Australian History

Subject Guide

Australian History is an exciting opportunity for students to engage with the history of their nation through new perspectives and understandings. They will dive deeply into two investigations that allow them to explore some of the key themes and topics that have shaped the world they in today and develop their critical thinking and research skills. Students will consider the history of the continent from Deep Time, analysing the ways in which First Nations Australians used and shaped the land prior to colonisation and then evaluate the ongoing impacts of colonisation and European values on the environment up to the 21st century. They will also investigate the ways in which power has been exercised and movements that have resisted it and pressed for change.

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Unit focus areas

Unit 3 - From custodianship to the Anthropocene 60,000 BCE – 2010 CE

Area of Study One: Foundations – 60,000 BCE – 1901 CE
Aboriginal custodianship of the land, including their spiritual beliefs, actively shaped and managed the environment of the Australian continent. With the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, this custodianship suffered a dramatic revolution, as European ideologies of land use and ownership upended the environment. The discovery of gold and booming urbanisation would further these changes, but as the 19th century grew to a close, an increased appreciation of the Australian bush saw colonial attitudes change.

Area of Study Two: Transformations – 1950 CE – 2010 CE
The years after WWII saw the dawn of the atomic age and a great acceleration in industrialisation. Australia profited from resource extraction but as the environmental toll mounted, movements questioning this growth and advocating for conservation arose. Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike contested the cost of progress and, as the evidence of profound changes to the Earth's system became clearer, the question arose – have we entered a new epoch – the Anthropocene?

Unit 4 - Power & resistiance 1788 CE – 1998 CE

Area of Study One: Foundations – 1788 CE – 1913 CE
The arrival of British colonisation introduced different layers of power and authority and resistance to the exercise of that same power. Frontier wars between colonists and First Nations peoples; tensions between colonists and British government; the Eureka Stockade; and movements for rights by workers and women all contributed to turbulence, as a British penal colony moved towards responsible government and a federation that was at once one of the most democratic in the world and yet denied these rights to the original inhabitants.

Area of Study Two: Transformations – 1957 CE – 1998 CE
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights after the horrors of the Second World War set in motion campaigns for rights across the globe. Australian First Nations fought to be included as full citizens and make a claim for land rights. Second-wave feminism in Australia sought to provide equal opportunities for women at work and in society. LGBTQIA+ Australians marched out of the closet and into the streets. As the 20th century ended, a backlash emerged against some of these challenges to traditional power structures.

Pre-requisites

Students undertaking Units 3 and 4 Australian History need to have completed Units 1 and 2 Modern History.

Assessment

For Units 3 and 4, students complete School-Assessed Coursework (50%) subject to external moderation, and a written examination (50%).