

Year 5

The Australian Gold Rushes

Learning Sequence



Diggers on Way to Bendigo (S. T. Gill 1869,
State Library of Victoria)



Men on the Goldfields
(c. 1880–90, State Library of Victoria)

Before commencing this unit please download the free activity kit:
Put Yourself in the Picture; Nineteenth Century Migration to the Victorian Goldfields from the [Sovereign Hill Education](http://education.sovereignhill.com.au) site. This kit contains classroom activities, worksheets, resource lists, fact sheets, primary sources and assessment rubrics referred to throughout this unit, plus additional resources you may find useful.

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Download the free activity kit called *Put Yourself in the Picture; Nineteenth Century Migration to the Victorian Goldfields* from the Sovereign Hill Education site (<http://education.sovereignhill.com.au/teachers/teaching-kits/>). This kit contains classroom activities, worksheets, resource lists, fact sheets, primary sources and assessment rubrics.

Activity 1

Why do humans prize gold?

- Make your own gold nugget by spraying a rock with gold paint to add visual interest to the lesson. Place this at the front of the classroom as you begin the lesson.
- Put the inquiry question 'Why do humans prize gold?' on the whiteboard. Students may respond with the following answers: it is beautiful to look at; it can be used as currency all over the world; it was associated with gods or spiritual beings; it can be shaped into jewellery or ornaments.
- Ask students in pairs to note some of the challenges that humans face in obtaining gold. Students should respond with answers such as: travelling long distances, facing racism, injury, death, murder, criminal activity, slavery, back-breaking labour and separation from family.
- Finding a gold nugget during the gold rushes of the 1850s was like winning the lottery today – it could change your life. Read the following scenario to students:

You are George O'Connell, a young man of seventeen living in Sydney in 1851 when news of the gold rush in Victoria breaks. You live in a small two-roomed house with your mother and seven brothers and sisters. Your father was killed several years ago in an accident at the shipbuilding yard where he works. Food is scarce and your mother struggles to pay the rent on the cottage. You and your brothers and sisters all had to leave school after grade four to go and work in a cotton mill. Your days at work are often twelve hours long and the loose cotton fibres stick in your lungs making you ill. Every night you dream of gold and how it could change your life.

- Students should work in groups to create hard copy or digital posters showing how George's life would change if he found gold. They should include images showing his life before (living in a two-roomed house and working in a cotton mill) and after. They can find images online at sites such as the State Library of Victoria (<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/>). Remember that all images must be accurate for the 1850s.



Activity 2

When and where was gold discovered?

- Show students the Youtube video *The Early Australian Prospectors Part 1* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VglWWR9SfCA>).
- Prepare a Think, Wink, Decide chart on the whiteboard.

Think – Things we have learnt from the video.

Wink – What we still need to find out.

Decide – How and where will we find answers to our questions?

- Make a classroom checklist of the 'Things we still need to find out' and display it on the classroom wall. As the unit progresses, students can tick off items as they discover the answers.
- Download the map 'Australia with states (large)' and mark the discoveries mentioned in the video. Brainstorm the best way to add the dates of each discovery to your map. This could be done as a class activity or individually. Students may decide they also need a separate map of just one state; for example, Victoria. Free downloadable outline maps of Australia and all Australian states are available from the following University of Melbourne website – <http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/maps/digital/outline-maps/>.
- Research when gold was found at the following locations in Australia and make a timeline showing them in order: Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine, Bathurst, Kalgoorlie, Clunes, Buninyong, Beechworth, Rockhampton.

Worksheets

Think, Wink, Decide (as a guide to create the whiteboard chart).



Men on the Goldfields
(c. 1880–90, State Library of Victoria)

Activity 3:

Who came to the goldfields?

- Write the following focus question on the whiteboard: Where did the gold seekers come from?
- Visit the following Museum of Victoria website and access the 1854 census data (<http://museumvictoria.com.au/origins/keydates.aspx?cid=1>).
- Ask students to download the 'Top 8 Countries of Origin' chart from the Museum of Victoria website and create a simple bar graph showing the countries of origin of immigrants to Victoria in 1854.
- Note that England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales are listed as separate countries. Have a class discussion on this. Why do you think they are listed separately? In what ways are each of these places similar? How are they different? Locate each on a map.
- On the whiteboard do a survey to find out where each student's parents were born. Create a similar chart for countries of origin of parents of students in your class. Compare the differences and/or similarities.
- Make a list of how Australia today is still influenced by the immigrants who came during the 1850s. How are we similar to people living here in the 1850s and how are we different?



Diggers on Way to Bendigo (S. T. Gill 1869,
State Library of Victoria)

Activity 4

What were the gold seekers like?

- Download the painting *The Last of England* by Ford Maddox-Brown and project it onto the whiteboard (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ford_Madox_Brown_-_The_Last_of_England_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg). Use the painting as a stimulus to discuss the people who came seeking gold. Historians are like detectives – they were not present at the event they are studying so they must search for evidence. Historians classify evidence as being either from a primary or secondary source. This painting is a primary source as it was created at the time.
- Begin a class discussion using the following questions as prompts:
 1. How many people are in the painting?
 2. How many people created the painting?
 3. Who are the central characters? Do you think they would have been typical of most gold seekers at the time?
 4. Are they rich or poor?
 5. What country can you see behind them? (Clue: Which country is famous for its white cliffs?)
 6. The name of their ship is the *El Dorado* (name written on the lifeboat). Does this tell us where they might be going?
 7. What type of ship is it?
 8. What clues can you see that indicate they are starting out on a dangerous journey?
 9. Can we accept this as a reliable piece of evidence on the people who travelled to the goldfields?
 10. Compare the painting to the graph you created. Does the painting represent everyone who came?
 11. Why did large numbers of Irish travel to Australia?
- Research how long it took sailing ships to reach Australia from England in the 1850s.

Worksheets

Primary and Secondary Source Definitions.



The Last of England (Ford Maddox-Brown, 1854)

Activity 5

How did people get to the goldfields?

- Read Kirsty Murray's *Bridie's Fire* (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003) either aloud to the class, in a literacy circle or as a homework task. This novel is historical fiction but it is incredibly well researched and is a powerful way to tell the story of the Irish who fled the horrors of the potato famine to seek a better life in Australia.
- Download the free activity kit called *Put Yourself in the Picture; Nineteenth Century Migration to the Victorian Goldfields* from the Sovereign Hill Education site (<http://education.sovereignhill.com.au/teachers/teaching-kits/>). This kit contains classroom activities, resource lists, fact sheets, primary sources and assessment rubrics.
- Ask students to imagine they are on board a ship travelling to the goldfields and then write a letter home to their parents telling them of their hopes and dreams. They should include the following information:
 1. The accommodation on board ship.
 2. The health of the passengers.
 3. The length of the voyage.
 4. Their plans once they arrive in Australia. Which goldfield will they head for? How will they get there?
 5. The different types of people on board the ship. Where do they come from? Why are they leaving their home country?



Western End of Queen's Wharf, Melbourne
(S. T Gill, 1854)
State Library of Victoria

Activity 6

How did people travel in the 1850s?

- Have students study a drawing or painting created in the 1850s, showing people travelling from Melbourne to the goldfields. Students can use the State Library of Victoria online catalogue to find examples of this type of artwork (<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/>).
- Using the artworks found as evidence, get students to create a list of modes of transport during the 1850s. For each mode list the pros (positive qualities) and cons (negative qualities).
- Ask students to study at least two images and create a list of adjectives to describe the gold seekers.
- Use a range of sources, such as illustrations, photographs, letters and newspaper articles, to create an entry for the National History Challenge about life on the goldfields in the 1850s (see <http://historychallenge.org.au/>).



The New Rush
(S. T. Gill, 1865,
State Library of Victoria)

Activity 7

What was the impact of the discovery of gold on Indigenous communities?

- The Ballarat goldfields were on the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung people. Download the digital trail *Hidden Histories: The Wadawurrung People* from the Sovereign Hill website (<http://sovereignhillhiddenhistories.com.au/>). This resource focuses on the often overlooked story of Indigenous people on the goldfields.
- In groups, ask students to draw a mind map showing how they think the discovery of gold affected Indigenous Australians. Students should complete the online tour of *Hidden Histories: The Wadawurrung People* to develop their answers. Write the following key words on the whiteboard to prompt their discussion:
 1. Travelling across the land
 2. Hunting and gathering food
 3. Sacred places
 4. Immigrant technologies, i.e. tools
 5. Immigrant food and drink
 6. Immigrant transport
 7. Immigrant clothing
 8. Interactions
 9. Utilisation of Indigenous skills
 10. Trading.



Encounters with Aboriginal Australians
(Charles Lyall, 1854, State Library of Victoria)

Activity 8

What skills were needed to find gold?

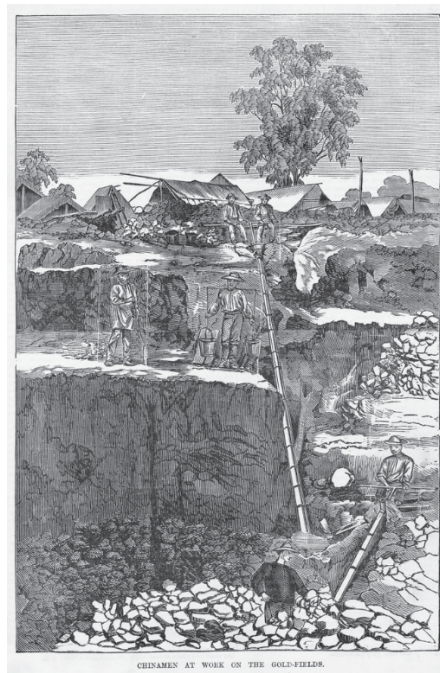
- Students should prepare a Think, Wink, Decide sheet for the question: How was gold obtained on the Australian goldfields?
- The key types of mining in 1854 were:
 1. Panning
 2. Cradling
 3. Shaft mining
 4. Puddling
 5. Sluicing.
- Ask students to select several images from a source such as the State Library of Victoria (<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/>) showing the different methods of mining. They should then use a comic book app such as *Strip Design* and add comic bubbles to the images explaining how each mining technique worked.

OR

- Students work in small groups to make a short video demonstrating how each gold-mining technique worked. This can be done in the style of a documentary, stop motion, Claymation or a 'draw your life video.'

Worksheet

Think, Wink, Decide



Chinamen at Work on the Goldfields (Ebenezer and David Syme, 1863, State Library of Victoria)

Activity 9

What hazards did families face on the goldfields?

- Read Doug Bradby's book *Don't Go to the Goldfields* (Buninyong, Vic.: Doug Bradby, 2015) either aloud to the class, in a literacy circle or as a homework task. This book is written with each chapter answering the pleas of anxious parents in England in 1852 trying to persuade their children not to go to the goldfields because of all the dangers they will encounter. Its lively, amusing style will readily engage students.
- Ask students to research life on the goldfields by studying illustrations by artists such as S. T. Gill (visit the State Library of Victoria to access them). They can use this visual evidence to prepare a list of dangers of living and working on the goldfields.
- Ask students to annotate the 'Dangers on the goldfields' activity sheet. They should fill out every speech bubble to show what dangers each type of person could experience on the goldfields, e.g. women, children. They should also indicate the dangers that each tool (e.g. mining pick) or action could bring about.
- In pairs or small groups, students should dramatise an incident where an accident has occurred in the goldfields. Does it lead to survival, injury or death?

Worksheet

Dangers on the goldfields.



Unlucky Digger That Never Returned (S. T. Gill, 1869, State Library of Victoria)

Activity 10

Was finding gold the best way to get rich?

- In Ballarat there was a saying: 'The rich man is not the one digging for gold but the one who sold him his shovel!' Discuss this saying with your class so they understand what it means.
- Project an image of S. T. Gill's illustration *Gold Buyer, Forest Creek* (pictured below) on the whiteboard and ask them the following questions.
 1. Which figures are the miners?
 2. Which figure is the shopkeeper?
 3. Which figure is wealthier? Note down five pieces of evidence that make you think this.
 4. Have the miners become wealthy from their gold digging? How do you know?
 5. What statement is the artist trying to make about wealth on the goldfields?
- Think, Pair, Share activity. Ask students to brainstorm other ways to make money on the goldfields apart from finding gold (Think). They should share their list with a partner (Pair) and then report back to the class (Share).
- If you are visiting Sovereign Hill as part of your study of gold, ask students to take photos of evidence that there were other ways to get rich on a goldfields. If you cannot visit Sovereign Hill, ask students to search for Sovereign Hill shops in Google images and select five photos that show how you could make money on a goldfield without digging for gold. Students should write a fifty-word caption to annotate each image.



Gold Buyer, Forest Creek (S. T. Gill, 1869, State Library of Victoria)

Activity 11

Was Eureka the birth of democracy in Australia?

- Pin up an image from Culture Victoria showing an advertisement for a meeting at Bakery Hill (<http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/a-diverse-state/eureka-stories/>). Read the following statement to the students:

George O'Connell (from Activity 1) eventually arrived on the Ballarat goldfields. He works hard every day digging and panning for gold. His back aches and his hands are covered with sores. He has only found a few flakes of gold in the river and has exchanged it for food at the goldfield's general store. He has not managed to send any money home to his family and often goes hungry. Every month he has to pay one pound and ten shillings for a license that allows him to dig. He must pay, even when he has found no gold. Troopers come around regularly to check his licence. Often he must stop work in his mine shaft and make the tiring journey up the ladder to show his papers. He sees the advertisement for the meeting on Bakery Hill and hears that there may be a rebellion against the licence fee. He considers whether the licence fee is fair.

- Make a Plus, Minus, Maybe chart on the gold licence to help George decide if he should join the rebellion.
- Visit the Public Record Office of Victoria education resources and find the script to the play 'Six Thinking Hats: The Eureka Stockade' (<http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/a-diverse-state/eureka-stories/>). Allocate the parts of Customer, Shopkeeper, White Hat Group, Black Hat Group, Red Hat Group, Yellow Hat Group, Green Hat Group and Blue Hat Group.

Ask students to work in their groups to research their part of the play, and have the two lead characters learn their lines. Perform the play at your school assembly.

Students can download the free activity kit called *Blood on the Southern Cross* from the Sovereign Hill Education site to help them with their research. This kit contains classroom activities, resource lists, a useful glossary of terms and descriptions of all the sites in Ballarat with links to the Eureka story you could include on an excursion to Ballarat (<http://education.sovereignhill.com.au/teachers/teaching-kits/>).



Eureka Stockade (B. Ireland, c. 1890–1900, State Library of Victoria)

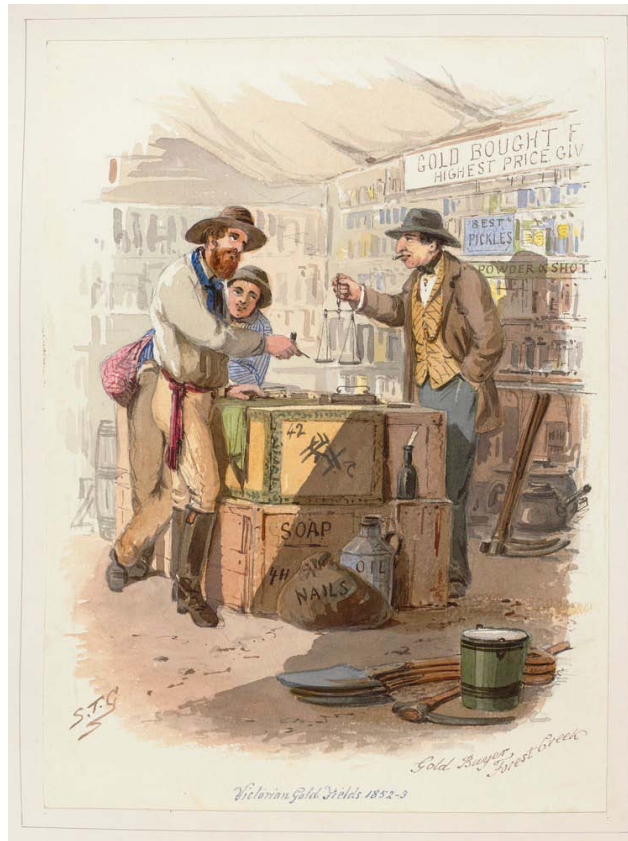
Activity 12

What was life like for Chinese people on the Australian goldfields?

- Show the *My Place* episode 'Ben' set in 1858 to introduce students to the experiences of the Chinese people living and working on the goldfields. You can purchase this series from the Australian Children's Television Foundation online Education Catalogue (see <http://actf.com.au/catalog/item/250>). Student activities based on this episode are available at http://www.myplace.edu.au/teaching_activities/1878_-_before_time/1858/episode_landing_16.html. They include activities based on cultural stereotypes.
- One of the challenges the Chinese faced on the goldfields was the language barrier. As a class, students should discuss what phrases they would need if they visited a country where they didn't speak the language. As individuals, students can brainstorm a list of phrases that would be useful for Chinese people arriving on the goldfields in the 1850s.
- Visit the following Culture Victoria website to see an example of a Cantonese/English phrase book: <http://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/immigrants-and-emigrants/language-a-key-to-survival-cantonese-english-phrasebooks-in-australia/zhu-english-through-the-vernaculars-of-the-canton-and-shiuhing-prefectures-c1857-c1862/>. What do these phrases tell you about life for the Chinese on the goldfields?
- Download the free activity kit called *New Gold Mountain* from the Sovereign Hill Education site (<http://education.sovereignhill.com.au/teachers/teaching-kits/>). This kit contains useful background information, classroom activities, resource lists, a selection of primary sources and a useful glossary of terms.



Chinese Quarter Ballarat (Ebenezer and David Syme, 1868, State Library of Victoria)



Gold Buyer, Forest Creek (S. T. Gill, 1869,
State Library of Victoria)

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