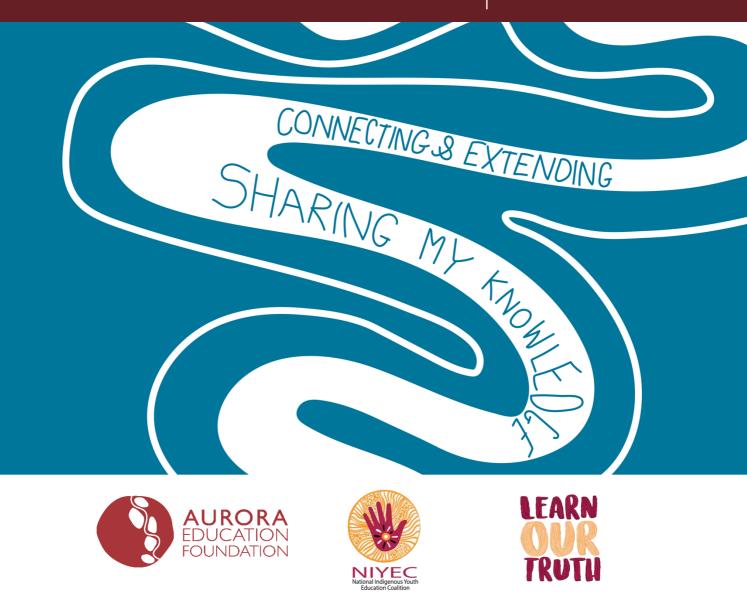


# **SLAVERY IN AUSTRALIA**

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE



## 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 support 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 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 January 2021

## Introduction

This is an education resource for knowledge sharing and learning in community settings, classrooms, vocational courses, and universities. The purpose of this resource is to help you understand the history of slavery in Australia and how it shapes the present, so that you can draw connections between the past and current-day struggles for equality and sovereignty.

The stories we know, are taught, and understand provide a lens to understand and interpret the world around us. The accounts focused on in this document include histories of violence, dispossession, human exploitation for profit and the role these legacies have played in the development of Australia, including how they continue to impact relations today.

Similar to the <u>Frontier Wars educational</u> <u>resource</u>, the stories shared in this document speak to the struggles and resistance of those who were impacted both directly and indirectly by slavery in Australia. The resilience of individuals and communities affected by this shameful history is unwavering, but the continued lack of recognition and acknowledgement by the wider Australian community continues to cause pain. It is our hope that this resource will go some way in bringing a greater awareness and recognition of this, our shared history.

This resource predominantly focuses on the slavery of First Nations people in Australia, however it also sheds light on other experiences of slavery for Pacific Islanders (the practice of which is referred to as Blackbirding), as well as Chinese and Indian peoples, and directs you to resources to learn more. It briefly touches on content and perspectives related to modern slavery, however we encourage learners wishing to explore this further to visit the <u>Global</u> <u>Slavery Index</u>.

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

**WARNING**: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers 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, think about the definition of slavery. This will help shape your understanding of the topic and the histories and stories shared in this document. Slavery can be defined as:

- labour which is coerced and inadequately rewarded<sup>1</sup>
- hard work for which you receive very little remuneration (money paid for work)<sup>2</sup>

This resource uses a broad and expansive definition of slavery so as not to exclude certain experiences. See further below for a detailed note on the definition and meaning of slavery vs forced labour.

## Activities

#### Reflection

Finish at least two of the prompts below.

When I think about slavery in Australia, I wonder:

- what...
- who...
- where...
- how...
- why...
- if...

## **Problem Tree**

Complete the problem tree on pg. 28 to map out what you think the causes and effects of slavery would be (don't worry about the roots for now). You should consider the causes and effects for enslaved individuals, their families and communities, as well as those that profited from it.

You can add to the tree as you work through this resource and learn more about the topic.

# The definition and meaning of slavery vs forced labour

Slavery, slave labour, forced labour and indentured labour are often used interchangeably, in this resource and in many of the sources and materials referred to throughout. Often people will get caught up on the distinct definitions of these various terms, for instance to argue that a particular instance of servitude does not technically constitute slavery. While there are differences in the meanings of these various terms, albeit subtle ones, it is important to consider the context behind the distinctions and how they inform and restrict our understanding of history and human experiences.

## For example, **slavery** was clearly defined under an international treaty in 1926 as:

[T]he status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.<sup>3</sup>

This treaty does not define forced labour, but it does mention that States should take all necessary measures to prevent forced labour from developing into conditions similar to slavery, thereby acknowledging that in reality they can be very similar.

Three years after this treaty was signed, forced labour was defined under a separate treaty as:

> [F]orced or compulsory labour shall mean all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.<sup>4</sup>

In comparing these two definitions, slavery is a system of complete legal ownership over another person, whereas forced labour is work or service that is completed involuntarily but it lacks the element of ownership that characterises slavery.

This differentiation is often the subject of debates about whether a particular instance of servitude constitutes slavery or not. However, it is important to keep in mind that the distinctions can often serve to reinforce the same power structures that upheld and benefited from slavery in the first place. This is explained below in relation to the history behind the two treaties on slavery and forced labour. A treaty, also referred as a Convention, is a binding international agreement between independent States, similar to a contract. States shape the content of treaty texts through a process of negotiation in order to serve their interests, which means they do not sign a treaty unless they agree to its terms. As such, drafting the treaty on slavery involved extensive negotiation about the definition of slavery as well as forced labour, as States needed to agree on the distinction. Professor of International Law Jean Allain's analysis of the negotiation history of the Slavery Convention noted that "the provisions on forced labour were the most discussed in the negotiation process, as it was recognised that all States "civilised or uncivilised" utilised forced labour...Thus, those negotiating the 1926 Convention ensured that the forced labour provisions "were only as strong as their interests allowed"".<sup>5</sup> For this reason, journalist and human rights researcher Nicholas McGeehan has argued that the effect of the treatymaking process to abolish slavery "was the continuance of slavery in a more acceptable form".<sup>6</sup> The selfserving nature of the Convention is further demonstrated by the inclusion of a "territory clause" which allowed States to exclude their overseas territories (that is, colonies) from the scope of the treaty.

This suggests that the definition of slavery was deliberately narrow and restrictive in order to allow States to continue practicing other forms of servitude.

The point is that despite the distinct meanings of these two terms, they each amount to human exploitation for profit and power. The key thing to consider is not so much whether instances of servitude referred to throughout this resource constitute slavery, but to question whose interests are served by labelling it as anything less than slavery?

#### Did you know?

In a 1925 Note by the Portuguese Delegate to the committee overseeing the drafting of the Slavery Convention, General Freire d'Andrade stated that the forbidding of forced labour sent the wrong message to First Nations people in the colonies, as it suggested "that its prohibitions implies for them a right to idleness"; and that the abolition of forced labour might interfere in "developing sufficiently in the interests of humanity, the riches and resources" of the countries that had been colonised.1

#### Activity

#### How does slavery infringe on a person's human rights?

To answer this question, examine the document that captures the common standard of human rights for all peoples: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

You can work with a partner to:

- Read through all 30 Articles <u>here</u>.
- Highlight the Articles that are breached by slavery.
- Select which 3 Articles would be most affected for people treated as slaves.
- Discuss what happens when a person's human rights are denied for generations

To learn more about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, watch this 6-minute video.



## **Deep Listening & Asking Big Questions**

## A truth telling yarn from us

An important truth, which is often left untold, is the history of slavery in Australia. First Nations, people from the Pacific Islands, Timor, India and China, among others, have been used as slaves in Australia across the last 200 years. They were placed in roles such as labourers, domestic servants, pearl divers, trackers, troopers, stock workers, etc. from the late 1830s through to present day. While the nature of the work has differed, the conditions are similar – little to no wages, forced servitude to colonial 'land-owners', kidnapping, poor living conditions, and physical punishment.

The term 'slavery' has often been avoided in the re-telling of these histories (replaced by terms like 'blackbirding', 'indentured labour' or 'stolen wages'), yet it is impossible to ignore the link between these experiences and the definition of slavery:

- labour which is coerced and inadequately rewarded.<sup>7</sup>
- hard work for which you receive very little remuneration (money paid for work).<sup>8</sup>

One of the most essential skills to develop as a student is to think critically as it allows you to understand and analyse the evidence, ideas, and claims related to a particular topic. Rather than simply accepting what a source says, you need to consider what biases and points of view it may contain. For example, does a source avoid use of the term "slavery" in describing conditions of servitude and why?

## Example of how to critically analyse a source

This is an article published in *The Evening Star*, a newspaper published in Western Australia from 1898 – 1921. It describes the treatment of Aboriginal peoples in the State and likens it to slavery. Read the annotated source and then answer the questions that follow.

The treatment of the aborigines of this State under the indenture system is of such a character that it demands early consideration by Parliament...In other words the system should be abolished because it is alien to the freedom under which whites live here. As descendants of the British race Australians rightly object to anything that savors of slavery, be it ever so remote in decree; it is repellent to every lover of freedom, and for that reason alone, apart from other issues raised, it is objected to...Under the Act of 1886, one of the enactments when West Australia was a Crown Colony, the aboriginals and half-castes of the State were by law let for a term to settlers who had to carry out certain conditions in the contract entered into as between the protector and the employer. The limit of time stipulated by the Act was 12 months. In return for this privilege the settler became bound to supply the native with good rations, clothing, blankets, medicine and medical treatment.

## Treatment of Blacks, The Evening Star, 1901

Notice the use of 'let' which is generally used to refer to the renting of property, not people. A primary source as this was written during the time of the forced labour.

- Indenture system is a system of unfree labour.
- Here this means anything that resembles slavery.
- The reference to race is an acknowledgment of the racist premise of slavery and other forms of servitude.
- A term that was used to refer to persons with mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage. It is now considered offensive.

## **Group Discussion Questions**:

- Was there anything that surprised you in the text?
- Was this perspective included in your history textbooks? Why/why not?
- Do you think this opinion would have been considered controversial at the time? Why/why not?
- Revisit the definition of slavery. Would you define the conditions and treatment of Aboriginal people described in the extract as slavery? Why/why not?

Now that you are familiar with how to critically analyse a source, you can apply this skill as you read the information contained in the following pages. The information is arranged under subheadings and includes Big Qs so that you can unpack the information as you go and think deeply about how the historical accounts impact today.

## ΑCTIVITY

You can build on the Source Analysis approach as you unpack the Big Qs.

In order to challenge some of the assumptions underlying Australia's dominant historical narratives, you can take these steps to critically analyse the information and sources:

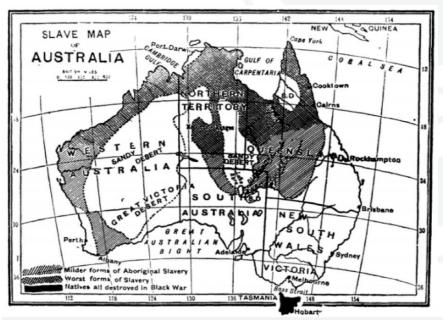
- 4. Using the Active Reading form on pg. 26, take notes as you read the information.
- 5. Note down your initial thoughts on the Big Qs, drawing on your notes from step 1.
- 6. Read the quotes pulled out of the suggested reading.
- 7. Look up any new vocabulary
- 8. Underline any points that you don't understand or disagree with.
- 9. Revisit your responses from Step 2. What would you add or change?
- 10. (Optional) Repeat all steps for the full source linked.

## **First Nations and Slavery**

First Nations people were placed in conditions of slavery since the beginning of colonisation to the 1970s. Whether it be working as domestic servants, as pearl divers, stock workers or labourers, Australia has a long history of exploitation and forced servitude of First Nations.

In recent times the case of 'Stolen Wages' has emerged in the media and courts. This refers to the exploitation that occurred between 1939-1972s when First Nations people were forced to work on cattle stations and other agricultural outposts in Queensland and Western Australia with minimal remuneration for their work.<sup>9</sup> Many wages were never paid at all, with the Queensland government establishing "Protection Acts" meaning wages were paid to 'protectors' or superintendents or into trusts which were controlled by the Qld government. In most cases, the wages never reached the workers pockets. The amount of wages stolen in Queensland during this time is currently estimated at \$500 million.<sup>10</sup> In Western Australia, the state could legally withhold 75% of First Nations wages up until 1972 and put them into trust accounts. This money has since 'disappeared'.<sup>11</sup>

Not only did these First Nations workers have their wages controlled, the work they could do, where they could travel and who they could marry were also controlled by the 'protectors' and superintendents.<sup>12</sup>



A Slave Map of Australia from 1890.<sup>13</sup> This map was printed in the British Anti-Slavery Reporter, a journal that documented and campaigned against slavery across the world

Watch this video below from The Feed SBS on <u>Stolen wages and generations of</u> <u>disadvantage: Is this Australia's version of slave labour?</u>.<sup>14</sup> This shares first-hand accounts of First Nations workers who had their wages stolen In QLD, and we hear from their families on the lasting effects:

"Stolen Wages is...what it's really saying is that Aboriginal people aren't enough".

While you watch the video, try making notes using the Deep Listening form on pg. 27.



Remember to apply the critical analysis skills from pg. 6

## **Big Q: Who profited from slavery?**

## Extracts from suggested reading:

• Tens of thousands [of Indigenous people] worked on cattle stations from the 1880s to 1970s. The beef industry could not have survived without them. In 1913, the federal government's Chief Protector of Aborigines, Baldwin Spencer, noted that "under present conditions, the majority of cattle stations are largely dependent on the work done by black "boys". In the 1930s, when the rest of the economy floundered in the Great Depression, Indigenous labour helped keep the industry profitable.

**Full source:** <u>The new Mabo? \$190 million stolen</u> <u>wages settlement is unprecedented, but still</u> <u>limited</u><sup>15</sup>

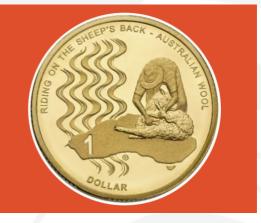


Cattlemen at Victoria River Downs Station, Northern Territory, in 1953.

 Keithean Bowen, granddaughter of a stockman whose wages were stolen says "if [my grandfather] was paid fairly I reckon he would've had his own place where he could've lived, and didn't have to worry about working for the council cleaning out other people's waste...I had a confrontation with a fella in high school, who said 'the only reason why you're here is you get an Indigenous scholarship from the government...I said if my family was paid fairly from the start, I reckon I probably would've had enough money to be able to pay for my schooling today."

**Full source:** <u>Stolen Wages and Generations of Disadvantage: Is this Australia's</u> Version of Slave Labour?<sup>14</sup>

The idiom "Riding on the sheep's back" shown on this coin, is a reference to Australia's major source of prosperity from the 1820s through to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Australian economy rode on the wealth of wool exports which helped many to achieve a high standard of living. Compare this narrative depicted on this coin to those above. Whose histories are being centred and whose are omitted?



## **The effects on First Nations**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People had little-to-no money to spend on themselves or their families and were actively disadvantaged from things like home ownership, education. The ongoing effects of denying generations of First Nations the ability to build up wealth from their labour, continues to be felt today. However, the fight and plight of these families and labourers is not often recognised. Hear their stories below. Iris worked as a domestic woman from 15 at Cherbourg Reserve in Queensland. Watch her story here.<sup>16</sup>



Violet was stolen from her family and forced into unpaid work at the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls. Read her story <u>here</u>.<sup>17</sup>

## **Big Q: What are the intergenerational effects on First Nations?** *Extracts from suggested reading:*

• Many Aboriginal people whose wages were stolen were also stolen children, denying them cultural and economic futures...

As a result of my growing up 'under the [Aboriginals Preservation and Protection] Act', I received a limited education. As such, I had limited job opportunities. When my husband died, it was financially difficult to raise my three small children on my limited income and widows' pension. It would have eased the financial burden if I was able to access the balance of my savings account and the interest accumulated over the years." ...

With previous generations unable to generate wealth and livelihood as they were denied their wages, this is seen as a key contributor to the intergenerational poverty which still plagues many communities ...

The majority of Australians have yet to acknowledge the "evident link between settlement life, stolen wages and the lack of education and employment in today's society".

Full source: Stolen Wages<sup>18</sup>

 Three years ago, WA conducted a stolen wages reparations scheme, with a maximum payout of two thousand dollars each. Indigenous affairs minister Peter Collier told parliament a government stolen wages taskforce had investigated, but there wasn't enough evidence to prove people were owed any more than \$2,000 each.

'Unfortunately, due to the complexity of trust accounts in Western Australia, the significant lack of surviving records and the passage of time, the task force could not develop an actuarial model that could illuminate the true value or full impact of any compensation,' he says. But there was detailed actuarial modelling done by Perth firm Barton Consultancy for the taskforce, delivered to government and obtained by Background Briefing.

At just one workplace alone, Moore River Native Settlement, the actuaries estimate Aboriginal wages kept in trust by government at more than \$63 million.

My grandmother having up to 75% of her wages withheld because she left employment where she was being abused by a particular employer, and Mr Neville chose to punish her by having more of her wages from her next employment withheld. It was some physical abuse, thankfully not sexual, but I have known of many cases of women who have suffered sexual abuse at the hands of their employers and have made complaints to the Department. That is documented within their personal files. Also what is documented often is the lack of response of the government to those kinds of accusations. **Full source:** WA's stolen wages shame<sup>19</sup>

#### Activity

#### **Critical Questions:**

Explore the impacts of slavery on a person's life, both at the time and for future generations:

Aspect of Life	At the time	Over future generations
Financial security		
Emotional wellbeing		
Cultural identity and family		
structure		
Social connections and		
power		

• What interconnections can you make between the columns above?

You can also add your points from the table above to the Problem Tree on pg. 28.

**Extension:** The longevity of the effects of slavery is a shared experience beyond Australia. What comparisons can you draw between the ongoing economic impacts discussed above and the following description of slavery in the USA?

Slavery... created the foundation of modern American capitalism. It was slavery and the 'blood drawn from with the lash' that opened the arteries of capital and commerce that led to US economic dominance worldwide.... For all the economic gains created by slavery, the slaves themselves could never profit. During the 246 years of institutionalised slavery in America, enslaved individuals could not participate in the economy as buyers and sellers. In order for slavery to function, the slaves needed to serve as cogs in the machine not as drivers. They were therefore not permitted to own assets or offer their labour for pay in any form. These prohibitions, which included ownership of land and trade of any kind, were often cemented in law and enforced through violence.<sup>20</sup>

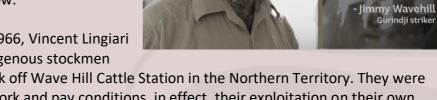
### A spotlight on resistance

It is important to note that there are not only stories of slavery, but instances of First Nations resistance to unfair working conditions, stories of strength and the continued plight for recognition today. There are stories of resistance from all around Australia, including the Wave Hill Walk Off on Gurindji country in 1966 (which was the basis for Paul Kelly's song 'From Little Things Big Things Grow') and the landmark Pilbara strike in 1946 to name a few. We have included a spotlight focus on one case of resistance in the Northern Territory below.

#### The Wave Hill Walk Off of 1966

The Wave Hill Walk-Off is the story of how one Indigenous man was able to change the course of Australian history. Australians Together have produced this great <u>resource</u>, which you can explore to discover more about the summary below.<sup>21</sup>

On the 23rd of August 1966, Vincent Lingiari led 200 courageous Indigenous stockmen



"We used to make

money for kartiya [white] people...

hey bin use us

like a slave, orking hard

for them.'

and their families to walk off Wave Hill Cattle Station in the Northern Territory. They were protesting against the work and pay conditions, in effect, their exploitation on their own lands. Their bravery and perseverance laid the foundation for the land rights movement in Australia.

In the 1880's pastoralists invaded Gurindji lands, 800kms south of Darwin, and set up the Wave Hill Cattle Station. This destroyed Indigenous food and water sources, communities and ways of life. Indigenous people were forced to work on the Station under extremely poor conditions: they rarely received wages, were often paid in poor-quality rations, they were beaten and even killed by the landowners. Women were abused.

On the 23rd of August 1966, 200 courageous workers and their families walked off Wave Hill Station. They were led by Vincent Lingiari.

In 1967 the Gurindji submitted a petition to the Governor General asking for their land back. Although the petition was rejected, the strike became about more than worker's rights – it became about land rights too.

The workers and their families, despite conditions of extreme hardship, continued to strike for 9 long years.

During this time many of the Gurindji people manned the camp in extremely difficult conditions and Vincent Lingiari toured Australia lobbying politicians and gaining financial, material and political support from worker's unions and community organisations. The courage and resilience of the Wave Hill Strikers made headlines across Australia and there was a readiness for many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people throughout Australia to stand together on this issue.

On the 16th of August 1975, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam handed over title to the land to the Gurindji people by symbolically pouring a handful of soil into Vincent Lingiari's hand.

Vincent Lingiari was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1976 and in 2006 the Northern Territory heritage listed the route of the walk-off. In 2016, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the walk-off, a public walking trail was opened so visitors can share the historic journey.



For further case studies and an activity on First Nations Resistance, flip to pg. 19 in the Connecting and Extending section.

## Further examples of slavery in Australia

**Indian and Chinese labourers** 

\*The name 'Coolies was initially used to refer to Indian and Chinese labourers. However, this term, due to its history is considered derogatory language in India.

Labourers from India were brought over as a source of cheap labour from the 1830s to the late 1840s. Reports show that over 150 labourers were brought over from India to work on properties in New South Wales (Dungog,<sup>22</sup> the Hunter Valley, the Naomi Valley and Sydney), Queensland (the Lockyer Valley) and Victoria (Melbourne).<sup>23</sup> While they were promised shelter, food and clothing, many were starved, beaten and imprisoned if they protested. Indian labourers protested their conditions and absconded work, which contributed to the switch to bringing in Chinese labourers instead.<sup>19</sup>

From 1847-1855, labourers from China were brought over to Australia. The next 8 years saw more than 2,000 Chinese labourers brought over to Queensland, Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria, treated with similar conditions to the labourers from India.<sup>20</sup> The 'Coolie' trade stopped when Chinese labourers mutinied on a ship to Australia, and as criticism of the trade in Cuba and Peru grew in international media.<sup>24</sup>

## **Blackbirding**

The Queensland sugar industry currently generates \$2 billion annually. But, it's a little-known fact that the industry was built upon the backs of Pacific Island people, who were coerced, deceived and even kidnapped from their islands of origin to work in slave-like conditions.<sup>25</sup>

From the 1860s-1904, after slavery had officially ended in the British Empire and the US, Australia began the practice of 'Blackbirding'.<sup>26</sup> Blackbirding refers to the practice of forcing people to work as poorly paid or unpaid labourers in a foreign country.<sup>27</sup> In Australia, Blackbirding involved taking over 62,000 men and women from Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Fiji to work on cotton and sugar plantations in Queensland<sup>28</sup> and New South Wales (until it was outlawed by the NSW government in the late 1840s).<sup>29</sup> While some people signed contracts to come and work in Australia, many were forced, kidnapped or lured into boats heading for Australia.

Once in Australia the South Sea Islanders – called 'kanakas' at the time - were brought to work in Australia during before any labour laws existed protecting from exploitation.<sup>30</sup> As a result, they were segregated from Australian society, forced to speak English, punished with corporal punishment and paid only 6 pounds per year (a rate which remained fixed for 40 years).<sup>31</sup> Many workers died due to malnutrition and exposure to disease, and mass graves are still being uncovered today. The official practice of 'Blackbirding' stopped with the introduction of the White Australia Policy, and most of the workers were deported. This exemplifies systemic racism and how 'coloured' and 'black' bodies were othered, controlled and ultimately treated as disposable commodities.

Those who remained (it is estimated around 2,500 people), often worked in domestic and agricultural labour roles in Queensland and New South Wales and were treated as First Nations rather than as distinct cultural groups.<sup>32</sup> By treating these two distinct cultural groups as one, these Pacific and South Sea Islanders were denied their own cultural and linguistic heritage in Australia. This meant that campaigns around reconciliation, land rights and regional autonomy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples did not adequately reflect their needs and aspirations, and assistance to address educational, employment, cultural and social disadvantages faced by Indigenous Australians failed to include those who had been Blackbirded to Australia.

The descendants of those who were 'Blackbirded' have been officially recognised (since 1992) as the Australian South Sea Islanders community and campaign for increased recognition of their ancestors history.<sup>33</sup> While the practice of 'Blackbirding' had stopped, we can reflect on what we have learnt about First Nations and Stolen Wages to understand the conditions of this labour until the 1970s.

## Present day

Today, workers from Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga and other South Sea Islands continue to be employed on farms through a federally-run 'Seasonal Worker Program'. Multiple enquiries, court judgments, parliamentary inquiries, and media exposés into the conditions of this work in Queensland and Victoria have revealed that groups of workers have been severely underpaid, or not paid, workers have died, are underfed and threatened.

In a court case in 2017 a Queensland company owner – Emmanual Bani – was fined \$227, 300 for underpaying and exploiting workers from Vanuatu. His company Pacific Crop Harvesting continues to employ workers from Vanuatu. Below are the conditions workers were exposed to:

"Twenty-two workers told the court they often were given no food for entire days, moved from farm to farm without warning and forced to sleep on buses on the side of the road, or on chairs.

"Stop asking questions about payment. If you keep asking I will send you back to Vanuatu," Bani told his workers, and threatened to call the police".<sup>34</sup>

Watch this video of the ABCs exposé into current working conditions in Victoria:<sup>35</sup>



Fill in the Deep Listening form on pg. 27 while you watch the video.

Additionally, with the lack of backpackers in Australia to do farm work during COVID-19, more workers have been brought over from Pacific Islands.<sup>36</sup>

# **Big Q: How has race been used to enslave and oppress peoples?**

## Extracts from suggested reading:

During the 18th century, the idea that humans could be divided into different biological races that were correlated with different traits and characteristics, such as "intelligent and hard-working" versus "unintelligent and indolent," seems to have appeared about the same time that chattel slavery was rapidly expanding as a money-making opportunity for Europeans (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). This suggests that the idea of race had a social genesis tied to the justification of slavery.

**Full source:** <u>Teaching Diversity: The Science You Need to Know to Explain Why</u> Race Is Not Biological<sup>37</sup> • "[S]cientists and ethnologists invented a race previously unseen by science, the "European." The self-identified members of the European or Anglo-Saxon race in America saw themselves as the superior beings, executing their manifest destiny in a racial hierarchy they constructed. They used their scientific research and publications as a justification for the continuing practice of slavery in the South and the assimilation or extirpation of the aboriginal Native American tribes in the West."

**Full source:** Types of mankind: polygenism and scientific racism in the nineteenth century United States scientific community <sup>38</sup>

• Skin colour does play a part in determining who is, and who is not, included as an Australian....White cultural values are taught to children, not as if they were alternatives from which to choose, but as the right and only values...Media representations of Indigenous people position us as abnormal; we are deviant, inferior, exotic or primitive.

...The relationship between the white centre and Indigenous people at the margins of Australian society has been a feature of colonialism since its appearance at Botany Bay to the present. Power relations between the white centre and the Indigenous margins have changed over time, but white culture has not offered Indigenous people a place in the centre. Instead white dominance has been powerful enough to maintain Indigenous people at the margins of society.

**Full source:** Unmasking Whiteness: A Goori Jondal's Look at Some Duggai Business<sup>39</sup>

 ...there is always a tendency to position immigrants, especially nonwhite migrants and refugees, as 'others'. As Henry-Waring (2008) argues, ...Otherness...give[s] primacy [highest importance] to Whiteness in Australia at the direct expense of non-white Australians such as black Africans in Australia. ...Otherness, 'lay[s] a set of pervasive ideologies that valorise [gives value to] whiteness as the norm, from which Others are constructed, defined, scrutinised and controlled.'
Full source: 'Not by Default Accepted': The African Experience of Othering and Being Othered in Australia<sup>40</sup>

In considering this Big Question, you can add your answers to the Problem Tree on pg. 28.

## The 'other' or othering definition

By placing one's self at the centre, the 'other' always constitutes the outside, the person who is different. As a verb, other means to distinguish, label, name, identify, place and exclude those who do not fit a societal norm...'Othering' is the process that makes the other.

Full Source: <u>Key Concepts in</u> Political Geography 44

# Final Big Q: Whose interests are served by denying that slavery existed in Australia?

## Extracts from suggested reading:

• Interviewer Ben Fordham: we've seen countless statues pulled down around the world because of links to slavery. This is off the back of Black Lives Matter. In London, the Mayor is saying that every monument is now up for review and one of the statues in the UK with a question mark now is of Captain James Cook. How do you feel about the removal of these statues?

**PM Scott Morrison**: Well, when you're talking about Captain James Cook, in his time he was one of the most enlightened persons on these issues you could imagine. I mean, Australia when it was founded as a settlement, as New South Wales, was on the basis that there'd be no slavery. And while slave ships continued to travel around the world, when Australia was established yes, sure, it was a pretty brutal settlement. My forefathers and foremothers were on the First and Second Fleets. It was a pretty brutal place, but there was no slavery in Australia. And so I think what we're seeing with some of these protests, they start on a fair point when they're raising issues about, you know, people's treatment in custody or things like that. Fair, fair issue. But now it's being taken over by other much more politically driven left wing agendas, which are seeking to take advantage of these opportunities to push

their political causes. And, you know, we've got to... I've always said we've got to be honest about our history. We've got to acknowledge the positive and the negative. But, you know, I think we've also got to respect our history as well. And this is not a licence for people to just go nuts on this stuff. Full source: Interview with Ben Fordham, 2GB <sup>42</sup>



Figure 1 <u>Scott Morrison is wrong about Australia's slave</u> past, historians say, The NewDaily, June 2020

• In the name of protection, Indigenous people were subject to near-total control. Their entry to, and exit from, reserves was regulated as was their everyday life on the reserves, their right to marry and their employment...

Boys were sent to farm work and pastoral stations, and girls to fill the insatiable demand for domestic servants, often in remote areas. As in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, however, the [Queensland] government frequently left 'full-blood' boys on the stations, many less than ten years of age, reasoning that they were already instructed in labouring and the stations would suffer without their input...

In 1901 [in Queensland] ... a minimum wage was legislated for Indigenous workers who were working under permit. For workers in the pearling

industry... the wage was set at 10 shillings. For all other workers ...the wage was set at five shillings (\$24 today), less than one-eighth of the 'white wage'. **Full source:** Unfinished business: Indigenous stolen wages: Chapter 2 - Life under the protection acts <sup>43</sup>

## Activity

#### **Critical Questions:**

Compare the perspective presented by the PM in the transcript with the Australian Senate Report excerpt above. Why did the PM say, "there was no slavery in Australia"? Before you write your responses in the box below, revisit the definition of Slavery on pg. 3.

	List at least 3 possible reasons	What would need to change/happen in your home, school, community, or government to overcome each reason?
1		
2		
3		

Are there any points or insights from this table that you could add to the Problem Tree on pg. 28?

#### **Extension Options:**

**Discuss with a partner**: Why might some leaders avoid or opt out of conversations or lessons about the history of racism and slavery?

#### Test your knowledge

Put your knowledge to the test by completing a short quiz <u>here</u> developed by Amnesty International Australia.

## **Connecting and Extending**

The extension activities below will allow you to relate the information explored in this resource to a subject area.

#### English

Satire can be a powerful tool for unpacking complex and traumatic histories. Ask A Slave is a satirical web series based on the actress' time working as a living history character at the popular historic site, George Washington's Mount Vernon.

Watch Episode 1 <u>here</u>, then write your own script or video based on an account of slavery in Australia.<sup>44</sup>

#### Music, English & History

Listen carefully to the lyrics of Paul Kelly's <u>From Little Things Big Things Grow</u>, which tells the story of the Wave Hill Walk-Off.<sup>45</sup> Translate the lyrics to tell a story of resistance or slavery close to where you live, or in Australia more broadly. Make a timeline of what happened at the Wave-Hill walk-off.

#### History

Another instance which may constitute slavery, was the stolen wages of First Nations Veterans. Read <u>this article</u> about how First Nations veterans had their wages and pensions stolen.<sup>46</sup>

Draw two cartoons of a First Nations veteran and a non-Indigenous veteran during the war (WWI, Vietnam or Korean war) and after the war. Focus on the differences in treatment at both stages.

#### History

Watch Servant or Slave<sup>47</sup> - a documentary produced by Aboriginal filmmaker Mitchell Stanley. It brings the voices of those who lived through the experience and survived to the forefront and shows the connection between the Stolen Generations and Slave Labour.

**Warning**: this documentary shows confronting content including physical and sexual abuse.



Where to watch Servant or Slave:

- You can watch on <u>Kanopy</u> (free access through a university or student account)
- You can rent or buy on <u>Vimeo</u>

Makes notes using the Deep Listening form on pg. 27 while you watch it, or complete the activities in <u>this</u> SBS Learn resource.

#### Geography

Look at a map of the country you're on and fill in the areas with instances of slavery (e.g. the stolen wages, blackbirding) and acts of resistance (e.g. the Pilbarra strike, the Wave Hill Walk Off) including the dates that they occurred. On your map, include any commemorations or memorials that exist in these areas.

#### Geography

Using the <u>Australian Bureau of Statistics</u> <u>Census Data</u>, explore the population trends for Australian South Sea Islanders over time and answer the following questions:

 What was the population of Australian South Sea Islanders in the 2016 Census?

- Which state had the largest population of population of Australian South Sea Islanders?
- How does this compare over time? Contrast the 2016 census data with data from other historical censuses.
- How does this data fit into the wider story of Blackbirding? Can you see any trends or parallels?

## Art

Indigenous Art is a powerful tool for social commentary. However, it is important to discuss how Indigenous Art is being produced in Australia. Read <u>this article</u> and discuss how the systems that produce, market and sell Indigenous Art have been described as 'modern slavery'.<sup>48</sup>

### Art

The Australian artist Daniel Boyd draws on his Aboriginal heritage as a Kudjla/Gangalu/Kuku

Yalanji/Jagara/Wangerriburra/Bandjalung man from North Queensland to bring an alternative lens to bear on the images that have constructed Australia's foundational myths.<sup>49</sup>

## Watch this interview with the artist: Daniel Boyd introduces '(HNDFWMIAFN)'

(5 mins) and answer the following frame questions:

- <u>Subjective Frame</u>: What would this work remind you of if you hadn't heard anything about Boyd's intentions? Why might it confuse some viewers?
- <u>Cultural Frame</u>: Which labour force and industry were 'a big part of Queensland's economy [in the 19th century]'?
- <u>Structural Frame</u>: What is Boyd calling the audience to consider by painting 'lenses' across the surface of this collection of works?
- <u>Postmodern Frame</u>: What paradox is Boyd exploring through his practice?



Daniel Boyd with Untitled (HNDFWMIAFN) (detail) 2017 / Photograph: Natasha Harth © QAGOMA

## Maths

Listen carefully to <u>A Director's Perspective</u> /Daniel Boyd 'Untitled (HNDFWMIAFN)'

<sup>50</sup>(2 mins) and answer the following questions:

- How much were the South Sea Islander workers paid per year?
- How much would that work out to each month?
- Compare this monthly rate to what the Chinese and white Australian workers were paid. You could present your findings as
  - percentages;
  - a column graph &/or;
  - $\circ$  an infographic

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies has developed a fantastic resource on the stolen wages using simple and compound interest here.<sup>51</sup>

- Review the key facts contained <u>here</u>.
- Complete the questions contained <u>here</u>.

#### **Legal studies**

In your Legal Studies class, read <u>this article</u> about the history of the Stolen Wages.<sup>52</sup> Discuss the reasons for:

- The Class Actions; and
- The complaint lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission.

## Economics/Business Studies/Legal Studies

The wages stolen from workers were often held 'in trust' – a legal term which means that one person or body, in this case the government, holds money on behalf of someone else. For this reason, claims have been made against governments for breaching their duties as trustee, or their duties as a fiduciary, by failing to properly manage the monies and repay workers.

With this in mind, discuss the duties of a financial trustee how the duties might have been breached by withholding workers' wages:

- The duties of a financial trustee include:
  - Keeping proper books of account; the trustee must not profit from the trust or have a conflict of interest;
  - Active breaches of trust consist of intentional, negligent or dishonest acts;
  - Passive breaches of trust consist of a failure to act appropriately.

Discuss the concept of 'Fiduciary Duty' in this context. Why are fiduciary duties important?

- Fiduciary duty:
  - occurs when one person is in a position of trust to act for or on behalf of another;
  - a fiduciary must act in beneficiaries' interest; must not profit from relationship; must not act for own benefit; must have no conflict of interest or intent to gain.

## Sharing my knowledge

Using your voice and applying your knowledge to counteract racism and injustice is a responsibility we all share as global citizens. Continue to share your knowledge with those around you, with the understanding, that even one voice can make a difference.

Throughout this resource you been have asked to think critically about slavery and its impact. It is important to note that history is not simply a point in time that has passed and with it so has its relevance. History impacts the world we know today, through systems of governance, societal structures and community values; to name a few. Keeping that in mind, continue to think critically about the legacy of slavery in Australia.

Consolidating the knowledge, you have already acquired from the resource, return to the video from The Feed SBS, <u>Stolen wages and generations of</u> <u>disadvantage: Is this Australia's version of</u> <u>slave labour?</u><sup>53</sup>

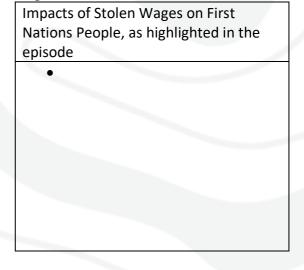


Now that you have re-watched the video, deeply consider the following quote from the episode,

"What happened to people under that control, was de-humanising,

demeaning and it has meant that the Aboriginal People in Queensland haven't been able to enter the economic market and be on an equal footing with Australians" (5.44)

In bullet points list the impacts of stolen wages mentioned within the video:



Now think deeper, what are some impacts the video didn't mention (*tip: consider the impacts today*):

Impacts of Stolen Wages on First Nations People •

You can also add these points to the Problem Tree on pg. 28.

## Start a dialogue

You may have listed racist or derogatory stereotypes as an impact in the previous activity. The most effective way to break down stereotypes is through educating others, which is something you can do today. Educate others on the information you have now learned so that we can collectively continue to break down these harmful stereotypes.

## Ask yourself or a friend:

- How has the legacy of slavery in Australia impacted our current society?
- What do you now know about slavery in Australia?
- What can I do as an individual to ensure that these histories are not forgotten?
- What would these industries look like now, if they hadn't exploited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other minority groups?

#### Write a tweet

Re-engage with Scott Morrison's apology regarding the history of slavery in Australia: "My comments were not intended to give offence and if they did, I deeply regret that and apologise for that."<sup>54</sup>

Reflect on Scott Morrisons apology and critically assess whether it is an appropriate response. Does this apology accept responsibility? Does it sufficiently counteract earlier messaging?

Now Imagine you're the Prime Minister of Australia ... what would you tweet to the nation about this history and/or your previous lack of awareness about it?

What's happening?		×
		٦
	140 Tweet	t

## **Critical Review**

Let's review what we've unpacked throughout this resource. You could start by categorising the red subheadings listed in this SBS article: <u>10 things you should know about slavery in</u> <u>Australia</u> under a column below:<sup>55</sup>

I already knew:	I didn't realise:	I still want to learn more about:
•		
•		

## Make a podcast

Considering these two articles (<u>Hungry, poor, exploited: alarm over Australia's import of</u> <u>farm workers</u><sup>33</sup> and <u>Australia to welcome Vanuatu farm workers</u><sup>39</sup>) curate a podcast episode on the continuing experience of South Sea Islanders working on farms in Queensland).

> We would love to see what you do! Please share through the hashtag **#LearnOurTruth**

Through sharing your knowledge about slavery, together we are bringing a greater awareness and recognition to this, our shared history.

## **Continuing your journey**

There is a wealth of resources to continue learning about slavery in Australia. Below are some examples that you can explore to expand your knowledge.

Remember to use the Active Reading Ripples on pg. 26 and/or Video Notetaking Forms on pg. 27 so that you critically engage with them.

#### Read

#### **Books**

- <u>Yijarni: True stories from Gurindji</u> <u>Country</u> by Erika Charola and Felicity Meakins
- <u>Trustees on Trial: Recovering the</u> <u>stolen wages</u> by Rosalind Kidd

#### **Articles and Reports**

- Report from the 2006 Senate Committee Inquiry into Stolen Wages: <u>Unfinished business:</u> <u>Indigenous stolen wages</u>
- <u>Think slavery in Australia was all in</u> <u>the past? Think again</u> Women's Agenda, June 2020
- Long fight for stolen wages for Western Australia's Aboriginal stockmen and women ABC News, July 2015
- <u>Australia needs to own up to its</u> <u>slave history</u> Sydney Morning Herald, April 2015
- Read stories from Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls here
- <u>Did legalised slavery exist</u> <u>in Australia?</u> ABC Radio National, July 2014
- <u>The racial gap in</u> <u>education and the legacy</u> <u>of slavery</u> Journal of Comparative Economics, Volume 40, Issue 4,

November 2012, Pages 581-595.

#### Listen

<u>Western Australia's Stolen Wages</u>
<u>Shame</u> ABC, September 2015

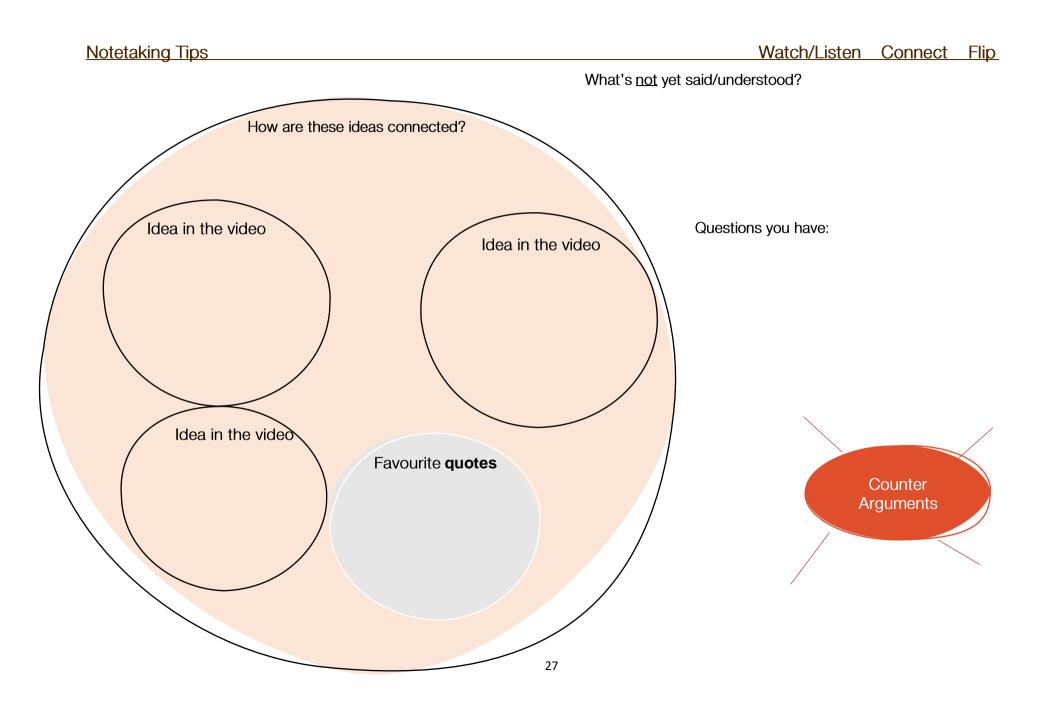
#### Watch

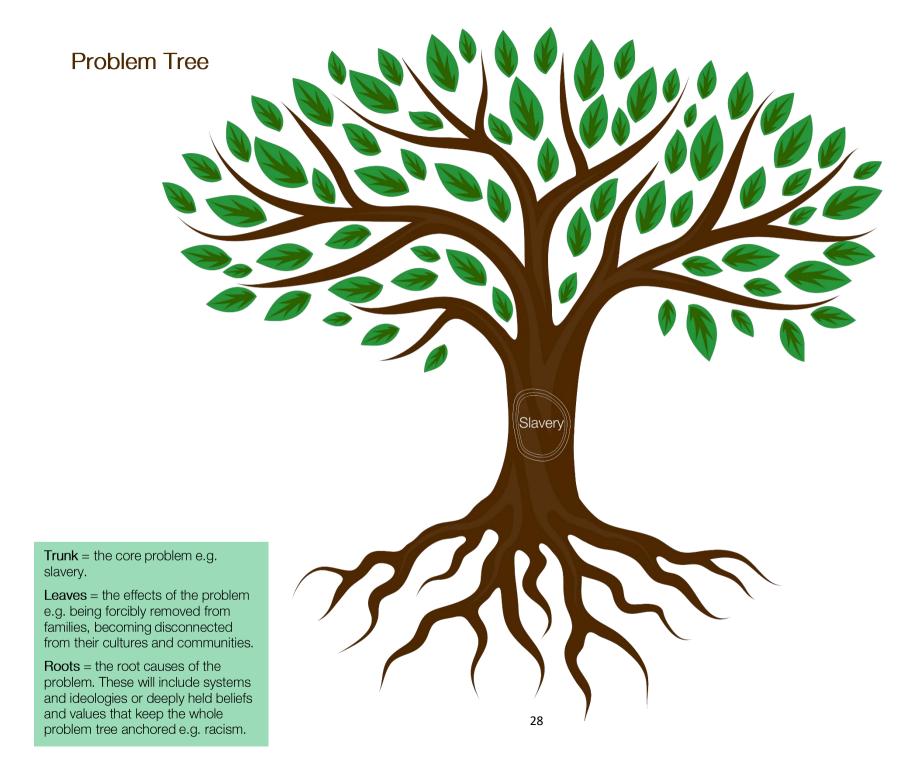
- Artworks that challenge Australia's wilful blindness to blackbirding: <u>#TogetherInArt Daniel Boyd</u> Interview (5 mins) March, 2018
- Lousy Little Sixpence documentary by Alec Morgan - comprises interviews and historical neverbefore-seen footage telling the long history of unpaid servitude of Aboriginal people. You can watch on <u>Kanopy</u> (free access through a university or student account).

Active Reading Ripples

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

Before	During	After are the key voices in the text?	
Who created the text?	Find three words you haven't come across before – type them into google images and try to guess the definitions:	What are some key quotes?	
Who is the intended audience?	Identify something from the text that you	What voices or knowledges aren't included in the text?	
How can you tell?	already knew before reading the text:	Understanding the 'truth' or reliability of the text: What is the background of the authors and how could this influence the text (e.g. bias)?	
	y something else from the text that sed you and explain why:	What is this text useful for?	
Self-reflection:			
Name something from the text you don't understand yet.			
How does your personal knowledge and experience affect the way you read the text?			





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

## Where we drew our knowledge from:

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boyd/#:~:text=Daniel%20Boyd%20draws%20on%20his,have%20constructed%20Australia's%20foun dational%20myths.

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<sup>51</sup> The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. (2019). *Student Resource sheet – Stolen Wages*. Retrieved from AIATSIS: <u>https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/year-9-and-10-mathematics-number-calculations-student-resource-sheet.pdf</u>

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https://www.stolenwages.com.au/uploads/1/3/0/7/130789712/where.are.all.the.dollars.stolen.fro m.aborigines.pdf

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<sup>54</sup> SBS. (2020, July 12). *Scott Morrison apologises after saying there was no slavery in Australia.* Retrieved from SBS: <u>https://www.sbs.com.au/news/scott-morrison-apologises-after-saying-there-was-no-slavery-in-australia</u>

<sup>55</sup> Marlow, K., Pearson, L., Verass, S. (2020, September 1). *10 things you should know about slavery in Australia*. Retrieved from NITV: <u>https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/12/01/10-things-you-should-know-about-slavery-australia</u>

## **Curriculum links**

## English

Year 7: ACELA1782, ACELA1537, <u>ACELY1720</u>, <u>ACELY1721</u>, <u>ACELY1723</u> Year 8: <u>ACELA1542</u>, <u>ACELA1548</u>, <u>ACELT1628</u>, <u>ACELT1807</u>, <u>ACELY1731</u>, <u>ACELY1732</u>, <u>ACELY1734</u>, <u>ACELY1736</u> Year 9: <u>ACELT1633</u>, <u>ACELT1635</u>, <u>ACELT1773</u>, <u>ACELY1742</u>, <u>ACELY1745</u>, <u>ACELY1746</u> Senior Secondary: (ACEEN004) (ACEEN008) (ACEEN009) (ACEEN011) (ACEEN014) (ACEEN018) (ACEEN019) (ACEEN027) (ACEEN024) (ACEEN028) (ACEEN035) (ACEEN038) <u>ACELY1739</u>, (ACEEN040) (ACEEN050) (ACEEN057) (ACEEN060) (ACEEN061) (ACEEN062) (ACEEN069) (ACEEN076) (ACEEN077)

## **History**

Year 8: ACDSEH075, ACHHS153, ACHHS155, ACHHS156 Year 9: ACOKFH015, ACOKFH019, ACDSEH088, ACDSEH083, ACDSEH084, ACDSEH085, ACDSEH020, ACDSEH089, ACDSEH090, ACDSEH091, ACDSEH092, ACHHS164, ACHHS169, ACHHS170, ACHHS172, ACHHS173, ACHHS174, Year 10: ACDSEH109, ACDSEH023, ACDSEH104, ACDSEH134, ACDSEH143, ACDSEH149, ACDSEH146, ACDSEH147, ACHHS182, ACHHS187, ACHHS188, ACHHS190, ACHHS191, ACHHS192

## Maths

Year 8: <u>ACMNA189</u>, <u>ACMSP284</u>, Year 9: <u>ACMNA211</u> Year 10: <u>ACMNA229</u>

## **Visual Arts**

Year 7 & 8: <u>ACAVAM118</u>, <u>ACAVAR124</u> Year 9 & 10: ACAVAM125, ACAVAR130, ACAVAR131

## Geography

Year 8: <u>ACHGK049</u>, <u>ACHGS058</u> Year 9: <u>ACHGS067</u>

## Music

Year 7 & 8: <u>ACAMUR098</u> Year 9 & 10: <u>ACAMUR105</u>

## **Economic and Business skills**

Year 9: <u>ACHEK042</u>, <u>ACHES043</u> Year 10: <u>ACHES055</u>