



Eugene Von Guerard 'Warrenheip Hills near Ballarat'
Source: National Gallery of Victoria

The Indigenous Experience on the Goldfields

Student Activity Booklet

New Diggers, Welcome!

Welcome to the eGold website, an electronic Encyclopedia dedicated to telling the story of gold in Australia. The exercises available on eGold will take you through some of the features of the website and show you how to access the site's facts, images, stories and multimedia for your research.



Eugene Von Guerard, 'The Barter'
Source: Geelong Gallery

The Indigenous Experience on the Goldfields

The social upheaval and rapid development following the discovery of gold in 1851 had a huge impact on the Indigenous population of central Victoria. The activities below will help you to explore some of their experiences. They will also show how, despite the terrible hardships brought about by the gold rushes, Indigenous peoples were active participants in daily life on the diggings.

Part A

Using eGold’s navigation tools, answer the following questions relating to the experience of Indigenous Peoples on the Victorian goldfields.

1. Who were the traditional owners of the land in the Ballarat and Mount Alexander areas?

The _____ and the _____ peoples.

2. What were the dual aims of the Loddon Protectorate?

i) _____

ii) _____

3. List 4 ways that the gold rushes might have changed the life of an Indigenous person from the Ballarat or Mount Alexander regions.

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

iv) _____

4. What was Edward Stone Parker’s professional title?

5. Europeans often labelled Aboriginal people as ‘ignorant’ for not having mined huge quantities of gold prior to European settlement. What can this tell us about their understanding of Indigenous societies?

6. Examine the source below.

Document A

‘Even the aborigines are wealthy in these times. I met a party of them at Bullock Creek well clothed, with a good supply of food, new cooking utensils, and money in their pockets. One remarked, with becoming expression of dignity, ‘me no poor blackfellow now, me plenty rich blackfellow.’

Using the eGold website, find the name of the author of this passage

7. How does the image of Indigenous experience during the goldrush described here differ from how you usually see the experiences of Aboriginal people on the goldfields.

Part B

The photograph here is of a Wathaurong woman dubbed 'Queen Mary Ballarat'. The photograph was taken by German photographer Frederick Kruger in the 1870s for his 'Souvenir Album of Victorian Aboriginals'. These types of collections were popular in Europe where audiences were keen to see 'exotic' images from the new world.

Queen Mary Ballarat



Source: Sovereign Hill Gold Museum

1. In the table below list all the items in the photograph which you identify as representing either Indigenous or Western Culture.

Indigenous Culture	Western Culture

2. Why do you think 'Queen Mary' has been photographed with so many different items at once?

3. Mary and other notable Aboriginal figures were often given European noble titles such as 'King' and 'Queen'. Why do you think the photographer gave Mary the title of 'Queen' here?

Part C: Journal Entry Exercise

Using your answers above, imagine you were present at Corranderrk Aboriginal Station in the 1870s when this photo was taken.

1. Write a diary or journal entry from the point of view of one of the participants in the photo shoot. You might write from the point of view of Mary, Kruger the photographer, an Indigenous onlooker at the station or as a Caucasian worker at the station.
2. Once you have completed your journal entry, exchange it with your partner. After reading each other's entries prepare a short explanation for the class about whose position you each took and the similarities and differences in your accounts of the event.