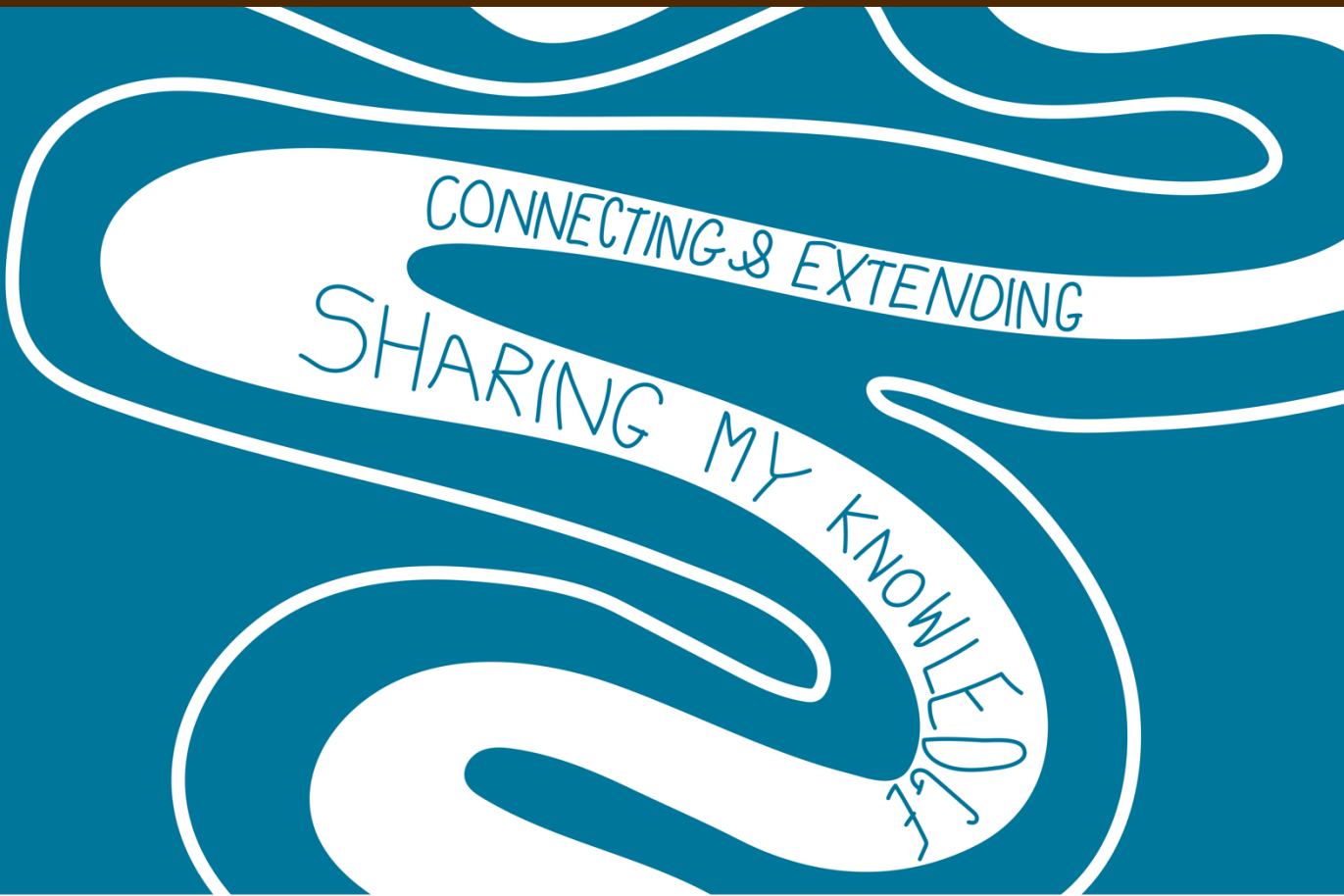




FRONTIER WARS

EDUCATIONAL
RESOURCE



AURORA
EDUCATION
FOUNDATION



NIYEC
National Indigenous Youth
Education Coalition

LEARN
OUR
TRUTH

About Aurora Education Foundation



At Aurora, our role is to **inspire** every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student in their education journey, **connect** them with educational and career opportunities that enable them to realise their potential, and **guide** them in this journey. Supported by Aurora, students and scholars are **achieving** unparalleled outcomes that transform lives.

Our suite of interconnected programs supports students from Year 8 right through to postgraduate study at leading overseas universities such as Cambridge, Harvard and Oxford, and beyond. We recognise the challenges Indigenous students face and empower them to overcome these through drawing on their culture and community as a source of strength.

Our work is strengthened by taking the long view. We know that students' potential can't be developed in a few days, or by whisking students to distant university campuses. Rather, it comes from establishing a relationship based on trust, working with Indigenous communities, and developing an understanding of the potential and skills of every learner.

About National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition



NIYEC brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, of different passions and experiences, to **reclaim our Indigenous rights to education**, and to drive a new era of learning for the future of our Nations.

Our purpose is to mobilise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to drive a new education ecosystem where we can govern and self-determine an education of our own design, for the future of our Nations.

We approach our work with an intergenerational vision, building on the foundations laid by our Old People in fighting for our rights so that we may create a better system for future generations.

About our educational resources

Aurora and NIYEC are committed to empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and learners in their education journey. We have collaborated to develop this educational resource to support all students in listening and learning from the voices of First Nations people in Australia, to challenge dominant narratives and to engage in an honest examination of our nation's history.

This resource was last updated in August 2020

Introduction

This is an educational resource for knowledge sharing and learning in community settings, classrooms, vocational courses, universities. The purpose of this resource is to get you thinking about your place and what your place may be in relation to the stories of the land that you are on.

The stories we know, are taught and understand provide a lens to understand and interpret the world around us. The histories focused on in this document include histories of blood, loss and conflict, and the concept of war is used to understand past struggles and how they shape us today.

Note that the views and perspectives reflected in this document are not representative of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations and people.

WARNING: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander users are warned that the following pages and linked resources may contain images and voices of deceased persons.*



What do I already know?

Before journeying through this resource, it's important to think about possible definitions of war as this will help shape your understanding of the topic.

A war can generally be defined as:

- a state of armed conflict between different countries or different groups within a country,
- a state of competition or hostility between different people or groups, or a sustained campaign against an undesirable situation or activity.

Activity options

Select one activity from the list below:

Reflection

With the definition of war in mind, reflect on all the wars that Australia has participated in. How many can you list?

Timeline

Draw a rough timeline (does not have to be to scale) of key wars in Australia's history.

Share circle

Go around in a circle and one-by one name major wars/conflicts Australia has fought in.

Watch and consider

Which of these wars/conflicts has the strongest correlation with this trailer for [Tomorrow, When the War Began](#).

Deep Listening

Watch the trailer for *Black Day, Sun Rises, Blood Runs* – a film and multimedia project which tells six stories of frontier violence, massacre and resistance from across the state of Victoria, part of the permanent First Peoples exhibition at Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Melbourne Museum.



A truth telling yarn from us

History is presented as ‘truth’, however there is never one story, rather there is a complex web of perspectives, opinions and experiences of history. We rarely have time to tell a whole story, so it is important to acknowledge that the histories you are told, the way they are written, and the narratives selected, favour certain perspectives. Those who chose the stories and are listened to in the re-telling of history, consciously or unconsciously include their own biases.

Australia was declared ‘Terra Nullius’, which means ‘land belonging to no-one’, by Captain Cook in 1770. In the minds of European settlers, this justified their colonising the country. This declaration deemed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as invisible or ‘no-one’. This means the histories, instances of resistance and complex societal structures of First Nations in Australia are often ignored.

In this resource, we focus on re-telling a more balanced story of the colonisation of Australia, by highlighting histories which are often forgotten or silenced – The Frontier Wars, and the Frontier Warriors. We want to tell the narratives of the thousands of First Nations who defended and fought for their Country, community and way of life, yet who are often omitted from history.

The Frontier Wars were conflicts, battles, massacres and acts of resistance between Settler Australians and First Nations from the landing of the First Fleet in 1788 to the 1930s, to the last documented massacre (that is considered part of the Frontier Wars) being the [Coniston Massacre in central Australia](#). The Frontier Wars are sometimes also referred to as the Resistance Wars.

These Frontier Wars lead to the death of over 30,000 First Nations Australians in comparison to 5,000 Settler Australians.

These Frontier Wars are yet to be acknowledged as official wars and Australia has not yet entered into a treaty, a legal agreement between two or more parties, or a similar negotiation, with First Nations.

This lack of a treaty means, among other things, that there is no official recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and the prior occupation of this land for tens of thousands of years, as well as the Frontier Wars. As such, many First Nations people consider themselves to be continuing the ‘spirit of the resistance’ today.

Perspectives from community

Professor Michael James "Mick" Dodson, a political activist, scholar, lawyer and member of the Yawuru peoples, says that the Frontier Wars have been ignored for too long:

"There has been a whitewashing of this in history - we ought to as a nation face up to the fact that there was 130 years of wars fought across this continent. This is a matter for our hearts. If we own up to this, it frees our hearts from this dark past. That's when we will be mature as a nation".

Jim Everett, a playwright and Plangermairreener man:

"We should be dedicating a part of country to our fallen heroes - perhaps we could mark it with a rock. I don't like the idea of statues."

Wurundjeri Elder Bill Nicholson:

"I would love to see our freedom fighters commemorated everywhere over Wurundjeri country," he says. 'We're still fighting for the same country today. The battle goes on. It hasn't ended.'"



Watching Through a Critical Lens

Viewing 1 [Occupation: Native](#)
[Clip 3 on Frontier Wars](#)



The documentary *Occupation: Native* uses satire for filmmaker Trisha Morton-Thomas to retell the narrative of settlement that includes the experience and history of Australia's Indigenous community. There is always more than one way to look at a story, and this documentary presents – without judgement – a perspective that has been disregarded for too long.

While you watch [Clip 3:Frontier Wars](#) try answering the Activity 3 questions in this [SBS Learn Pack](#) on Exploring Australian Narratives. You could do this as a group chat or making your own written reflections.

Viewing 2 [The Feed](#)

Laura Murphy Oates, a Ngiyampaa Weilwan journalist, provides a short intro and insight into the [Frontier Wars on the Feed](#).

Please note: there is a coarse language warning for this clip.

While you watch try making notes in our Deep Listening form on page 17.

Enrich your understanding:

Important work has been done to re-tell the stories of the Frontier Wars and massacres. Click on the image below and use the map to learn more about the Frontier Wars in your area. Click on the marker on the map and then select 'Full details' to hear from primary sources ([Mapping Frontier Wars - Newcastle Uni](#)).

Activity option

Learn the key **timeline** of events and acts of resistance from [NITV's online timeline](#). If you chose to do a timeline for the initial activity, how does this compare to the NITV timeline?



Asking Big Questions

One of the most important aspects of studying and learning about history is the need to engage with historical sources critically. Rather than simply accepting what a source says, you need to consider what biases and points of view the source may contain.

Example of how to critically analyse a historical source:

This is an article written by a settler Australian for the newspaper, *The Launceston Advertiser* in 1831. It talks about the frontier conflicts between First Nations Australians and settlers in Tasmania. Note that the opinions he expressed were considered controversial at the time.

We are at war with them: they look upon us as invaders – as their oppressors and persecutors – they resist our invasion. They have never been subdued; therefore they are not rebellious subjects, but an injured nation, defending in their own way, their rightful possessions, which have been torn from them by force.
- *The Correspondent, Launceston Advertiser, 1831*

This suggests that First Nations peoples had a right to the land.

A primary source as this was written during the time of the Frontier Wars.

Shows a settler acknowledging wars during first contact.

'Them' and 'they' shows that this text is written for a settler audience. This was also common language used to make First Nations people appear as the 'other', different or inferior.

'Subdued' suggests that settlers expected to make First Nations peoples 'obedient' and not to "resist our invasion".

Questions:

- Was there anything that surprised you in this text?
- Was this story of first contact covered in your history textbooks? Why/why not?
- Why do you think this opinion was controversial at the time?
- What do you think it suggests about Terra Nullius?
- Revisit the definition of war (a state of armed conflict). Would you define these frontier 'conflicts' as a war? Why/why not?

You can build on this approach as you unpack the following Big Qs. You'll be challenging some of the assumptions underlying Australia's dominant historical narrative every time you take these steps when critically analysing historical sources:

1. Note down or share with a partner your first thoughts.
2. Read the quotes pulled out of the suggested reading.
 - Look up any new vocabulary
 - Underline any points that you don't understand or disagree with
3. (optional) Repeat for the Full Source linked.
4. Revisit your responses from Step 1. What would you add or change?
5. Compare with *Our Summary*

Also see tips for Active Reading on page 16

Big Q1:

What conflict has become the most defining narrative of Australian history and Australian identity?

Suggested reading:

- *“The Anzac experience, which began at Gallipoli, is the centrepiece of collective memory in Australia... The First World War and the Gallipoli campaign in particular are widely represented as the birth of the nation. Amid the profound destruction of World War I, we find an act of national creation... Arrival, colonisation and federation are, in such an understanding, merely moments of preparation, the creation of a chrysalis which does not fully emerge until blood is shed on the slopes of Gallipoli”*

Full source: [The birth of a nation? Gallipoli, trial and trauma](#)

Our summary: ANZAC is considered the birth of Australia’s collective spirit – the moment that Australia is said to have developed an identity as a nation rather than separate states. This identity was portrayed as one of comradeship, courage and sacrifice: others before self.

Big Q2:

Why don’t we commemorate the Frontier Wars?

Suggested reading:

- *“Recent scholarship suggests that this prominence [of ANZAC] has served to mask other, important histories of the continent, including frontier conflict.”*

Full source: [Why Weren’t We Taught? Exploring Frontier Conflict Through the Lens of Anzac](#)

- The announcement in late 2018 that \$498 million would be spent by the government on redeveloping the Australian War Memorial attracted some critique from the public: *“The major issue raised by the recent announcement is that the AWM redevelopment will in no way attempt to incorporate the long silenced stories of the Frontier Wars... Calls to acknowledge the Frontier Wars at the AWM have been growing stronger over recent years. However, the AWM Director has stated that the memorial is concerned with telling the stories of Australians who’ve been deployed to wars overseas, not internal conflicts.”*

Full source: [Break the silence: Acknowledge the Frontier Wars](#)

- *“The memorial’s silence on the Frontier Wars reinforces the idea that Australia was settled, not colonised employing brutality. It encourages a forgetting that enables the national remembrance of war and national identity to be founded in offshore battlefields and Anzac spirit. It also means a lack of context for the stories of Indigenous war experience it does tell”.*

Full source: [Opinion: The forgotten Frontier Wars](#)

- *This image of our nation is thrown into stark contrast when stories of theft, rape, murder, and massacre are discussed. These are historic facts, not open to dispute.”*

Full source: [Can Australia handle the idea that it wasn't always the 'good guy'?](#)

Our summary: As the above quotes indicate, some people feel that the prominence of ANZAC has drawn attention away from other histories of Australia including the Frontier Wars. This is because recognising the Frontier Wars not only challenges the narrative of current day Australia as being full of ‘comradeship’ and cohesion, but recognising these Frontier Wars also delegitimises the declaration of Australia being Terra Nullius – or empty land, therefore delegitimising colonisation. How can you argue no-one was here if they were fighting to protect their Country and culture? This silencing is also seen in the way that Indigenous servicemen’s contributions to protecting and serving Australia overseas have been ignored. [The Too Dark to See documentary series](#) highlights their often-hidden contributions.

Big Q3:

Whose history do we memorialise and commemorate?

Suggested reading:

- “[T]here is significance in what is deemed worthy to cast in bronze and erect in public spaces. It matters what events are commemorated and celebrated. It may mark power and domination or it may mark diversity and inclusion...Monuments are as much about forgetting as they are remembering, and they can certainly communicate power and dominance.”

Full source: [The politics of public monuments: it’s time Australians looked at what, and whom, we commemorate](#)

- “Because these statues and monuments were created to celebrate particular colonisers and colonial events they often do not tell the full story of history and in many cases, they tell a lie... Also, these types of statues and monuments often hide and ignore the pain that the men or events they are commemorating have caused to First Nation people. For example, many people have seen statues of Governor Lachlan Macquarie but are unaware of his role in the Appin Massacre, where 14 First Nations people were shot and driven off a cliff.”

Full source: [Whose History: the role of statues and monuments in Australia](#)

- “But who will remember that Macquarie, the man considered by so many to be Australia’s renaissance governor – an aesthete who increased crop and livestock production, brought schools, hospitals and banks to the colony – was also, by his own word, a terrorist?”

Full source: [Lachlan Macquarie was no humanitarian: his own words show he was a terrorist](#)

Our summary: The above articles indicate the power of public statues and symbolism to inspire and to oppress. While public monuments and memorials play an important role in remembering and honouring those who have defended their country and lost their lives in battle, the omission of First Nations peoples from the public history domain has also served to silence their histories and sacrifices. This serves to reinforce the myth that Australia was peacefully settled.

Big Q4:

Do you think there is irony or offence in the term 'Settlement'? Consider what this term implies and how this contrasts with the Frontier Wars you have learned about.

Suggested reading:

- “Language matters, and emphasising a change of terminology – or, more importantly, emphasising that there is more than one position and term – demonstrates how much language is implicated in structures of power...The key significance of the term “invasion” is that it demonstrates force, a lack of negotiation and Indigenous experience and resistance...No treaty was established (hence the move to establish one now), and the force of violence of Cook’s encounters were repeated in generations of frontier wars, dispossession and murder...On that basis, “invasion” has a very different meaning to the much more benign sounding “settlement””.

Full source: [Discovery, settlement or invasion? The power of language in Australia’s historical narrative.](#)

Our summary: The language used in sources provides a lens through which to understand the authors points of view and motivations and can help shape the readers’ understanding of historical events. The term “settlement” implies a peaceful process of establishing a new community, whereas the term “invasion” implies a process imbued with violence, resistance and dispossession. The Frontier Wars evidence that the colonisation of Australia was indeed violent and met with resistance, so many Indigenous peoples find the term settlement to be offensive because it denies this history.

Big Q5:

Discuss: Through the denial of Frontier wars, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples haven’t even been “conceded the dignity due to worthy opponents”.

Suggested reading:

- “Despite recognising Pemulwuy as “a brave and independent character”, Governor King offered a reward for his death or capture and issued a government order that any Aboriginal people seen near Parramatta should be shot on site.”

Full source: [8 War Heroes](#)

- “I want to know that our people fought back, that we didn’t just lay down and die”.

Full source: [Surviving New England](#)

Our summary: “It represents Indigenous people as passive - implying Indigenous people didn’t fight for their country and reinforcing derogatory stereotyping of Indigenous people as lazy and incompetent...The denial of the resistance wars in Australia continues to affect both Indigenous Australians’ perception of themselves and the distorted perception many Australians have of our history as a peaceful settlement to be celebrated.”

Full source: [What about history? How our history of invasion and social control impacts today](#)

Big Q6:

How does this denial of the Frontier Wars relate to First Nations Australians' rights today?

Suggested reading:

- *“The Frontier Wars were ultimately fought for the possession of land and the exercise of sovereignty. One reason Australians find it difficult to acknowledge the war is because it goes to the very heart of the foundations of Australian sovereignty and ownership of this great land.”*

Full source: [Lest We Forget: why we need to remember the Frontier Wars](#)

Our summary: The ongoing struggle for land and rights today is the legacy of frontier resistance and is rooted in the failure to recognise the prior and ongoing occupation and sovereignty of First Nations and their right to land, water, sky, and resources through the declaration of terra nullius. The Frontier Wars are a testament to the fact that sovereignty was never ceded and so it provides historical context to the ongoing struggles today.

Activity option

Database search

Go to the National Library of Australia's online database, [Trove](#), and search through historical newspapers and other records. Apply the same questions above to the documents that you find.

Connecting and extending

English or Drama

Create a reflective piece, explaining the forgotten narratives of the land you are on and explaining why these narratives have been silenced. It is important to acknowledge who you are in the piece – whether you are First Nations Australian or non-Indigenous and what perspective this gives you and what stories you can't respectfully represent.

English, History or Drama

Research the Frontier Warriors and create a piece that re-tells the narrative from their perspective. See for example [8 war heroes you didn't learn about in school](#).

English or History

Pick out one or more 'Australian history' books from your school or community library and think critically about the content and perspective of the books – who authored and published the book and when? What stories are being told, how are they being told, and by whom? Whose voices and perspectives are included or excluded?

History or Geography

Option 1:

Research the land that you are on, and the stories of the massacres or frontier conflict from where you come from.

Option 2:

Create a timeline of the country you are on and the stories that are on your land.

Option 3:

Take another look at the Massacre Map. Use it as a starting point to make your own version of a map (interactive or print-based) of your area. Fill in the histories of the First Nations people who walked on the land, important geographical sites to them and sites of first contact with any instances of resistance or Frontier Wars.

Connecting and extending

Media

Taking up Jim Everett and Bill Nicholson's calls for there to be greater commemoration of frontier warriors, design and create a monument or piece of art to honour one of the frontier warriors you have learned about.

You could draw inspiration from the pieces above, as well as how other countries have honoured First Nations warriors (see [the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument in Ontario Canada](#) for an example).

Include an informative piece of writing explaining the history and contribution it commemorates.

Visual Arts or History

Explore and learn about the following art works and monuments that commemorate frontier warriors and frontier conflicts.

- Ask the following questions of each: What was the purpose of the artwork or monument?
- What does it represent?
- How does it help honour the past?
- How was it created?
- Is there a common theme across the pieces?

[Queenie McKenzie's 'Mistake Creek IbertMassacre'](#)

[Judy Watson's Massacre Maps](#)

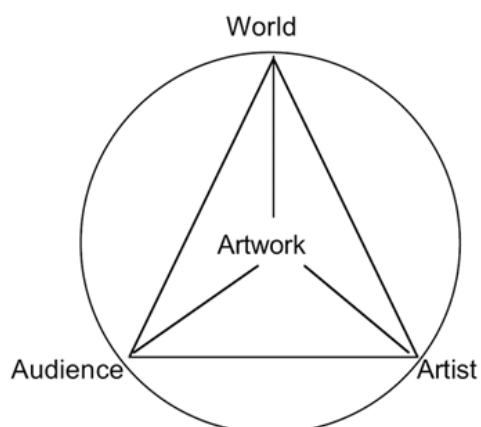
[Tony Albert's Yinimadyemi Thou Didst Let Fall](#)

[Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner Memorial](#) – and [here](#).

Use the points you learn from researching and observing the artwork to annotate around a blank conceptual framework (left).

Try to make connections between each of the agencies.

Extension: use the Postmodern Frame to unpack one of these works further.



Sharing my knowledge

Contact your local Land Council and let them know you would like to pay your respects (give some ideas) and organise a time and activity to do so. Remember this is a big topic that could cause pain for some people. Ensure you do your own research before reaching out to local Land Councils or other First Nations people will lessen the burden that many experience when they have to educate non-Indigenous Australians about our shared history.

Start a conversation at your school with fellow teachers and ask them to have a (preferably local) First Nations guest speaker come in and share the history of the land.

Organise a screening of [First Australians](#) or [Occupation: Native](#) at your school, work, community centre, home, or encourage friends and family to watch it. Take time to discuss what you learnt after.

Write a letter to your local council asking them to memorialise the histories of the land you are on in consultation with the local Indigenous community.

If you are a First Nations Australian, why not suggest or design something yourself or in collaboration with others and propose this to the local council.

If you are non-Indigenous, suggest your local council collaborates with local Indigenous designers or the local land council to design a memorial – or you can contact the land council yourself and suggest ideas or ask for collaborations.

Write a letter to your neighbours, letting them know the story of the land you are on. If you have organised a way of commemorating the histories of the land you are on (an event or art piece etc.) consider sharing this in the letter. For safety - make sure you only do this with neighbours you trust, or leave out where the letter came from, some people are uncomfortable confronting these histories.

We would love to see
what you do!
Please share through the hashtag
[#LearnOurTruth](#)

Continuing your journey

There is a wealth of resources to continue learning about the Frontier Wars, the warriors who resisted colonisation and the continuing impact today. Below are some examples that you can explore to expand your knowledge. Remember to apply the deep listening and active reading techniques to these resources so that you critically engage with them.

Read

Books:

- *The Sydney Wars: Conflict in the Early Colony, 1788-1817* by Stephen Gapps
- *Surviving New England* by Callum Clayton-Dixon
- *The Australian Frontier Wars 1788-1838* by John Connor
- *Forgotten War* by Henry Reynolds
- *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and Maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians* by R. Bruce Elder

Articles:

- [The killing times: the massacres of Aboriginal people Australia must confront](#)
- [Lest We Forget, why we need to remember the Frontier Wars](#)
- [Forgotten War](#)
- [Lest We Remember: the Australian War Memorial and the Frontier Wars - Michael Green \(2014\), The Wheeler Centre](#)
- [As 'racist statues' topple around the world, Australia is being urged to address its own monuments](#)
- [10 Indigenous statues that Australia desperately needs](#)

**See tips for
Active Reading
on page 16**

Listen

- [Frontier War Stories podcast](#) by Boe Spearim:
- Callum Clayton Dixon's [Lecture \(Clayton-Dixon, 2019\) on the New England Frontier Wars](#):

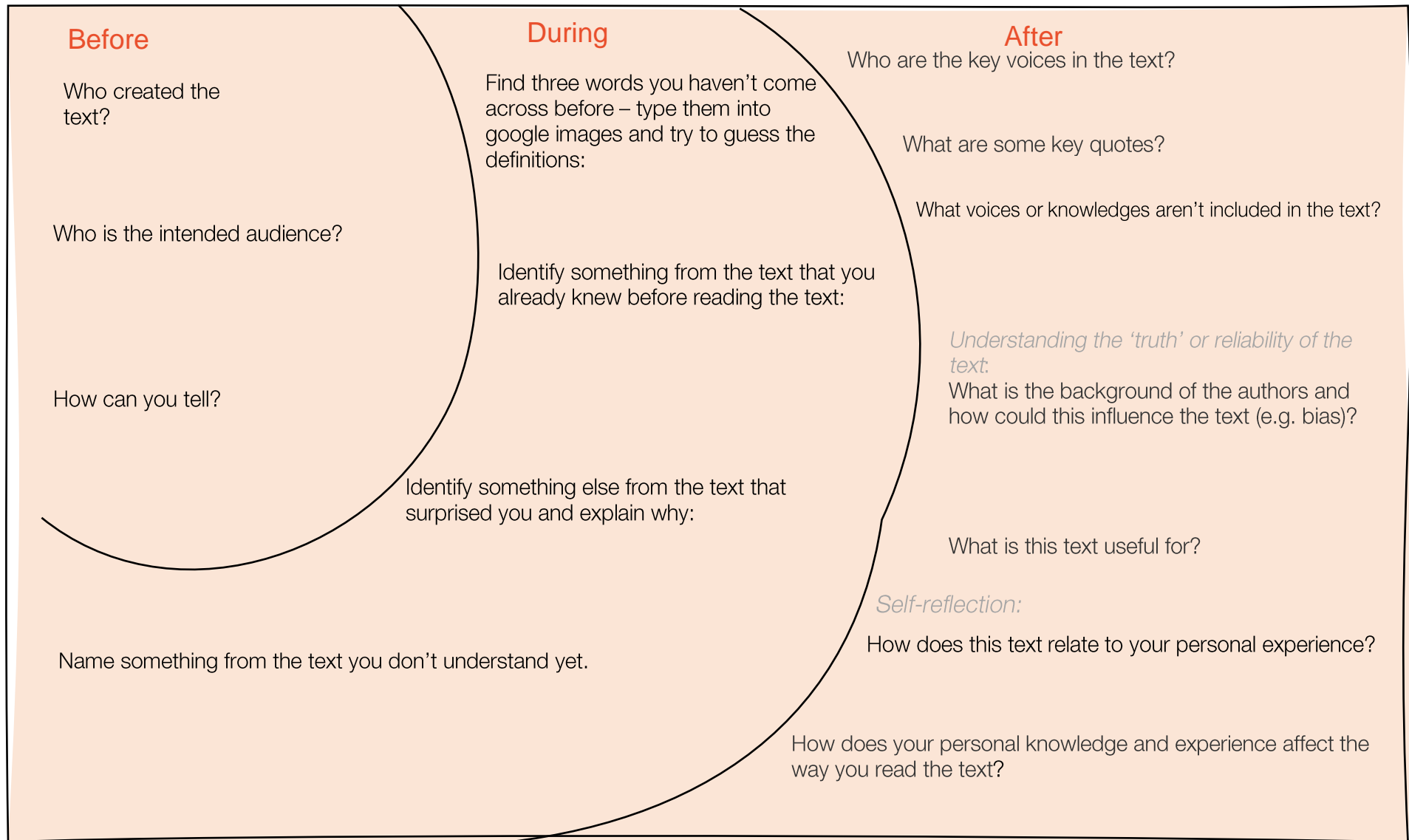
Watch

- Occupation: Native full documentary:
 - Free access via your local library or university account [here](#); or
 - You can rent or buy the full film [here](#)
- [High Ground 2020](#)
- [The Secret River 2015](#)
- [Yagan 2013](#)
- [Jandamarra's War 2011](#)
- [First Australians](#)
- [Black Lives Matter protests spark debate on Australia's historical monuments and statues | ABC News](#)
- [Remembering the Appin Massacre | ABC Lateline](#)

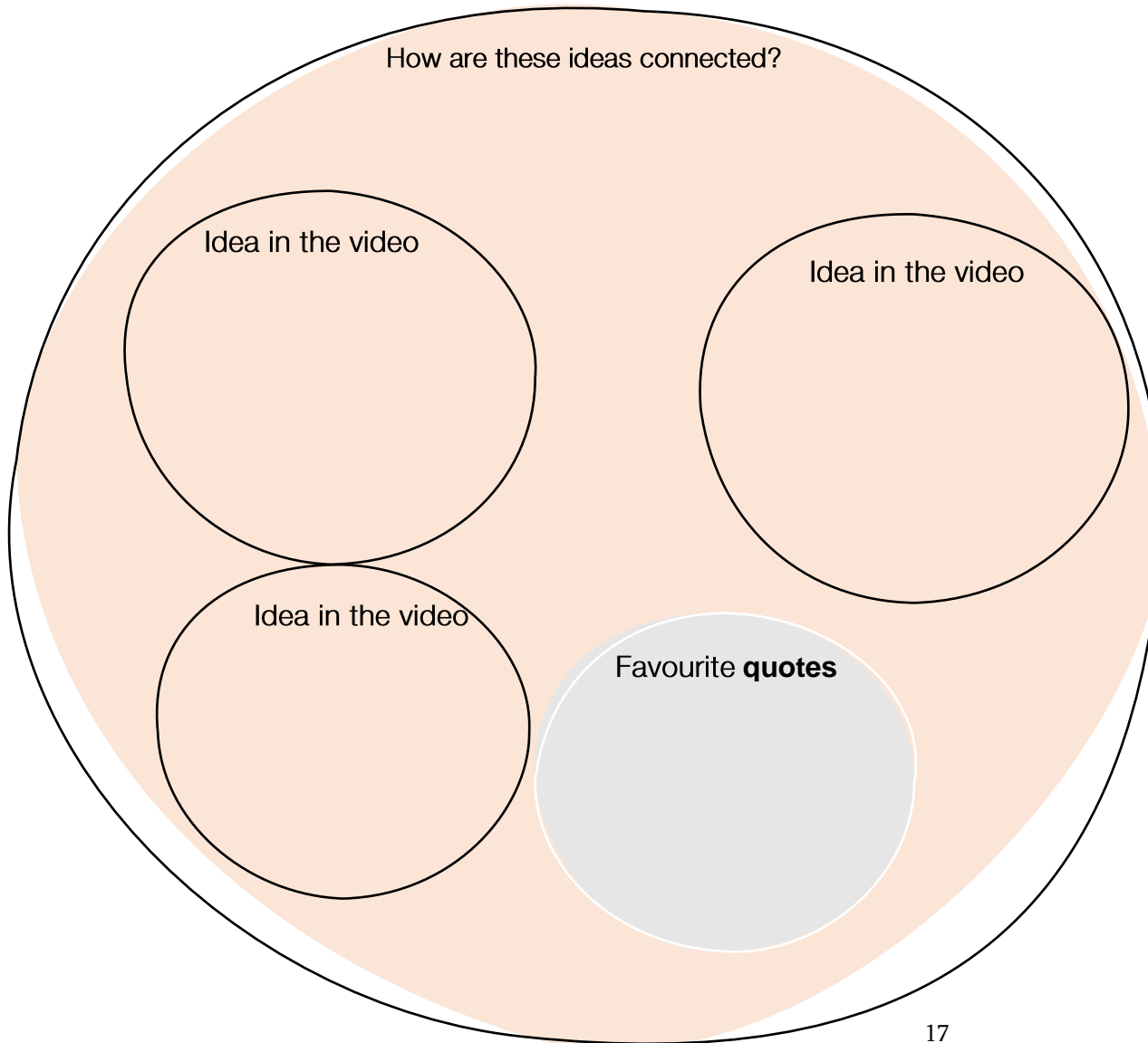
**See tips for
Deep Listening and Watching
on page 17**

Active Reading Ripples

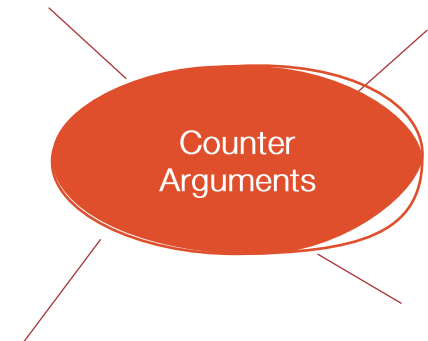
Pick at least one question from each ripple to help you unpack longer texts



What's not yet said/understood?



Questions you have:



Thanks to all those involved in designing, composing and sharing knowledge to help make this resource possible.

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Curriculum links

Humanities and Social Sciences

- Year 8 (Civics and Citizenship): ACHCK066
- Year 8 (History) ACHHS155,
- Year 9 (History): ACDSEH085, ACDSEH020, ACHHS164, ACHHS168, ACHHS172, ACHHS173
- Year 10 (History): ACDSEH104, ACDSEH149, ACHHS182, ACHHS190, ACHHS191

English

- Year 8: ACELA1543, ACELT1626, ACELT1806, ACELT1627, ACELT1806
- Year 9: ACELY1739, ACELT1635, ACELY1742
- Year 10: ACELA1565, ACELT1639, ACELT1812, ACELY1749