



Let The Land Speak

A history of Australia: How the land created our nation by Jackie French

Primary Teachers Resource

Book Summary:

To understand the present, you need to understand the past. To understand Australia's history, you need to look at how the land has shaped not just our past, but will continue to shape our future. From highly respected, award-winning author Jackie French comes a new and fascinating interpretation of Australian history, focusing on how the land itself, rather than social forces, shaped the major events that led to modern Australia. Our history is mostly written by those who live, work and research in cities, but it's the land itself which has shaped our history far more powerfully and significantly than we realise. Reinterpreting the history we think we all know - from the indigenous women who shaped the land, from terra Incognita to Eureka, from Federation to Gallipoli and beyond, Jackie French shows us that to understand our history, we need to understand our land. Taking us behind history and the accepted version of events, she also shows us that there's so much we don't understand about our history because we simply don't understand the way life was lived at the time. Eye-opening, refreshing, completely fascinating and unforgettable, LET THE LAND SPEAK will transform the way we understand the role and influence of the land and how it has shaped our nation.

Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes:

Appropriate Ages:

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Introduction

Let the Land Speak - A history of Australia: How the land created our nation explores the relationship between Australia's people and the land, from the traditional owners of the land to the people that populate Australia today.

How to use these notes

The Teacher's Notes have been written for Primary School Teachers who are teaching The Australian Curriculum: Geography and The Australian Curriculum: History. *Let the Land Speak - A history of Australia: How the land created our nation* presents a range of information and opinions on the importance of the land from both a geographic and historic context and therefore is a good companion text for teachers teaching geography and history. The text also provides teachers with an alternate point of view to the development and history of Australia to traditional textbooks.

These notes have been arranged in chronological order by chapter. The chapters most relevant to Primary School Teachers from years 4 – 5 have been addressed. It is recommended that the teacher read the relevant content from each chapter, and where appropriate, modify the language level of the content for their students. The activities in these notes are designed to stimulate thought, discussion and debate on traditional representations of Australian geographical concepts and historical knowledge and understanding.

Where possible, and appropriate, the activities include cross curricula learning opportunities such as creating multi-modal pieces of literature and mathematical problem solving.

Study notes on themes and curriculum topics:

This text will be useful in addressing the Australian Curriculum: Geography

Geographical Knowledge and Understanding: Year Four

- The types of natural vegetation and the significance of vegetation to the environment and to people (ACHGK021)
- The importance of environments to animals and people, and different views on how they can be protected (ACHGK022)
- The custodial responsibilities of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander Peoples have for Country/Place and how this past and present views about use of resources (ACHGK023)
- The natural resources provided by the environment and different views on how they could be used sustainably (ACHGK025)

Geographical Knowledge and Understanding: Year Five

- The influence of people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples on the environmental characteristics (ACHGK027)
- The influence of the environment on the human characteristics of a place (ACHGK028)
- The influence of the environment on the human characteristics of places and the management of spaces within them (ACHGK029)

This text will be useful in addressing the Australian Curriculum: History

Historical Knowledge and Understanding: Year Four

- The diversity and longevity of Australia's first peoples and the ways Aboriginal first peoples and the ways Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples are connected to Country and Place (land sea, waterways and skies) and the implications for their daily lives (ACHHK077)
- The journey(s) of AT LEAST ONE world navigator, explorer or trader up to the late eighteenth century up to the late eighteenth century, including their contacts with other societies and any impacts (ACHHK078)
- Stories of the First Fleet, including reasons for the journey, who travelled to Australia, and their experiences following arrival (ACHHK079)
- The nature of contact between Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders and others, for example, the Macassans and the Europeans, and the effects of these interactions on, for example families and the environment (ACHHK080)

Historical Knowledge and Understanding: Year Five

- The nature of convict or colonial presence including the factors that influenced patterns of development, aspects of daily life of the inhabitants (including Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples) and how the environment changed (ACHHK094)
- The impact is a significant development or event on a colony; for example, frontier conflict, the gold rushes, the Eureka Stockade, internal exploration, the advent of rail, the expansion of farming, drought (ACHHK096)

The role of that a significant individual or group played in shaping a colony; for example, explorers, farmers, entrepreneurs, artists, writers, humanitarians, religious or political

Reading strategies

Students can find working with non-fiction texts, especially those with few visual clues, difficult, especially when they first start working with them. By providing the students with support through reading strategies, students are better able to engage and work with complex texts.

Group reading provides students with an opportunity to work through the text together and to support each other as they are reading. By taking it in turns to read, the students are also able to take the opportunity to record notes, and mark up new and unfamiliar words whilst another student is reading. One way to do this is to use a reading chart (see the end of these notes) as students read through the text. The reading record is a summary of the information that the students have read and can be used to compare different interpretations of the text with each other as well as an record that can be referred to as students' progress in their studies.

Questions for reading and discussion

Before you begin

Jackie French states *this book is the story of the land's influence on iconic Australian events* (p.6). Working in small groups, students complete the following tasks:

- Define the following words
 - Influence
 - Iconic
 - Events
- Brainstorm iconic events that the students may know for example local festivals, past bushfires, NAIDOC week etc.
- Circle any events that may be influenced by geography for example bushfires.
- Use the events to create a table that shows iconic Australian events that.
- Using a think, pair, share strategy, students compare their lists.
- After completing the think, pair, share, students make any changes to their lists that they think are necessary.
- Students report their findings to the class.

In the introduction to the text, Jackie French writes *History is stories. Some of them not necessarily the most accurate or unbiased – get written down* (p.7). As a whole class, discuss what the students think this statement means including any examples from their experience in studying history and their own life experience.

List the inventory of the HMAS Bark *Endeavour* from 1768. The HMAS Bark *Endeavour* is described as being twice the size of a suburban house. Using the inventory list, complete the following tasks:

- Research the size of the typical suburban house in Australia.
- Using grid paper, sketch out the space that two suburban houses would take, to scale (this is the size of the HMAS Bark *Endeavour*).
- On the grid paper, mark out how the inventory would fit in the space.
- Looking at the paper and the available space, discuss why it would be important for the boats/ships that were exploring the world to stop and get fresh water, grass and other supplies at regular intervals.

Using a large physical map of Australia as a class, identify and mark all of the harbors. Using the map, the Internet and other sources, mark all of the places that may have provided safe harbor for sailors if they understood the winds and other factors. For example, on the NSW South Coast, Jervis Bay, if entered correctly would provide safe passage for boats, Wreck Bay, which boats tried to enter, was too shallow and treacherous (hence the name 'Wreck Bay').

As a class discuss the statement "To understand our history you need to understand our land" (p.8)

In small groups read the statement "We need to listen to our land" (p.9) and complete the following tasks:

- Identify who the "we" are,
- Evaluate the word "need"
- Describe what "listening to our land" involves.
- As a group imagine you are writing a letter to your grandchildren. In the letter explain to your grandchildren why it is important to "listen to our land"

Chapter one: the real First Fleet

Chapter one tells an imaginative recreation of what may have happened as the first peoples arrived in the Australia.

Divide the students into small groups and complete the following tasks:

- Allocate each group one part of the first chapter.
- Taking it in turns, students read their allocated part of the story out loud; those students who aren't reading should take notes on what they hear (new words, key ideas, images that come into their head etc.)
- After reading their allocated sections students take it in turns to discuss what they have learnt from the text.
- Using their notes and the discussion, the student use a storyboard (see the end of these notes) to map out the key events and ideas in their allocated section of the text.
- Students use the storyboard to create a multi-modal text.

Extension 1: As a class, discuss how the students felt about this story and if they think it is probable/possible. Students show give reasons for their thoughts.

Extension 2: Conduct further research into the different theories of the arrival of the first people in Australia, including local Dreaming stories. Compare and contrast the research using a compare and contrast chart (see the end of these notes).

Chapter two: the Ice Age that made three hundred nations

Chapter two examines the ways the first peoples may have used to arrive in Australia and the way the land, in particular the ice age and glaciers may have influenced the paths taken by these people once in Australia. The chapter also begins to explore some of the myths and popular misconceptions about Aboriginal people.

As a whole class, create a list of the myths about Australia's first people for example: the didgeridoo was only played in parts of the Kimberley and far northern Australia, not all of Australia.

As a class, using the text and other sources; list the different kinds of housing that the Aboriginal People lived in. Working individually, students choose one kind of house and create an annotated diagram for the house including the reasons why each feature was important.

Extension: research the houses that are currently in the student's local area, from heritage-listed houses to those that are more contemporary. Place the houses on a timeline and annotate the important features of the house. Using the research and the knowledge gained from both activities, ask the students to draw their ideal house, annotating and describing all of the important features.

Divide the students into small groups and complete the following tasks:

- Using a KWL chart (see the end of these notes) or similar, write down all of the information the students know about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- As a group, choose 3-5 areas that the students would like to find out more about, for example: traditional local housing, traditional music and dance, traditional medicine etc.
- Students work together to conduct their research and complete the KWL chart.
- Students create a digital summary of their research.
- Students present their research to the class.

Use an Indigenous language map (available from AIATSIS) and identify the Indigenous Nations and languages that may have been in the students' local area. Using a physical map and a climate map of the local area, identify the geographic features that may have assisted the first people as they lived in the area, for example, a local creek that would provide fresh water and a place to catch fish and other animals.

Chapter three: Cooperate or die

Chapter three discusses aspects of the lifestyle of the first peoples of Australia, including the role of ceremonial battles, trade and kinship relationships. This is then explored in relation to the arrival of the people from the first fleet in 1788 and the differences in their weapons as well as the way the first people fought the arrival of the first fleet and subsequent arrivals through raids and other forms of defense.

Working in pairs, students read the first two paragraphs of the text under the heading “The land of few languages”. After reading the text, students complete the following activities:

- Identify the number of people who were in Australia
- Identify the number of nations in Australia.
- Imagine that an equal number of people lived in each nation, how many people would you find in each nation if the populations was:
 - 300, 000 people
 - 500, 000 people
 - 1, 000, 000 people

In small groups read the section “How to get along” taking it in turns to read out loud and to take notes. After completing the reading, the students discuss what they think the key points are and write them down in a list. The students also discuss any new terms or difficult phrases for example “mutual reliance” and rewrite them in their own words. Using a physical map of Australia, mark the places where people gathered. Looking at the physical map, describe what features of the region would be of benefit to the gathering peoples for example, large grass plains for kangaroos to eat, breed and raise their young.

Choose one conflict that is listed in the text or another conflict or warrior that the students may be aware of for example Jandamarra of the Bunuba people. Research the conflict using a KWL chart (see end of these notes). The students should try to find any evidence about the way geography influenced the conflict. After completing their research, the students create a multi-modal text of the conflict they have researched.

Chapter four: The women who made the land

Chapter four discusses the roles of women in traditional and contemporary Aboriginal society as well as the lack of information on Aboriginal women and their roles in traditional recorded history. Before beginning the unit with the students, read through the chapter and create a summary of the traditional foods used in different local areas.

Provide the students with a summary of the traditional local foods. After reading the summary, students complete the following tasks small groups:

- Research the traditional foods in the local area.
- Identify what is still available in the area, what is endangered and what has become extinct.
- Discuss what can be done to help sustain traditional local foods.

As a whole class read the section: “The land with no ovens or cooking pots”. After reading the section make a chart that lists all of the utensils, what plants they come from and how they are used and why they are important. Highlight any utensils that could be made in the local area.

“Probably more than half, even nine-tenths, of the food in Indigenous diets was hunted, collected, caught or planted and harvested by women. But looking at colonial paintings in art galleries, the classic Indigenous food-gathering theme is “bloke with dead kangaroo and spear”.”

As a whole class, read the quote from Jackie French above. Discuss why you think the representations of men are much higher than the representations of women in art. Using either the online collection, or by visiting a state or national gallery complete the following activities in small groups:

- Choose three to five paintings from the colonial period that contain images of Aboriginal people.
- Identify what the Aboriginal people are doing in the paintings.
- Identify what any other people are doing in the paintings.
- Imagine you are from 500 years in the future and have uncovered these paintings as part of an archaeological dig. Describe and evaluate what these paintings tell you, as an archaeologist about people’s lives during the colonial period.

Chapter five: Terra incognita: Dreams of gold, and a land without grass

Chapter five discusses the aspirations and driving forces of colonialism and the European Expansion. The chapter explores the European search for spices, land, gold and indigenous populations that could be enslaved to help build the colonies. The chapter also explores the difficulties and misconceptions associated with the European exploration of Australia.

The complexities of the content explored in this chapter make it a good chapter for teacher background and reference. Possible activities that a teacher may wish to explore after they have read this chapter include:

- Discussing with students the possible reasons for colonial expansion
- Identifying why Australia did not fit the traditional requirements of a country that was colonized
- Inviting discussion about the slave trade in relation to European expansion

Read the quote from Prime Minister Tony Abbott below. Working in small groups, ask the students to discuss how they feel about this statement based on what the students have learnt so far in their study of history. Students prepare a short speech for the class that presents their reactions to the speech.

"I guess our country owes its existence to a form of foreign investment by the British government in the then unsettled or scarcely settled great south land."

Prime Minister Tony Abbott Melbourne Institute Economic Conference, July 3, 2014.

Chapter six: The goat, the grocer's assistant and the mistake that lead to a nation.

Chapter six looks at the myth of the “discovery” of Australia by Banks and Cook. The chapter also examines the myths surrounding the men themselves. The chapter also provides an in depth list of the inventory of the HMAS Bark *Endeavour*, the requirements of the ship during the journey as well as the voyage itself.

Before beginning the unit, the teacher should and summarise the information on both Cook and Banks including references to their character. Using this summary and their own research, the students create a profile for each of the men.

In small groups, the students read pages 95 – 96 with a focus on the inventory of the HMAS Bark *Endeavour*. After reading the relevant sections of the text, the students should complete the following task:

- List the inventory that was on the ship
- Identify the nutritional value of each of the foods using the internet and other sources
- Evaluate how effective these stores of foods would have been for a sea voyage and suggest alternative foods.

“Australia was colonised by mistake” (p. 92). Discuss this statement as a whole class. After the discussion, the students write a one-paragraph response to this statement.

Chapter seven: The colony that didn't starve

Chapter seven explores the stores brought by the first fleet on the voyage from England to Australia. The chapter also explores the experiences of the first fleet and the experiences of the Aboriginal people upon the arrival of the first fleet.

In small groups, students scan through the section “supplying a new land” and complete the following tasks:

- List the seeds that banks identified for the fleets stores.
- Choose 5 -10 items and identify the needs of each of the items in regards to soil, sun, water and any other environmental conditions.
- Compare these needs to the soil, sun, water and other environmental conditions in Sydney.
- Students then create their own list of 5 seeds that could be grown in Sydney that would have been of benefit to the people on the first fleet.
- Students create a list of 5 – 10 seeds that could be grown in their local area that would be of been of benefit to the people on the first fleet justifying their choices.

Extension: Using the list of traditional foods from the activities in chapter four and the list of seeds sent by Banks in this chapter, discuss as a class a more sustainable approach to establishing the colony that arrived in Sydney in 1788.

Concluding the unit

After completing the activities in these notes, conclude the unit with one. Or more of the following activities:

“History is our future”

In small groups complete the following tasks:

- Define the words “history”, “our” and “future”
- Discuss why knowing our history is important for our future.
- Prepare a short, digital presentation that shows the importance of knowing our history in order to protect our future.

“Without geography, we cannot understand history”

In small groups complete the following tasks:

- Define the words “geography”, “understand” and “history”
- Discuss why you think it is important to understand geography in order to understand history giving examples from this unit.
- Choose one example from the discussion and create a multi-modal presentation about the importance of the relationship between geography and history.

If you could go back in time, what advice would you give the people of the First Fleet as they leave for Australia? How would you help them to understand the concepts of “sustainability” and “cooperation” upon their arrival to Australia?

Reflecting on what you have learnt during this unit, what have been the three most important lessons/facts/pieces of information for you? Why are they important to you? How can you use what you have learnt in your everyday life? Write a letter to your future children or grandchildren about the things that you have learnt during this unit of work and how you hope to use this knowledge to create a better future. Share your letter with another member of the class using a “think, pair, share” strategy. Make any changes to the letter that you think are necessary after completing the “think, pair, share”. Edit and publish your letter using the appropriate format such as an email, blog or word processed document.

Black line masters

Reading Chart

Title of the text _____

Chapter title	Chapter title	Chapter title
Key concepts and ideas	Key concepts and ideas	Key concepts and ideas
Key quotes	Key quotes	Key quotes
New words	New words	New words

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Any other information	Any other information	Any other information
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Compare and Contrast chart

Topic One _____ Topic Two _____

How they are alike

How they are different

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Storyboard

Layout/screen	Layout/screen	Layout/screen	Layout/screen	Layout/screen
Narrative				

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Key quotes and language to be used				
Other important information				

KWL ChartWhat I Know
Learnt

What I Would Like to Know

What I

What I Know Learnt	What I Would Like to Know	What I

Bibliography and additional resources

Jackie French

Jackie French's official website

<http://www.jackiefrench.com>

Jackie French – Children's Laureate

<http://www.childrenslaureate.org.au/laureates/jackie-french/>

Jackie French - *I spy a great reader: how to unlock the literacy secret and get your child hooked on books.*

<http://www.harpercollins.com.au/books/Spy-Great-Reader-Jackie-French/?isbn=9780732299521>

There is an extensive bibliography at the end of *Let the Land Speak*. The list of websites below, are designed to help give students a starting point for the activities contained within these notes.

Chapter One

The Australian Museum: The Spread of People to Australia

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/The-spread-of-people-to-Australia>

Australian Government: Our People

<http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people>

Australian Geographic: DNA confirms Aboriginal culture one of Earth's oldest

<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/news/2011/09/dna-confirms-aboriginal-culture-one-of-earths-oldest/>

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Chapter Two

AIATSIS Indigenous language map

<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/asp/map.html>

Australian Government: Australian indigenous architecture

<http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-indigenous-architecture>

Australian Geographic: Living the traditional Aboriginal life

<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2010/12/living-the-traditional-aboriginal-life/>

Aboriginal culture: Traditional Life

<http://www.aboriginalculture.com.au/housing.shtml>

Chapter Three

Aboriginal Kinship

<http://www.nlc.org.au/articles/info/understanding-kinship/>

Aboriginal Kinship and Skin Names

<http://www.clc.org.au/articles/info/aboriginal-kinship>

Chapter Four

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Aboriginal Women and the relationship to land

<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/ntru/nativetitleconference/conf2005/papers/Jones.pdf>

Chapter Five

Australian History: European Exploration

<http://www.australianhistory.org/exploration>

The History Channel: The Age of Exploration

<http://www.history.co.uk/shows/mankind-the-story-of-all-of-us/articles/the-age-of-exploration>

Chapter Six

Australian Dictionary of Biography: Joseph Banks

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/banks-sir-joseph-1737>

Australian Dictionary of Biography: James Cook

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cook-james-1917>

Australian Geographic: On this day Captain James Cook sets sail

<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/blogs/on-this-day/2011/08/on-this-day-captain-james-cook-sets-sail/>

Australian National Biographical Notes: Joseph Banks

<http://www.anbg.gov.au/biography/banks.biography.html>

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State Library of NSW: Sir Joseph Banks

<http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/banks/banks.cfm>

BBC History: Captain James Cook

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/cook_captain_james.shtml

BBC History: Sir Joseph Banks

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/banks_sir_joseph.shtml

About the author of these notes

Rachel Ford began her professional career as teacher after completing a double degree in Arts and Teaching. Rachel also has a Master of Education and is currently studying a Master of Business Administration. Rachel has worked as a publisher in Melbourne and Sydney. She currently lives in Sydney where she works as a freelance writer and publisher.