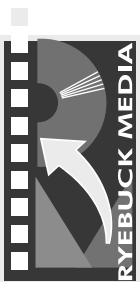


# Australian

# History Mysteries

Investigating five case studies in Australian history



**NATIONAL  
MUSEUM OF  
AUSTRALIA**  
CANBERRA

Ryebuck Media Pty Ltd  
National Museum of Australia

ISBN 0-9493804-0-7

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Designed by Polar Design, Carlton, Victoria

Printed by Impact Printing, Brunswick, Victoria

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# Contents

## Introduction to *Australian HISTORY MYSTERIES*

The resource	6
Aims	6
The structure of the resource	6
The choice of case studies	7
An inquiry approach	7
Application to the curriculum	8
<i>Australian HISTORY MYSTERIES</i> website	8
Making history active	8
<i>Australian HISTORY MYSTERIES</i> curriculum process	9
Acknowledgements	10

## Case studies

	<b>Case Study 1</b> Who ‘discovered’ Australia?	
	Teachers’ guide	11
	Student activities	14
	<b>Case study 2</b> What was the life of a female convict really like?	
	Teachers’ guide	37
	Student activities	40
	<b>Case study 3</b> The Eureka Rebellion — could you have stopped it from happening?	
	Teachers’ guide	57
	Student activities	63
	<b>Case study 4</b> What happened in a frontier conflict near Broome in 1864?	
	Teachers’ guide	81
	Student activities	84
	<b>Case study 5</b> Was Ned Kelly a hero or a villain?	
	Teachers’ guide	101
	Student activities	104

## Website

For reading guides, web links, interactive ‘games’ and updates,  
go to <[www.nma.gov.au/education/resources/history\\_mysteries](http://www.nma.gov.au/education/resources/history_mysteries)>





**Introduction** to

# **Australian History Mysteries**

## The resource

**Australian HISTORY MYSTERIES** is a joint project of the National Museum of Australia and Ryebuck Media Pty Ltd, specialists in educational multimedia. The project is supported by ScreenSound Australia.

This print and video resource draws on materials from a variety of museums, historical collections and historic sites to bring students a rich array of evidence. These are listed on page 10. The project would not have been possible without the support and enthusiasm of all those who provided access to resources.

## Aims

A major aim of the resource is to show teachers and students how museums are an excellent starting point for students' historical activities. Museum objects and displays can raise questions, suggest inquiries, provoke debate, reveal stories, and present mysteries that need to be solved by investigating evidence.

The project also aims to stimulate students' interest in and engagement with a study of aspects of their history and heritage, and to develop the skills needed in pursuing historical inquiries.

## The structure of the resource

The resource contains:

- **A 25 minute video, 'Australian HISTORY MYSTERIES'**, with short introductory sections on each of the five case studies. These introductions take students to the places associated with their investigations, and show them current and historical images of the site. Students are also introduced to the 'mystery' that they will investigate in each case study.  
  
This element of the resource serves to excite, stimulate, engage and challenge students. It is the 'hook' that will lead them into wanting to explore further the issues raised with them by the narrator.
- **Five print case studies**, containing a variety of reproducible information and evidence pages for use in the classroom. The case studies investigate these 'mysteries':
  - Who 'discovered' Australia?
  - What was the life of a female convict really like?
  - The Eureka Rebellion — could you have stopped it from happening?
  - What happened in a frontier conflict near Broome in 1864?
  - Was Ned Kelly a hero or a villain?
- A set of **introductory 'tuning in' activities** for each case study. These activities help students engage with the key concepts involved in each case study in a way that makes sense in their own lives today. Once they have focused clearly on the nature of the investigation, they will be better able to critically analyse the evidence.
- **Suggested teaching strategies** for each of the case studies, so that even the least experienced history teacher will feel confident in presenting the units to their classes. The approaches recommended include individual student, group and whole class activities. Of course, teachers are able to select and adapt the ideas, resources and suggested questions and strategies and shape them to their own needs and approaches.
- There is also an associated **website** containing extra resources and activities for the classroom, an introductory 'What is history?' exercise, bibliographical information, educational games, links to related sites for each unit, and updates of information. This is at [www.nma.gov.au/education/resources/history\\_mysteries](http://www.nma.gov.au/education/resources/history_mysteries).

There is an additional introductory exercise on Ned Kelly in *STUDIES of Society and Environment* magazine, 2/2002. It is available in your library or from Ryebuck Media.

## The choice of case studies

The case studies are not exhaustive investigations of the topics to which they relate. Rather, they provide a way of focusing on a key aspect of each topic. They are studies in depth, not in breadth.

Each of the case studies has been selected because it involves a key aspect of Australian history usually studied in secondary schools. Each study provides a way for students to explore aspects of the craft of the historian in a different way, thus enriching history teaching in schools.

## An inquiry approach

All the units in **Australian HISTORY MYSTERIES** come from the practical classroom experience of the writers, and reflect a commitment to inquiry learning.

By inquiry learning we mean a process that as far as possible involves students in 'finding out by working out'. This means that, while we have selected and sometimes edited or adapted the evidence and provided an appropriate framework for presenting it to students in the classroom, it is still up to the students to critically analyse the evidence, and come to their own conclusions about it.

This approach, represented by the seven stages set out below, is built in to each unit. Sometimes it is explicitly obvious in the structure of the unit; at other times it is less obvious (for example in the Eureka case study); but in each case the principles involved are there, and are the active elements behind students' learning activities.

In this inquiry process, students:

<b>Engage</b>	They reach a point where they are interested and engaged, and want to find out what has happened in this case.
<b>'Tune in'</b>	Students see the key concepts involved in the study in a way that they can identify in their own lives and experience. The study has <i>meaning</i> for them.
<b>Hypothesise</b>	They draw on existing knowledge and ideas, and state what they expect to find, or what they anticipate the outcome might be. Their hypotheses then become the thing that they are testing by evidence.
<b>Structure an inquiry</b>	To carry out their inquiry, students have to follow a logical and coherent structure. They determine what they need to know to answer the questions they are exploring.
<b>Critically examine evidence</b>	Students now go through the process of gathering, sorting, comprehending, classifying, interpreting, testing, accepting, rejecting, qualifying, contextualising and synthesising this evidence.
<b>Reach a conclusion</b>	Students are now ready to reach an informed conclusion that they can defend and justify. The conclusion is theirs, and they will be aware of the degree of certainty with which they can hold that conclusion. They are able to complete a summative task that demonstrates their knowledge and understanding, and that reflects the processes they have gone through.
<b>Reflect and apply</b>	Students are able, finally, to go beyond the particular case studied, and think in terms of the broader concepts involved. They can apply their new knowledge and understandings to other periods, places and peoples.

## Application to the curriculum

**Australian HISTORY MYSTERIES** has been written for students at the middle secondary years of schooling (years 8–10), but can be adapted for both higher and lower levels.

Taken together, the variety of approaches and emphases in **Australian HISTORY MYSTERIES** covers a large area of what all state and territory curriculum documents say history is about. The case studies chosen allow students to explore key aspects of history, such as:

- knowledge about aspects of their shared past
- understandings about the nature of evidence
- concepts of change, continuity, causation, motivation, empathy
- cultural influences on historical understanding — the impact of different values and different cultural contexts in leading to different representations of the past.

This has been summarised in the table on the next page. Teachers will be able to identify the areas within their own state or territory curriculum documents where this resource will be suitable for use in their classrooms, and most notably in:

- History
- Studies of society and environment
- Civics and citizenship education
- Discovering democracy.

## Australian HISTORY MYSTERIES website

There is an associated website with this kit. It is at [www.nma.gov.au/education/resources/history\\_mysteries](http://www.nma.gov.au/education/resources/history_mysteries).





This website provides:

- some simple activities to **introduce the nature of history**
- a **bibliographical guide** to each case study
- **web links** to other sites relevant to each case study
- an **interactive ‘game’** for each case study that provides a different way of helping students engage with the main themes
- a periodical updating of **resources and issues** associated with each case study.

## Making history active

We believe the case studies, the multimedia materials that go with them, and the suggested approaches for implementing them all work together in this resource. They create the real possibility for active engagement, argument, enlightenment, outrage, pride, wonder, incredulity and, above all, excitement to be generated in classrooms through the use of these materials.

## Australian HISTORY MYSTERIES Curriculum Process

<b>PROCESS</b> <b>Students take these steps:</b>	<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b> <b>As a result of the process, students can:</b>
They investigate an aspect of history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ set and test a hypothesis</li> <li>▪ construct a logical inquiry sequence</li> <li>▪ identify and gather evidence</li> <li>▪ select and sort relevant evidence</li> <li>▪ critically analyse evidence</li> <li>▪ synthesise evidence</li> <li>▪ present a reasoned conclusion</li> </ul>
to gain knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ select appropriate facts</li> </ul>
and understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ show empathy</li> <li>▪ understand causation</li> <li>▪ discuss motivation</li> </ul>
that they apply to the problem to reach a conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ appreciate that cultural elements influence interpretations</li> <li>▪ identify and explain different representations of an aspect</li> <li>▪ realise that there are interpretations involved</li> <li>▪ acknowledge that their conclusions may change over time</li> </ul>
and that they reflect on and apply to new situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ identify the broad concepts in the particular example</li> <li>▪ speculate on what would have happened if some element had been different</li> <li>▪ apply concepts to new situations</li> <li>▪ hypothesise about the future.</li> </ul>

## Acknowledgements

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Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, WA  
Ballarat General Cemeteries Trust, Ballarat, Vic  
Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat, Vic  
Battye Library of Western Australian History, Perth, WA  
East Perth National Cemetery Trust, Perth, WA  
Eureka Stockade Museum, Ballarat, Vic  
Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village, Warrnambool, Vic  
Fremantle City Council, Esplanade Park, Fremantle, WA  
Indigo Shire Council, Beechworth Historic Courthouse, Beechworth, Vic  
Island Produce Tasmania Pty Ltd, Cascades Female Factory Historic Precinct, Hobart, Tas  
Mansfield Cemetery Trust, Mansfield, Vic  
National Museum of Australia, Canberra, ACT  
National Trust of Australia, Old Melbourne Gaol, Melbourne, Vic  
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, Tas  
School of Art History and Archaeology, The University of Manchester, UK  
ScreenSound Australia, Canberra, ACT  
Sovereign Hill Historical Park, Ballarat, Vic  
Stringybark Creek Historic Site, Mansfield, Vic  
Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, Ross Female Factory Historic Precinct, Tas  
Tasmanian Wool Centre, Ross, Tas  
Warrnambool Art Gallery, Warrnambool, Vic

### **and**

Dr Bain Attwood, Amanda Baker, Glenda Baines, Tina Baum, David Beames, Simone Bellares, Leilani Bin-Juda, Andrew Buxton, Dr Eleanor Casella, Tom Copley, Trish Connors, Andy Cottier, Irene Crebbin, Franchesca Cubillo, Marita Cullen, Matthew Dower, Martin Drummond, Dr Stephen Foster, Shane Gallasch, Dr Bill Gammage, Doug George, Fiona Hooton, Heather Hunt, Louise James, Elizabeth Jamieson, Greg Jones, Parry Kostoglou, Shirley McCarron, Lisa McConnell, Dr Ann McGrath, Keith McMenomy, Dr John McQuilton, Kaye Mongan, Melanie Morgan, Sarah Murphy, Howard Nichol, Matt Noonan, Brenda O'Connor, Jan Riggall, Ben Roberts, Dr Kay Saunders, Dr Bruce Scates, Denis Shephard, Richard Skinner



## Case Study one

# Who 'discovered' Australia?

In this investigation students look at a variety of evidence to determine who 'discovered' Australia. In doing so they have to address the issue of what 'discovery' means, and what the implications of different definitions, or elements of an overall definition, are.

The aim is not to have students nominate one person or group whom they propose as 'the discoverer', but rather to analyse evidence and appreciate that the full meaning of 'discovery' involves many processes over thousands of years.

Students are introduced to a range of possible 'discoverers', including Aboriginal people, Baijini gypsies, Chinese explorers, Macassan fishermen, Portuguese seamen, Dutch merchants, James Cook and Matthew Flinders.

Students investigate one of these possibilities, the Portuguese, in detail. A series of maps dating from the sixteenth century, called the Dieppe maps, may or may not show the east coast of Australia. If they do, a Portuguese expedition must have visited the north and east coasts of Australia more than two hundred years before James Cook. Students analyse the maps, but also consider other possible physical evidence of a Portuguese visit at this time — evidence which, if it does show a Portuguese presence, certainly reinforces the possibility that the Dieppe maps are in fact maps of Australia. Chief among this possible physical evidence is the mystery of the 'Mahogany Ship' — the supposed sixteenth-century Portuguese wreck that may or may not be buried in sandhills near Warrnambool, Victoria.

As they look at this mystery, students are thrust into a real and still contested issue in Australian history. They are introduced to a wide range of evidence in their investigations, and have to deal critically with the issue of the nature of evidence in history. While the 'Mahogany Ship' has not been located, the search continues — and keeps the historical debate about the 'discovery' of Australia alive.

Students can also see this as an interesting example of how history might be used to promote other social ends — the Victorian Government and the City of Warrnambool would welcome proof of the Portuguese discovery, as it would be a great tourist attraction to the area. The Victorian Government has even in the past offered a \$250 000 reward for proof of the existence of the ship in the sand dunes between Warrnambool and Port Fairy.

# Teachers' Guide

## Classroom planner

Classroom activity	Resource pages required	Suggested classroom format	Approximate classroom time
1	Page 14	Group	15 mins
2	Page 15	Group/homework	20 mins
3	Page 16 & video	Class	20 mins
4	Pages 17–29	Groups	30 mins
5	Page 30–31	Class	10 mins
6	Pages 32–33 & atlas	Class	20 mins
7	Page 34	Group	20 mins
8	Page 35	Individual	60 mins

There are more resources for this unit — reading guides, updates, extra resources and activities for the classroom, including an internet 'game' — at <[www.nma.gov.au/education/resources/history\\_mysteries](http://www.nma.gov.au/education/resources/history_mysteries)>.

## Classroom strategies

**The key element of this unit is the notion that 'discovery' has different meanings, or different layers of meaning, and that different answers can be given to the question who 'discovered' Australia, according to the definition or layer applied.**

As a result of working through the evidence, students will realise that 'discovery' might mean:

- being the first ever to become aware of something (which would make Aboriginal people the 'discoverers')
- being the first to find something, and tell that to other outsiders (which might apply to the Chinese, Macassans, Portuguese or Dutch)
- being the first to map an area which then brings newcomers in large numbers (which might apply to Cook and the east coast of Australia)
- being the first person to find something, and be able to show others exactly where all of it is and what it looks like (which might apply to Flinders).

**Activity 1** introduces students to the concept of 'discovery'. This is a key element, and needs to be explored thoroughly. Students have to decide who 'discovered' a fictional cure for cancer. Students work in groups, with each group taking one candidate, and being responsible for presenting the case for that applicant.

Divide the students into four groups. Allocate one candidate to each group. That group has to present the arguments to support that candidate's claim to the prize. Stress that in their presentations students need to put forward the positive claims of the person for the reward, and also anticipate any objections that there might be to them from other candidates.

After all groups have argued their case and have answered any questions from the rest of the class, students vote as individuals — but they cannot vote for the candidate whose case they presented. This forces them to look beyond their own candidate and their own arguments.

In their discussions of awarding the 'prize', students will probably want to share it. Do not let them! They must make one choice — then they might discuss why that restriction was unsatisfactory to them.

In **Activity 2** students continue developing their understanding of the concept of 'discovery'. The student survey should cover several generations, and students discuss any trends that emerge. There is a real possibility that they will see differences in generational responses.



Students look at the video segment in **Activity 3**. At the end of the segment, students need to be clear that they are investigating three elements in this 'mystery':

- **Did Portuguese explorers map the east coast of Australia 250 years before Cook?**
- **Is there a Portuguese wreck, the 'Mahogany Ship'?**

Both of these help to answer the ultimate mystery:

- **Who 'discovered' Australia?**

In **Activity 4**, students look at different possible 'claimants' to 'discovery'. In doing so they will again confront the issue: what does 'discovery' mean? Is the answer to the question different according to the different definition applied?

Each group can be made responsible for analysing and reporting on a different candidate. Each group reports: 'I think that ... discovered Australia because ...' They then answer questions about their claim asked by others in the class. This activity will certainly put the issues about the definition of 'discovery' into sharp focus! Stress at the end that just because they have put forward a particular claim, they do not have to accept it. At this stage they are representing that claimant, not supporting them. It is important that at every stage the teacher stresses that all evidence has to be treated critically and analytically in history.

In **Activities 5–7** all students now explore one claim, that of the Portuguese. The key element in this claim is the Dieppe maps — a set of French maps, possibly copies of a lost Portuguese original. The earliest one of these is called the Dauphin Map, and dates from about 1536. If the Dieppe maps are maps of Australia, the Portuguese visited Australia in 1522–1524. If they are not maps of Australia, the Portuguese probably weren't here. Students examine the arguments for and against the maps as showing parts of Australia. They also look at other possible evidence — which may or may not make the maps more likely to be Australia. The key piece of physical evidence would be the 'Mahogany Ship'. If it exists, and if it is a Portuguese caravel, it may make the Dieppe maps more believable. If it does not exist, it may cast doubt on the 'Portuguese theory'. If it exists but is not a Portuguese ship, it weakens the theory considerably.

In **Activity 8** students now come to their own conclusion, with the requirement that they also justify that conclusion by reference to the element of 'discovery' that they are using, and the nature and strength of the evidence that supports it.



# Who will win the award?

Welcome to this meeting of the jury to award the World Prize for 'Discovery' this year.

As you know, this is the special award of fifty million dollars that goes to the person who has made the most significant discovery that has benefited humanity.

Past winners have discovered ways to eliminate poverty, to create world peace, and to eliminate racism.

This year's award is right up there with these great discoveries.

It is for the discovery that eliminated cancer.

The problem is: there are four candidates for the award. We do not know who should get it, so we have asked you to meet and decide.

Without any more delay, let's look at the candidates.

<p><b>Candidate A</b></p>	<p><b>Candidate B</b></p>
<p>A is an indigenous inhabitant of the Brazilian rainforest. She found the plant that cured cancer after a mysterious space rock crashed into the area. She was the only person who knew that the plant contained the juice that seemed to cure certain cancers. She only ever used it for her own tribe. However, it would never have been known about by outsiders if Candidate B had not become involved.</p>	<p>B met A, and learned the secret. He took the plant to use with his friends in Europe. He kept it secret, and only shared it with a few people. He also did not realise how powerful it was, and only used it to treat certain types of cancer. But it was his use of the plant that then led Candidate C to know about it.</p>
<p><b>Candidate C</b></p>	<p><b>Candidate D</b></p>
<p>C was a great research scientist. She learned about the miracle plant from B. She experimented with it, and was only one experiment away from showing that her improved version could cure all cancers. However, she died before she could tell anyone about it and all her papers describing the research were apparently destroyed. If that had happened, would we have known of the plant? Her family now claim the prize on her behalf. However, there is also Candidate D to consider.</p>	<p>D met C on the day she died, and quite by accident picked up the only surviving copy of her research paper explaining what she was going to do in her final test. He completed that test, and quickly told the world about this wonderful cure. The rest is history — and there are no more deaths from cancer in the world.</p> <p>Well, judges, it's up to you. Cast your vote for one applicant only.</p>



## BALLOT PAPER

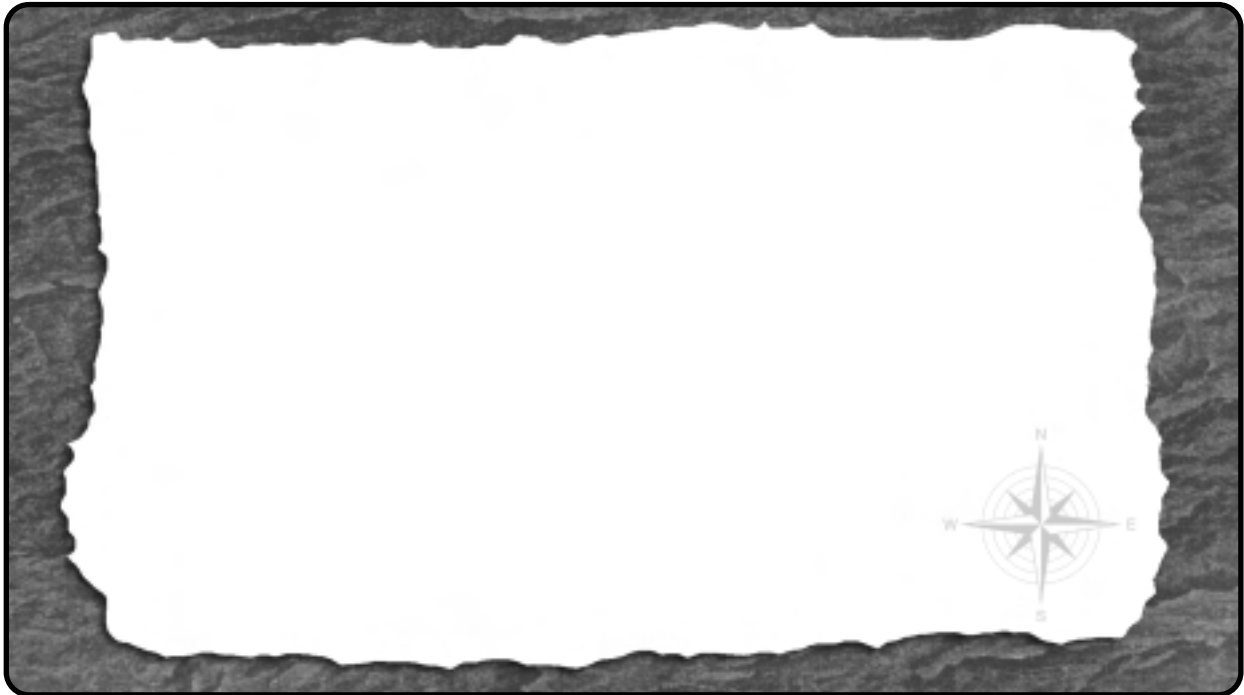
GROUP \_\_\_\_\_

I vote for:  CANDIDATE A  CANDIDATE B  CANDIDATE C  CANDIDATE D



# Who 'discovered' Australia?

- 1 What is the meaning of the word 'discover'?  
Write your definition, starting your sentence: 'To 'discover' means...'
- 2 What does Australia look like? Draw a sketch of its shape in the box below.



- 3 How could you **prove** that it looks like that? Discuss the suggestions you come up with.



You all know what Australia looks like, but have you ever wondered how you know that? Who 'discovered' Australia?

- 4 Carry out a survey of the question: **Who 'discovered' Australia?**  
Do it for three different age groups if you can: for **yourselves**, for **your parents' generation**, and your **grandparents' generation**.
- 5 Collate the class results, and compare the answers of the different generations.  
Discuss the results.
- 6 At this point you can record your own answer to this question: Who 'discovered' Australia?

**In the rest of this unit you will be able to look at the possibility of various individuals and groups 'discovering' Australia. You may end up answering the question above in the same way, or what you learn may make you change your mind.**



# Video visit

- 1** What did the presenter of the video learn at school about who 'discovered' Australia?
- 2** Why is there confusion about who 'discovered' Australia?
- 3** Draw up a table like the one below. In the left hand column record four different types of evidence the presenter uses to raise questions about the issue. Then briefly summarise what the strengths and weaknesses or limitations of each might be as evidence of who 'discovered' Australia.

Types of evidence	Its strengths as evidence	Its weaknesses or limitations

- 4** What is the 'Mahogany Ship'?
- 5** What is the significance of the 'Mahogany Ship' for understanding who 'discovered' Australia?
- 6** Describe the site where the 'Mahogany Ship' is supposed to be located. Why would it be difficult to find a wrecked ship there?
- 7** What are the three mysteries that you are being asked to solve?



# Presenting possibilities



our task now is to look at various individuals and groups who might be considered to have 'discovered' Australia.

- 1** Look at the evidence for each person or group, read and discuss it, and answer the questions related to that person's or group's claims.
- 2** Make a presentation to the class that argues that individual's or group's claim. (Even if you do not personally believe their claim, you still have to put it forward as well as you can.)

In preparing your argument you need to make clear the meaning of 'discover' that suits the possibility you are presenting.

**Use a table like this to summarise your own and other groups' presentations.**

Possibility	Main evidence / arguments FOR	Main evidence / arguments AGAINST	My own verdict on each possibility
A Indigenous Australians			
B Chinese			
C Baijini			
D Macassans			
E Portuguese			
F Dutch			
G James Cook			
H Matthew Flinders			



# Indigenous Australians

## Source 1 Archaeological evidence

“Archaeologists rely on various techniques to establish the age of material they find in their excavations. As these techniques are improved, or new techniques developed, dating becomes more and more accurate. Using such techniques archaeologists have discovered evidence of human activity in Australia dating back many thousands of years. Scientists cannot date the earliest evidence exactly, but current estimates vary from about 50 000 years ago to 60 000 years ago. Evidence of ancient human activity is found across the whole of Australia.”

(Adapted from Mulvaney, John & Kamminga, Johan, 1999. *Prehistory of Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p. 138 and Smith, Mike, 1998, 'The pattern of continental occupation: late Pleistocene colonisation of Australia and New Guinea', in Murray, Tim (ed.), *Archaeology of Aboriginal Australia: A Reader*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p.41)

## Source 2 Ochre

**Piece of ground ochre (haematite) used about 50 000 years ago from Nauwalabila 1, basal levels, Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory.**



(Piece of ground ochre, Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory. On loan from Rhys Jones, Australian National University. National Museum of Australia)

**P**eople have been mining ochre at the Karrku ochre mine in the Campbell Ranges west of Yuendumu, Northern Territory, for at least 30 000 years. It is still prized for its intense red colour. It is widely traded around Central Australia.

This piece of ochre has been ground to produce pigment for painting. This technique is among the earliest known evidence for art-making in the world.

## Source 3 The Walls of China, Willandra Lakes.

### Source 3



(J. Houldsworth for the Australian Heritage Commission, with permission from the traditional owners)

**S**ource 3 above shows eroded dunes around Lake Mungo, New South Wales. These were once the shores of an ancient lake. In a remarkable discovery, the burnt remains of a young woman showed that more than 30 000 years ago people were cremating and burying their dead here. Archaeologists also found the burial site of a man covered in red ochre. This suggests that these people were carrying out funeral ceremonies.

Red ochre is not found close to Lake Mungo, so people must have brought it from quarries further away. Red ochre was a very important item of trade for Aboriginal people throughout much of Australia.

## Source 4 Modern use of ochre

### Karrku ochre mine and ochre



(Karrku ochre mine, Northern Territory and piece of ochre recently mined there. National Museum of Australia)



# Indigenous Australians

## An historian's claim on display in the National Museum of Australia

### Source 5

“The discoverers, explorers and colonists of the three million square miles which are Australia, were its Aborigines.”

(Historian John Mulvaney, 1969)

## An Aboriginal oral history tradition on display in the National Museum of Australia

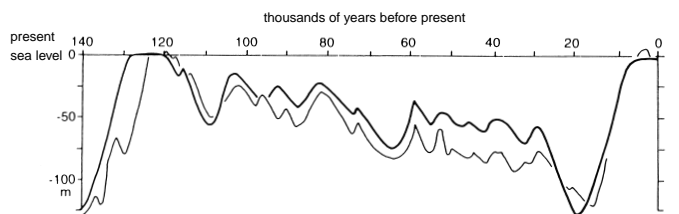
### Source 6

“People should remember that we are the oldest surviving race of people, culture of people, in the world... We know that our people have been here from the beginning of time.”

(Aboriginal poet Kevin Gilbert, 1996)

## Changing sea levels around Australia over time

### Source 7



(Mulvaney, John and Kamminga, Johan, 1999. *Prehistory of Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999 p. 106)

## The changing shape of the Australian landmass over time

### Source 8



Lower sea levels expose more land, and make the distance between islands much shorter.

(Lourandos, Harry, 1997. *Continent of Hunter-Gatherers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 6)

- 1 According to this evidence:
  - How long have Aboriginal people been here?
  - From where might these people have come? (You might have several different answers or possibilities for this.)
  - Did they occupy different parts of Australia?
  - Who has 'discovered' Australia?
- 2 From this evidence, could Aboriginal people be said to have 'discovered' Australia? Give your reasons.
- 3 What is the meaning of the word 'discover' you are using for this answer?
- 4 Prepare your case to present to the class.

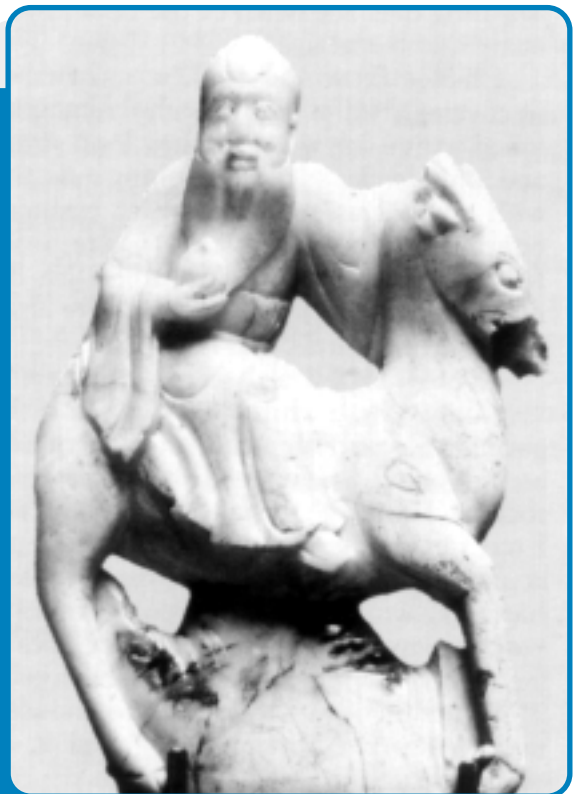


# Chinese

## Source 1 Possible Chinese contacts

- Some scholars believe that Chinese astronomers had charted the sky around northern Australia around 593 and 592 BC — they reported a solar eclipse which would only have been seen in Australia.
- A Chinese book written in 333 BC reported 'hopping animals' in parts of China.
- Between 1405 and 1433 the Chinese admiral Ch'eng Ho made seven voyages of discovery from China, some of them in the area around Timor.
- In 1820 Europeans discovered that the Chinese had a name for northern Australia — Lam-hai.
- In 1879 this small carved figure of Lao Shou Xing, the Chinese god of long life, was found 1.2 metres below ground level, in the roots of a banyan tree near Darwin. This is the sort of object a Chinese sailor might have carried with him. It has been dated to about 1670, and had been dropped there when the tree was young.
- Chinese value trepang (also known as bêche-de-mer, sea slug or sea cucumber), which was plentiful in northern Australian waters. Sites where trepang was caught and processed by non-Aboriginal people have been dated to between 1200 and 1450, though not all archaeologists agree on these dates. They argue that the start of the trepang industry can be dated to 1667 when the Dutch attacked a fleet of Macassan fishing ships from Celebes, forcing them to take shelter in the Gulf of Carpentaria, where they discovered the trepang.

(Based on Rolls, Eric, 1992. *Sojourners*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, pp. 8–15)



- 1** From this evidence, could Chinese be said to have 'discovered' Australia? Give reasons.
- 2** What is the meaning of the word 'discover' you are using for this answer?
- 3** Prepare your case to present to the class.