum 7–10 English Version 2.0 explicit references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures are found in the below content descriptions:

Year 7

- Identify and explore ideas, points of view, characters, events and/or issues in literary texts, drawn from different historical, cultural and/or social contexts by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and a wide range of Australian and world authors (VC2E7LE01)

Year 8

- Explain the ways that ideas, issues and points of view in literary texts drawn from diverse historical, cultural and social contexts by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors, and a wide range of Australian and world authors, may represent the values of individuals and groups (VC2E8LE01)

Year 9

- Analyse the representations of people and places in literary texts, drawn from diverse historical, cultural and social contexts, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and a wide range of Australian and world authors (VC2E9LE01)

Year 10

- Analyse representations of individuals, groups and places and evaluate how they reflect their context in literary texts by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and a wide range of Australian and world authors (VC2E10LE01)

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Cross-Curriculum Priority

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority provides more guidance around the responsibilities of educators to help students deepen their knowledge of the oldest continuous living cultures and contemporary First Nations communities. The below organising ideas are from the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Version 2.0 and are reflected in the *You Can Teach That: Teaching First Nations Perspectives* series.

Country/Place	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of Australia maintain a deep connection to, and responsibility for, Country and Place and have holistic values and belief systems that are connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways. (VC2CCPACP1)
Culture	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies are diverse and have distinct cultural expressions, such as language, customs and beliefs. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural expressions, while also maintaining the right to control, protect and develop culture as Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. (VC2CCPAC1)
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of life reflect unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing. (VC2CCPAC2)
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people belong to the world's oldest continuous cultures. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples demonstrate resilience in the maintenance, practice and revitalisation of culture despite the many historic and enduring impacts of colonisation, and they continue to celebrate and share the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures. (VC2CCPAC3)
People	Australia has 2 distinct First Nations Peoples; each encompasses a diversity of nations across Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have occupied the Australian continent and adjacent islands from time immemorial. (VC2CCPAP1)
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have sophisticated political, economic and social organisation systems, which include but are not limited to family and kinship structures, laws, traditions, customs, land tenure systems and protocols for strong governance and authority, (VC2CCPAP2)
	The significant and ongoing contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their histories and cultures are acknowledged locally, nationally and globally. (VC2CCPAP3)

Capabilities

- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Intercultural Capability
- Personal and Social Capability

Introduction to the resource

Emeritus Professor Richard Broome AM of La Trobe University is also President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. He is the author of over 20 books including *Aboriginal Australians: A History* since 1788 (5th edition, 2019) and the award-winning *Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800* (2nd edition, 2024).

In this interview for VATE's *You Can Teach That: Teaching First Nations Perspectives* series, Broome gives an account of the history of First Nations people in Victoria, touching on some of the developments in colonial policies, misconceptions about First Nations people in Victoria, and the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria have resisted and survived colonial oppression. Broome also discusses the importance of understanding the history of First Nations people in Victoria and its importance for future generations.

Key knowledge

- Frontier violence
- Impacts of colonisation
- Resistance and survival

Key concepts

- Colonisation
- Intergenerational trauma
- Protectorates and missions
- Assimilation
- Treaty
- Sovereignty

TIMESTAMP	KEY FOCUS
0:21 mins	What are some of the key milestones in the history of First Nations people in Victoria?
16:52 mins	What were some of the misconceptions that British colonisers had about Victorian First Nations people?
22:42 mins	In what ways have First Nations people in Victoria resisted and survived colonial oppression?
30:27 mins	Why is understanding the history of First Nations people in Victoria important for future generations?

A note on the Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 (Vic)

At approximately 6:05 mins of the interview while discussing the Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 (Vic), Professor Broome states that the reserves system established under Act "saved" Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While we understand his intent in using this word, we believe this is not the best way to describe the ongoing and negative impact of these places upon the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who survived them.

According to the State Library of Victoria, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who failed to meet the requirements of the Act (i.e.: those who were mixed race) were "forbidden" to live on one of the six reserves that the government had established in 1860. The Act outlined restrictions on many components of daily life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whose movements were now suddenly curtailed. The Act prescribed where they could live, how they could earn an income, how their children should be cared for, and noted that all "bedding and clothing was on loan only and shall remain the property of Her Majesty".

Where the 1869 Act compelled Victorian First Nations peoples to live on these reserves, by 1886 revisions to the Act expelled those with mixed heritage aged between eight and 34 years from the reserves. These revisions were known as the Half-Caste Act – an Act that we now know was responsible for the forcible removal of children from their families. These removed children are known as the Stolen Generations. With limited support provided, those who were expelled from the reserves were now expected to become self-sufficient and "no longer be a financial burden". For those who were eligible to remain on the reserves "freedom of movement, occupation, and conduct of a personal life such as marriage to a partner of choice, living in community with family" were all restricted. In his publication, *Aboriginal Victorians: A history since 1800*, Broome explains the government's aims in their changing approach to the reserves were twofold: to reduce the costs associated with maintaining the reserves, and forcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage to "vanish" as older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged and died, and younger, mixed heritage peoples "blended to whiteness". (p. 94). The 1997 Bringing Them Home report is a harrowing account of the long-lasting impacts of these government policies.

A note on wage theft

While Broome explained that First Nations people joined the workforce, he did not discuss or acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' wages were kept in a government trust fund that they were unable to access. At the recent Queensland Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry, witnesses spoke of making attempts to access their wages only to be given a meagre amount that was not commensurate with their time spent in paid employment. Historians have estimated that $500 million of these funds were withheld and/or stolen from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers under the Protection Act between 1938 and 1972. You can read about the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry into Stolen Wages (2006) here.

Recognising historical traumas and the ways in which they continue to impact the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a prerequisite for creating a culturally safe learning space.

A note on transitional housing

At approximately 11:15 mins of the interview, Broome discusses some opportunities for "equal" citizenship afforded to First Nations people through their compliance with transitional housing and other assimilationist policies in the 1930s. We would argue that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not treated equally through these policies or other.

The history of Victorian government legislation and supports designed to 'protect and manage' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is complex. As Manning (2004), writes, these supports were "often based on racial theories, such as 'Social Darwinism'" where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were deemed as inferior and in need of supervision and care. In the 1930s, "protectionism was replaced with assimilationism" (Manning, 2004) and these attitudes were reflected in Victoria's transitional housing welfare system – especially at Rumbalara and Manatunga – as discussed by Broome in his interview.

In 1955, the Victorian government under Henry Bolte pursued an agenda that included changes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait policies favouring assimilation. This coincided with the Menzies' government's view of the importance of the nuclear family, the family home, and the provision of housing for all Australians. As a result, the newly established Aborigines Welfare Board investigated the housing situations of First Nations Victorians and deemed their living situations (often on the fringe of major townships) as "the most urgent social problem" in Victoria at the time and that new houses to accommodate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would "uplift" their lives and facilitate their assimilation. These transitional housing settlements taught Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to 'behave' like European-Australians before being placed in mainstream society. Manning explains:

> *…residents were isolated and closely supervised by Anglo-welfare officers. Residents were expected to forego their Aboriginal lifestyle and to adopt Anglo-social mores through the use of the house. Anglo-supervisors managed the settlements and reported on the residents' conduct by regular and unannounced contact. Transitional tenants were expected to follow rules and guidelines established by government authorities. If residents adhered to these regulations they were rewarded with better housing. However, if residents ignored settlement rules, they were liable to punishment and possible eviction. This reward/punishment system reflected the manipulative nature of the transitional estates as Aboriginal people were exposed to direct State control of their lives.*

The residents of Rumbalara and Manatunga were not aware of the Board's educative policy toward the transitional housing units and the intention to use these homes as a tool for 'teaching' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people how to 'function' in a European setting. As Manning writes, "Aboriginal welfare activities at Rumbalara and Manatunga were a combination of middle-class idealism, assimilationism, humanitarianism and paternalism".

For more about assimilation policies in Victoria (and Australia):

- 'Their Ultimate Absorption': Assimilation in 1930s Australia by John Chesterman and Heather Douglas (2004)
- Bringing Them Home Report: Part 2 Tracing the History, Chapter 4 Victoria (1997)
- 'The Policy of Assimilation: Decisions of Commonwealth and State Ministers at the Native Welfare Conference, Canberra, January 26 and 27, 1961'
- The Archived History of Stolen Generations in Victoria
- Protection and segregation (1890s to the 1950s)

The following activities, prompts, lesson ideas and external links are designed to interrogate and embed the concepts, ideas, questions, themes and knowledge presented in the accompanying video. They are designed to gain further understanding of the topic and explore how the topic can be utilised, dissected, or cemented in the classroom. Materials and activities have been selected with a view to creating opportunities for bringing the content of this topic to students and colleagues.

The structure of these activities has been inspired by the 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning pedagogy framework which is grounded in the research of Dr Karen Martin and Dr Martin Nakata and created by Department of Education staff, James Cook University's School of Indigenous Studies, and the Western New South Wales Regional Aboriginal Education Team.

NON-LINEAR: Establishing cultural safety

The history of colonisation in Australia is inextricably linked to the systematic genocide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Various legislature and policies of control that curtailed the rights and freedoms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including (but not limited to), banning the use of native tongue/First Languages, forcibly removing children from their families (see the 1997 *Bringing Them Home Report*), and the use of missions and institutions to expunge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The State Library of Victoria has compiled a list of Acts and regulations that relate to the management of First Nations people in Victoria from 1869 to 1970.

Acknowledging the damage caused by colonisation and ongoing government policies prepares a foundation where healing can occur. Recognising historical traumas and the ways in which they continue to impact the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a prerequisite for creating a culturally safe learning space. Genuine cultural safety must be grounded in a knowledge of trauma and its impacts on individuals and communities. As Tujague and Ryan (2021) write, cultural safety "goes beyond cultural awareness and sensitivity". In an educational context:

- Cultural awareness is acknowledging that students may have a different cultural background to you and others in the classroom.
- Cultural sensitivity "is taking steps to understand your own culture and life experiences, and how they impact others" (Tujague and Ryan, 2021).
- And "to be culturally safe is to understand one's own culture and the cultures of others without judgement… Cultural safety is said to be present when the recipient of your work considers you safe and not a threat to their culture being accepted" (Tujague and Ryan, 2021).

The Victorian Government has a guide to creating a culturally safe classroom complete with helpful actions that schools can take for supporting cultural inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content involves a degree of planning, preparation, and learning about ways to be culturally responsive on the part of the teacher.

- In what ways do you create cultural safety in your classroom and school?
- How comfortable are you in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures?
- How do you learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures, and knowledges?
- What kind of supports do you have in place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in your care?
- Would you consider your pedagogies to be culturally responsive?

Part of creating a culturally safe classroom is ensuring that the material you choose and focus on is age and stage (year level) appropriate. While students can learn about concepts related to colonisation and its impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from a young age, some of the details and complexities of certain events or concepts are not always suitable for students as they need to be able to understand – not misunderstand. Similarly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students should not be retraumatised by exploring historical traumas. Adopting some of the pedagogical principles espoused by Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre for teaching about the Holocaust can be a helpful place to start when building a safe space. Some important strategies include:

- Reframing lessons to focus on positive elements and joy, rather than frightening or negative elements, especially before concluding the lesson.
- Select age-appropriate resources that support your rationale for embedding First Nations perspectives, voices, and histories.
- Use true stories supported by authentic resources and primary source materials.
- Avoid emotional empathy and asking students to *actually feel* what another person might feel. Instead aim for cognitive empathy (recognising how another is feeling) and compassionate empathy (helping another to deal with their situation/emotions).
- Focus on stories of survival, resistance, and continuing examples of culture thriving in society today.
- Allow time for debriefing and processing of challenging material.

Broome notes there was "violent opposition" to colonial invasion "from the start" and there was "frontier fighting in many areas". The Frontier Wars refers to all the massacres, fighting, and instances of resistance beginning with the arrival of the colonists in 1788. Many acts of violence and oppression continue to this day. Teaching about the Frontier Wars is important in understanding that this nation was formed through the violent dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and is essential in understanding and interrogating the tensions that exist between First Nations people and white Australians. Below is a list of resources that may assist you in teaching this material:

- AIATSIS Education resource on the Frontier Wars (1780s-1920s)
- *The Australian Wars* documentary and accompanying resource
- Australians Together resource on the consequences of colonisation for First Nations people
- Narragunnawali resource to support the documentary film *Occupation: Native* (in order to access this resource, and others on the Narragunnawali site, you will need to create a free account)
- Common Ground article about the Frontier Wars
- The University of Newcastle's colonial frontier massacre mapping project and an article from Lyndall Ryan to assist with interpretation.

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Grogan's research with European Australian, second year pre-service teachers (2022) found that when asked about their experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and perspectives in the classroom, pre-service teachers recalled "repetitive renditions of the drama *Rabbit Proof Fence*" without "teacher guidance, leading to othering and boredom" and the "positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in 'the past' or non-existent, with some [students] highlighting cultural insensitivity and Eurocentrism". In addition to this, "many [pre-service teachers] also noted no formal instruction [about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples] at all throughout their secondary schooling". Bishop (2020) writes that as a result "many teachers don't feel confident or capable to include Indigenous perspectives in their classrooms" and subsequently, this perpetuates "some schoolteachers' ignorance and fear" (Grogan, 2022) about teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. For some, this fear of 'not getting it right' prevents teachers from embedding First Nations perspectives in their work. Seebach (2017) argues in her research that Australian students are "bored when learning about their country's blood-drenched history because they are suppressing emotions they cannot, or find it difficult to, deal with: for example, inherited guilt". Seebach's article is an interesting read and contrasts the teaching of Holocaust history in Germany with the teaching of colonial genocide in Australia. She is careful not to compare the two but instead focuses on the ways in which the history curriculum mandates these two events and notes:

- Boredom is "an easy strategy to deal with the resentment" toward a class that evokes negative emotions in students (p. 87).
- Recognising responsibility for their ancestors' role in genocide, and the benefits that white Australian have reaped involves a degree of self-reflection.
- "Many Australians believe history should be a source of pride, and that kids should have an affirming national story with appropriate heroes and values to aspire to" (Clark, 2007, as cited in Seebach, 2017, p. 87).
- "As long as the student does not have to deal with his or her negative past and heritage and the bloody mass killings their ancestors might have committed, they are happy learning about foreign wars of parts of Australian history they can be proud of" (p. 87).
- All of this contributes to some students thinking that they are "oversaturated" with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories.

It would be worthwhile engaging with your students about these sentiments to see if they are reflected in your context. English teachers know the power of literature and storytelling in amplifying and celebrating the experiences of a diverse range of people but do students feel this is done authentically or with a view to promote healing?

- Why is it important to learn about our true history? Consider Elizabeth Balderstone, the current owner of a property in Gippsland on which the 'Warrigal Creek' massacre occurred in 1843. She recently gave evidence at the Yoorrook Justice Commission.
- How can we learn from history in order to create a more inclusive and just future?
- In what ways does the learning that students do in your English classes contribute to their perception of Australia and what it means to be Australian?
- What would make the experience of learning about these important events more engaging?

There have been policies of protection, assimilation, self-determination and reconciliation. It is now clear that none of these policies have actually made the condition of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples any better than it was prior to the invasion.

COMMUNITY LINKS: Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land

Broome outlines seven broad phases that teachers can use to explain the important developments in the colonial invasion of Victoria. These can be simplified as:

1. The beginnings of colonisation and the Frontier period from 1834 when Europeans occupied Portland in southwest Victoria.
2. The period of "protection and control" from 1860 to 1886 where First Nations people were moved to missions, reserves and stations under the Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 (Vic).
3. "Absorption and control" from 1886 to 1857 with the introduction of the Aborigines Protections Act 1886 (Vic) which removed those of mixed descent from the reserves and separated families.
4. The Aborigines Act 1910 allowed the government to continue to enact laws about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people until 1957 which marked the introduction of a devastating Assimilation Policy. Active policies during this period through to the 1970s facilitated the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children from their families (the Stolen Generations).
5. The 1950 and 60s saw the establishment of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League, led by Doug Nicholls, and the 1967 referendum which lead to the creation of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs that funded community organisations, legal services, and health services.
6. "Renaissance of culture" and self-determination, with the growth of First Nations corporations and many First Nations initiatives being run and controlled by First Nations people.
7. Recent decades that are marked by the pursuit of the Voice, Truth, and Treaty as outlined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

As Wiradjuri author Dr Anita Heiss writes for *Barani: Sydney's Aboriginal History*:

> *The common justification for most policies for Aboriginal people was that they were 'for their own good'. There have been policies of protection, assimilation, self-determination and reconciliation. It is now clear that none of these policies have actually made the condition of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples any better than it was prior to the invasion.*

"Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land" is a slogan adopted by First Nations lands rights activists in Australia. The phrase is said to have originated from Jim Bates, father of William Charles Bates. William Charles Bates was a Barkandji man who was instrumental in the return of land to Traditional Custodians in New South Wales. He mobilised local communities and led the Mutawintji blockade in 1983 which resulted in the NSW Government closing scared sites to the public to stop them being desecrated and handing back the national park to Traditional Custodians for care and management. More broadly, the phrase responds to the continued lack of recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty. Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) has a helpful guide to understanding the nuances of sovereignty in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their deep and reciprocal relationship to the land. For some, sovereignty is a "renegotiation of power within Australia to recognise the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people" (p. 4).

Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody's tribute to Vincent Lingiari and the Gurindji people, 'From Little Things Big Things Grow', is a protest anthem that describes the story of the Gurindji Strike (also known as the Wave Hill Walk Off) and the community's efforts to claim their traditional lands back, sparking the land rights movement. The song is officially part of the National Film & Sound Archive and has been reimagined numerous times. Recently, the song has been rewritten and performed by Wik and Solomon Island artist, Ziggy Ramo, who updated the lyrics and gave the song a new perspective. View the music video for Ramo's 'Little Things' and the making of 'Little Things' with Ramo. You can also view Ramo and Paul Kelly performing the song live for ABC's *The Set*.

In his 'Making of…' interview, Ramo says, "The song is a timeline where we move through a history and a side of history that hasn't been told here" (6:12mins). He has rewritten the lyrics to tell the story of First Nations resistance to "200 years of history that's falsified". Alongside examining Ramo's updated lyrics, a study of the music video and the intertextual links it makes is a worthy activity for students. Consider:

- The establishing camera shot coming into Sydney Harbour across the water.
- The significance of Ramo on top of the Sydney Opera House and performing at the site of the First Fleet's landing in 1788.
- The images of buildings and man-made artefacts being overrun by nature. Ramo says (6:40mins) that he wanted to contrast "places that have been abandoned by Western society and are now being reclaimed by Country".
- Ziggy releasing sand from his hand (a nod to Mervyn Bishop's 1975 picture of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and Vincent Lingiari)
- The image of Ramo at the beach at the end and his potential location at Port Jackson or Sydney Cove (nod to 'The Founding of Australia 1788' by Algernon Talmage or 'The First Fleet entering Port Jackson, 26 January, 1788' by E. Le Bihan)
- The CGI images of ships coming into the bay at the end of the music video.

Joanne O'Mara, Glenn Auld, Yin Paradies, and a group of pre-service teachers from Deakin University have written an article for *English in Australia* (vol. 57, no. 3, 2022) that explores how you could incorporate Ziggy Ramo's song and music video into your practice (p.5).

Ramo's other work, especially 'Banamba' which draws upon archival footage of protests in Australia are deeply political works about the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, Ramo said of the music video for 'Banamba', "[The use of] Archival footage acts as a collage of Blak resistance: The 1965 Freedom Rides, 67 Referendum, The Tent Embassy, Vincent Lingiari, Charlie Perkins … protest after protest. We might go about it in different ways, and not always agree about the best path to take – but ultimately we all want change. May we never lose sight of our humanity. A banamba [change] is coming."

Additionally, A.B.Original has also worked with Paul Kelly to record a version of Kelly's 'Dumb Things' for Triple J's Like A Version. The rewritten lyrics are available here.

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES: 'White Australia has a Black History'

The title of this interview is 'White Australia has a Black History'; a phrase that was featured on the 1987 NAIDOC Week poster created by Mandandanji artist Laurie Nilsen. NAIDOC stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee, and NAIDOC Week is marked every year in from the first Sunday in July to the second Sunday. The week is a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history, and people and provides an opportunity for all Australians to learn about First Nations cultures and contributions. You can read more about NAIDOC Week here.

You can zoom in to look at Nilsen's poster using the tool on Trove and read about the poster's significance here. Take some time to interrogate the poster and its components. You will notice the shape of Australia is formed by a snake, the intricate iconography, patterns, and artwork, as well as different figures including a stockman in front of Uluru, a man wearing traditional dress, a soldier, a portrait of rugby player Mark Ella, and a mother and son watching a tall ship.

The gallery of NAIDOC Week posters are a rich documentation of the cultural and political history of First Nations people in Australia. These original commissioned pieces of artwork reflect social changes and actions (lack of actions) from the time, celebrating the connection between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and activism. Quandamooka artist Megan Cope said "Some people don't understand why Aboriginal people make political art. But there's no possible way you can produce art that's not political. If you are born Aboriginal you are born politicised" (*The Art Life*, 2012) and Noongar author Claire G. Coleman agrees, writing "Protest is common across the entire world of Indigenous art, from the city to the place city folk imagine is the 'bush'. It was always there, from the beginning. All you need to do is learn how to look at Aboriginal art… Indigenous protest art is everywhere" (*The Guardian*, 2021).

Have students look through the gallery of NAIDOC Week posters and write down and discuss the things they first notice. Challenge students to consider the political or protest components of these posters. While NAIDOC Week is a period of celebration. The posters are also making a political statement. Review the same posters and discuss the use of:

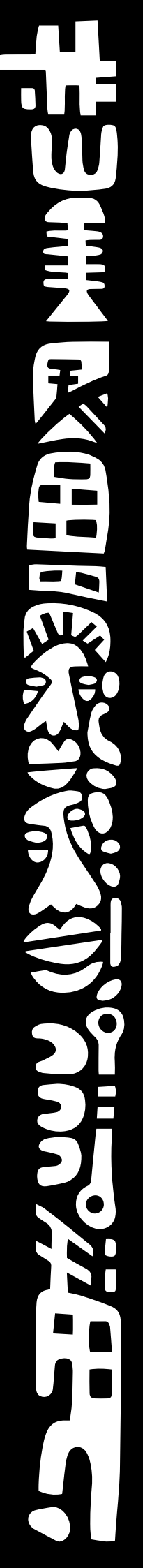
- Iconography and/or photographs
- Slogans and/or text
- Colours, patterns, and/or design
- People and/or figures
- Metaphor and/or allusion
- Symbols and/or space
- Author background – how might this influence the artwork?

Discuss:

- What is the message of this poster?
- What are the values being promoted in this poster if we agree with the artist and their statements?
- What values are promoted if we disagree with the artist?
- From whose perspective do we view this poster?
- How does the poster represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, values, or histories?
- What social commentary can be made about Australia and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by studying this poster?

The Australian Human Rights Commission has curated a timeline of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples advocating for the right to be heard.

- Do the themes and artwork of any of the posters match the events in the timeline?
- What other events were happening for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that may have inspired the NAIDOC themes?
- What are some of the common themes in the timeline and in the NAIDOC Week themes? Are there any key phrases or terms that keep appearing?



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This resource has been reviewed by Darby Jones, a freelance writer and editor of Kamilaroi, Scottish and English heritage. View Darby's work at https://www.darbyjones.au/.

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