

Unit 3: Australian history – imagining Australia

Area of Study 1

A new land: Port Phillip District 1830–1860

Outcome 1

Ideas underpinning the settlement of and migration to the Port Phillip District (PPD), including ideas about European expansion in the new world and land ownership, and the motivations of some individuals and groups.

These notes provide the bare bones of what you need to know for the exam. Under each dot point that you have prepared to talk about, make sure you have specific evidence to draw on in your responses (statistics, specific examples, etc).

Key dates

- 1834: Henty family settles in Portland Bay
- 8 June 1835: John Batman arrives in present-day Melbourne
- October 1835: John Pascoe Fawkner settles in Melbourne
- 5 March 1838: John Pascoe Fawkner begins publishing the *Melbourne Advertiser*
- April 1838: Faithful Massacre
- 1846: *The Argus* is first published in Victoria
- July 1851: First gold discovered in Victoria, at Clunes
- 1-3 December 1854: Eureka Stockade
- 24 November 1857: Universal Manhood Suffrage introduced for elections to the Legislative Assembly

Main origins of settlers

- Van Diemen's Land
- New South Wales
- England
- Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales
- 1852-1860: Chinese and others looking for gold

Key individual profiles

Henty family

- First Europeans to settle within the Port Phillip District
- Travelled from England in 1832
- Settled in Western Australia, then Van Diemen's Land, before illegally relocating to Portland Bay in 1834.
- Initially established a small farm and began whaling
- 1839: had over 30,000 sheep and 500 head of cattle
- 1840: suffered when land and stock prices collapsed, but recovered

John Batman

- Member of the Port Phillip Association
- Sailed to the Port Phillip District from Van Diemen's Land in 1835
- Settled at Batman's Hill (now in Collins Street, Melbourne CBD)

- Declared on exploration of present day Melbourne that “this will be the place for a village” and named it “Batmania”
- Treaty with Wurundjeri people (Batman’s Treaty)
 - Rented Aboriginal land in exchange for blankets, tomahawks, mirrors, handkerchiefs, knives
 - Unlikely that the Wurundjeri people understood this treaty or agreed to it
 - Governor Bourke declared the land to belong to the Crown and therefore the treaty was invalid

John Pascoe Fawkner

- Entered the Yarra River on board the *Enterprize* in 1835 (15 August)
- Opened Melbourne’s first hotel
- Founded Melbourne’s first newspaper: *Melbourne Advertiser* (also known as *The Port Phillip Patriot*)
- Had a keen interest in politics and was a member of the Victorian Legislative Council

Reasons for migration

- Push factors: driving settlers away from Europe
 - Rural poverty
 - Population boom
 - Working class shift – new, more positive view of colonies
 - Working class press
 - Unfavourable factory conditions
- Pull factors: driving settlers towards the Port Phillip District
 - Labour shortage
 - Opportunity
 - Eg the opportunity to own property
 - Letters praising the land
 - Gold discovery

Evidence: Push factors

Primary Source

- Hentys:
 - “Ruin stares the farmer full in the face”
 - Social class: would “descend many steps in the scale of society”

Secondary Source

- Mirams et al.: The ambition of most to “make their fortune in the district” as “Great Britain offered few opportunities for financial wealth and advancement”

Evidence: Pull factors

Primary Sources

- Hentys would “Immediately be placed in the first rank of society”
- John Batman, touring on the *Rebecca* in 1835:
 - “I never saw anything equal to the land in my life”
 - “As rich a land as I ever saw”
- Matthew Flinders quoting George Bass: the land was “frequented by seals... a commercial speculation might be made with advantage”
- John Pascoe Fawkner: made an expedition in 1835, comprised entirely of tradesmen

- Lancey (travelling with Fawkner):
 - “We made up our minds to settle and shape the land”
 - “Eager to possess”
- Lieutenant James Grant
 - Touring on the Lady Nelson in 1800: “I never saw a finer country”
 - In 1801: “Luxuriant grass growing... and soil rich and good”

Secondary Sources

- White:
 - “Offering the chance for social mobility and prosperity”
 - “The bush was a place to exploit and leave”

Nature of colonial society

- Primitive, rough society
 - Thomas Walker: “I never met with people living in a style more rude and rough, or with less attention to comfort”
 - Rev John Ford: one third of PPD’s 2000 children were attending school in 1842
 - Katherine Kirkland: “In the bush it is no easy task to tell who are gentlemen and who are not”
- Attempts to recreate European social and political structures
 - Socially, there were picnics, teas, dinners and balls
 - 1845: 47 drapery stores in Melbourne
 - Anne Drysdale on architectural links: “handsome homes and elegant drawing rooms”
 - Despite attempts to reproduce aspects of gentility, there was no “titled aristocratic upper-class” nor were there “cultured families living on unearned income”
 - Systems of control: Arbitrator, Magistrate, Troops, Courts, Gaols, Superintendent
 - Popular sports: cricket, archery, sailing, billiards

The impact of European settlement on the Aboriginal communities of Port Phillip and their responses to it

(Remember: Aborigine = noun; Aboriginal = adjective; do not write "Aboriginals")

European attitudes toward, and impact on Aborigines

Attitudes

- Katherine Kirkland (1808-1892)
 - Wrote about interracial friendship
 - However, she never revealed her name while writing, only stating that she was a "Lady"
- Jeannie Gunn (1870-1961):
 - Wrote about affection for and friendship with Aborigines
- Annie Baxter Dawbin:
 - Held negative views towards her local Aboriginal population (near Port Fairy)
 - Took part in violence against Aborigines
- Overwhelming consensus that Aborigines comprised an inherently inferior race that would die out
- "Terra Nullius": the land belonged to no one on settlement

Impact

- Shaw: "The cost of the squatters' pastoral success was the destruction of Aboriginal society"
- Dispossession
 - Loss of food sources, exploitation, inter-tribal warfare and the loss of will to live
 - Cultural misunderstandings, including over land and possession
 - Robinson: "As the settlers grew in number and spread out their sheep and cattle, more and more area became off limits for the Koories"
- Population decline
 - Disease, conflict (conflict numbers in dispute by historians) and declining birth rate
 - Thomas: "but few are born to fill up the ranks of the dead"
 - Number of Woiwurung and Bunnerong
 - 1832: 350
 - 1836: 207
 - 1863: 33
- Disease
 - New European diseases: smallpox (largest killer), tuberculosis, cholera, measles, influenza
 - By November 1891, 90% of Aboriginal women were affected by venereal disease (Protector Parker on the Loddon)
- Violence
 - Robinson, 1841: settlers spoke of "dropping" Aborigines "as coolly as if speaking of dropping birds"
 - 1850: up to 2,000 Aborigines had been killed at European hands
- Traditional lifestyle
 - Loss of culture, connection to the land, traditional skills and the impact of European products like sugar, tobacco, flour and money
 - Material culture shifted: such as methods of constructing traditional implements
 - Shaw: "The settlement destroyed their tribal life and too many went off to town where they could easily beg, steal and get drunk"
 - Missionary George Langhorne (in 1837) aimed "gradually to wean blacks from their wandering habits"

Aboriginal Responses

- Shaw: "Above all was the Aborigines' resentment at the taking of its tribal land"
- In some remote places, Aborigines attempted to ignore European presence
- Physical resistance
 - Faithful Massacre, April 1838: 7-11 whites killed in an attack on overland flocks
 - However, according to official records presented to the NSW Legislative council, only 40 whites were killed by Aborigines in the Port Phillip District between 1836 and 1844
- Economic resistance
 - A party of Wathaurong people attacked and ransacked Yuille's property near Geelong, which caused considerable loss
 - Shaw: while economic resistance was "annoying certainly", it was not very effective as the number of sheep taken was not as great as those lost from other causes
- Cultural resistance
 - Shaw: "The aborigines did not want to abandon their old traditions"
- Accommodation
 - Living between the two cultures
 - Some joined the Native Police or worked with Europeans while maintaining a traditional way of life
 - In 1835, Derrimut, a chief of the Yarra tribe, allegedly warned John Pascoe Fawkner twice that his fellows were planning a mass murder of whites
 - Some settlers employed Aborigines:
 - Joseph Decker employed them successfully
 - C.B. Hall thought Aborigines useful for stripping bark, finding lost horses and as guides and/or messengers
- Historians' views:
 - Blaskett: "Aboriginal reaction to white settlement was comparatively peaceful"
 - Christie: "Aborigines put up a determined and concerted resistance"

The impact of the gold rushes and the way gold changed people's visions of the future of the colony

Background and impact

- First gold in Victoria was discovered in Clunes, by Edmond, in July 1851
- Economic impact
 - Greater money supply
 - New institutions reflect prosperity and confidence (Melbourne University, ANZ building, etc)
 - Production: sheep and cattle for meat
 - Agriculture: wheat and vegetables
 - Rapid rebuilding of Melbourne
 - Victoria became a viable place to invest
 - Good market for capital goods
 - Increase in imports
 - Growth of banking sector
- Social impact
 - The social/ethnic mix of migrants changed at this point in time
 - Broome: culture changed from "a hierarchical pastoral society of big land holders to a bristling gold-driven democracy of small business enterprise"
 - "Nouveau riche"
 - Lavish wedding celebrations
 - One miner was reported to have torn up banknotes in the street
- Population impact:
 - 1850-1860: Victorian population increases from 77,000 to 540,000
 - Establishment of regional towns and cities
 - Influx of Chinese migrants
 - 1854: 2,000 in Australia
 - 1861: 25,000 in Victoria
- Criminal impact
 - Broome: "men of the most depraved and abandoned characters"
- Eureka Rebellion (Eureka Stockade)
 - 1-3 December 1854 in Ballarat
 - Miners (diggers) discontent with taxation without representation
 - License fee needed to mine, was a revenue raiser for the Government
 - No representation for miners
 - No obvious improvement to infrastructure
 - Rebellion sparked by murder of James Scobie and arson attack on the Eureka Hotel (also known as Bentley's Hotel)
 - According to Peter Lalor, 22 diggers died
 - Six soldiers and police allegedly died (however, the Ballarat District Register only shows 27 names)
 - Aftermath:
 - Royal Commission held afterward recommended that the License Fee be abolished and replaced by a "miner's right" (pay one pound per year and receive a vote).
 - Many argue that the Eureka Stockade hastened the following political changes, such as the introduction of democracy

Visions of the future

1. Government reform: representative and responsible government
 - Ballarat Reform League: critical of the political situation in Victoria, and had a vision of a participatory democracy
 - “Taxation without representation is tyranny”
 - Developments:
 - Secret ballot (1856)
 - Male suffrage (1857)
 - Triennial parliaments: parliament must meet every three years (1859)
2. A “pure” Victoria
 - Governor Hotham wrote of the continued arrival of the Chinese: “Some restrictions should be interposed to the scourge of Chinese immigration with which the colony is threatened”
 - Belief that Chinese were immoral
3. Powers of the Victorian Government to be limited
 - Victorian Constitution
 - “All taxes and tallages of every kind which bear upon labour, or provisions, luxuries or any article whatsoever, to be abolished... All property qualifications in the elector and the elected to be abolished...”
4. An intelligent and informed society
 - First “Age” editorial: “We are desirous of producing in Melbourne a newspaper that shall correspond in point of literacy, talent, and generally completeness and efficiency with the first-class journals of London...”
5. Breaking up squatters’ estates
 - The land reform movement gathered momentum as the 1850s progressed
 - Land reform would lead to a freer and more egalitarian society
 - Address of the People’s League to their Fellow Colonists of Victoria, *The Argus*, 1855: “We found, on our arrival, a land abounding in the choicest treasures, blessed with a healthful climate, and a soil remarkably fruitful... but we found it also overlaid with monopolies... We find ourselves with very scanty means of living, declining trade, a great many persons destitute of employment, and consequently many helpless persons destitute of food.”
6. Creating a city of knowledge and culture
 - University of Melbourne and the State Library of Victoria established in the mid-1850s
 - “*The Argus*” on University of Melbourne, 4 July 1854: “The influence of the gold discoveries... has had a blighting effect on the cultivation of those elevated tastes and refined sentiments... One nation is civilized by another through coming into contact with the organic operations of social life.”
 - The State Library: Sir Redmond Barry, an early supporter of the library, “viewed the library as having an important social function – a university for the working man, and a cure for the social unrest (caused by the influx of diggers)” – Michael Spurr (HTAV)
7. Constructing a metropolis
 - Building boom
 - Gothic and neoclassical styles used:
 - Pentridge Prison
 - Parliament House
 - GPO
 - State Library
 - Melbourne Grammar
8. The 8 hour working day
 - Campaign initiated by stone-masons in February 1856
 - Campaign culminated in a demonstration on 21 April 1856

Exam question: Section A**Question topics**

- Migration
- Aborigines
- Gold

Example topic: Aborigines

e.g. "We have long held the opinion that as a people we are guilty of the basest¹ meanness and dishonesty in our treatment of this unhappy race . . .

It would seem that never does the white man . . . appear in a more thoroughly despicable light, than in his dealings with his less civilised brother. He takes possession of the land as a matter of course . . . while the original occupant of the soil . . . looks helplessly on . . . we take the country from the blacks, because we can put it to better uses than they would do . . .

In less than twenty years we have nearly swept them off the face of the earth. We have shot them down like dogs. In the guise² of friendship we have issued corrosive sublimate³ in their damper, and consigned whole tribes to the agonies of an excruciating death. We have made them drunkards, and infected them with disease . . . We have made them outcasts on their own land . . ."

- Editorial, *The Argus*, Melbourne, 16 March 1856

¹ basest – lowest ² guise – appearance ³ corrosive sublimate – poison

- Identify **two** examples from the document of 'meanness and dishonesty' in the treatment of Aborigines. (2 marks)
- Identify and explain **two** reasons given in the document that a colonist might have used to justify the treatment of Aborigines. (4 marks)
- Discuss to what extent the views expressed by the editor about the European treatment of Aborigines reflected the general views of European settlers in the Port Phillip District/Colony of Victoria. (6 marks)
- Using this document and your own knowledge, explain the concept of terra nullius and discuss its impact on the Aboriginal people of the Port Phillip District/Colony of Victoria. (8 marks)

- VCAA 2010

Sample answers:

- The editorial alleges that white settlers had "shot [Aborigines] down like dogs" and "made them drunkards".
- One justification that colonists used was that Aborigines were "less civilised" than white men. Many colonists held a view that Aborigines had an inherent inferiority to white men, and that because their society had not advanced in the ways in which whites measured advancement (partly due to their nomadic lifestyle and lack of farming culture), that they were "less civilised". Similarly, the document alleged that "we put" the land to "better uses than they would do". This reflects a different attitude toward land use, in particular a culture of exploiting the land, property, and capitalistic growth that was not mirrored in Aboriginal culture, and therefore allegedly legitimised disrespect for Aborigines.

Sample structure answers:

- iii.
- Editor's views that are representative of general views of settlers: whites could put land to better use than Aborigines; Aborigines were "less civilised"
 - More contentious views: his overall argument is that European settlers have been incredibly brutal and "despicable" in their behaviour; Europeans have caused population decline, loss of culture, dispossession, disease, alcoholism.
 - Outside of the document: contrast the sympathies of people such as Kirkland with the views of settlers like Dawbin; note that Kirkland's views were in the minority. The general view was one without sympathy for the welfare of Aborigines e.g. Robinson "dropping" Aborigines.
- iv. *Terra nullius*: the land belonged to no one. Aboriginal people were not entitled to the land because they had not cultivated it in the European manner. Impacts of loss of land and perceived inferiority.
- Dispossession
 - Violence
 - Change in traditional lifestyle e.g. emergence of Alcoholism
 - Disease
 - Population decline
 - Accommodation