



**Australian History Series**  
**Book 4: Ages 9-10 years**



# First Contacts

Aligned with the Australian National Curriculum



**Section 1:**  
**Indigenous**  
**Australians**

**Section 2:**  
**World Navigation**  
**Before 1800**

**Section 3:**  
**Departure and**  
**Arrival of the**  
**First Fleet**

**Section 4:**  
**Indigenous**  
**People and**  
**Others**



By Lisa Craig

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# Teachers' Notes

*First Contacts* has been written specifically for Australian students studying History in Year 4. It contains four sections which relate closely to the National Curriculum.

- The first section helps students to develop an understanding of the diversity and longevity of Indigenous Australians and explores their way of life prior to colonisation.
- The second section of the book encourages students to investigate the voyages of navigators worldwide and the contacts that they made with others.
- *Departure and Arrival of the First Fleet* is the title of the third section of the book. It examines why the First Fleet set sail, conditions on board, and the experiences of the passengers during and after the journey.
- The final section gives students the opportunity to explore the contact that Indigenous Australians had with their Asian neighbours and early European settlers.

All of the activity sheets in *First Contacts* have been written to extend students' historical knowledge and understanding. Students are asked to derive information from a variety of visual and written sources, sequence events, read and add to maps, group information, create artefacts, conduct surveys, fill in diagrams, hold discussions and draw conclusions.

To make life easy for the teacher the answers are provided at the back of the book.

## National Curriculum Links

### Historical Knowledge and Understanding

ACHHK077 – The diversity and longevity of Australia's first peoples and the way Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples are connected to country and place and the implications for their daily lives.

ACHHK078 – The journey of at least one world navigator, explorer or trader up to the late 18th century, including their contacts with other societies and any impacts.

ACHHK079 – Stories of the First Fleet, including reasons for the journey, who travelled to Australia, and their experiences following arrival.

ACHHK080 – 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.

### Historical Skills

ACHHS081 & ACHHS082 – Chronology, terms and concepts.

ACHHS083 – Historical questions and research.

ACHHS084 – Analysis and use of sources.

ACHHS085 – Perspectives and interpretations.

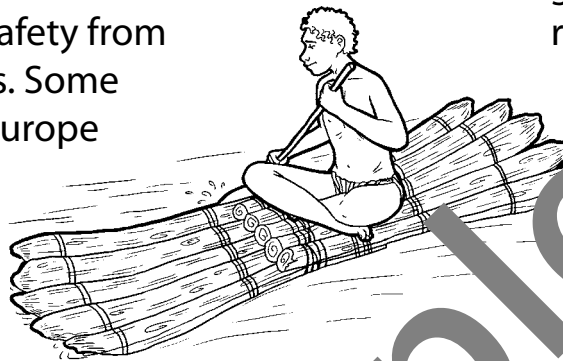
ACHHS086 – Explanation and communication.

# The Journey to Australia

People began migrating out of Africa around 150,000 years ago. They set off in all directions to find new places to live that could give them abundant food, shelter and safety from dangerous animals. Some groups settled in Europe and others in Central Asia. One group

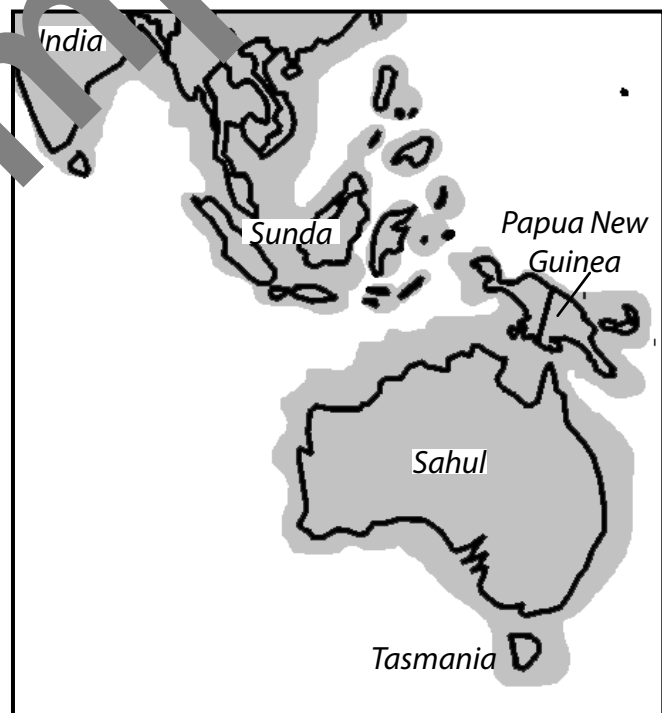
left the coast of Arabia and sailed across the Indian Ocean on simple log rafts to India. From there, they started a long journey, following the coast until they reached Australia.

Scientists think these travellers were the First Australians.




## Land bridges

During an ice age about 50,000 years ago, the level of the sea was much lower than it is today. Land bridges (see map right) made it possible for people to walk and sail short distances from island to island in the Sunda (now Indonesia) until they reached Sahul (Papua New Guinea, Australia and Tasmania). This journey from India was a very slow one. It took some Indigenous Australians 30,000 years to step foot on an Australian beach. When the ice age ended about 15,000 years ago, the sea covered the land bridges again and Australia was cut off from Papua New Guinea and Tasmania.



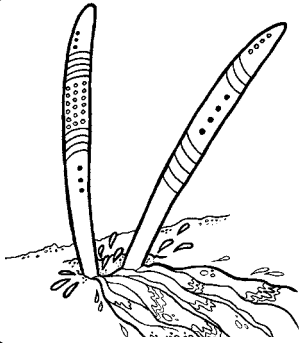
**Land bridges to Sahul (Australia) during an ice age**

 – where land was joined

## Activity

# The Journey to Australia

- ☐ Read this passage taken from an indigenous story.



... My people come from the great Djankawu far across the sea. Djankawu came in his canoe with his two sisters, following the morning star. They walked across the big country following the rain clouds. When they were thirsty, they plunged their digging sticks into the ground and fresh water flowed out ...

1. Write down three things that this description tells us about the first people to arrive in Australia.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2. How did Djankawu and his sisters find their way to Australia?

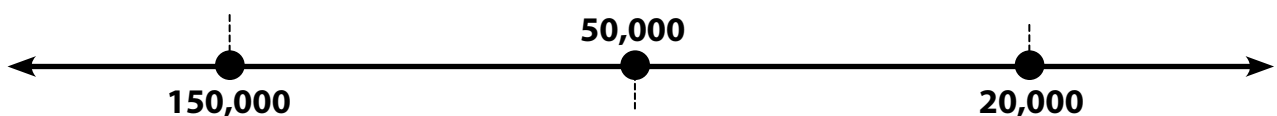
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why would it have been dangerous sailing on rafts or canoes across the ocean?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Timeline

- ☐ Use the information on page 6 to annotate the stages in the journey taken by Indigenous Australians from Africa to Australia.



## A Different World

About 50,000 years ago, Australia was a much cooler place. It was the end of the Pleistocene era and the world was in the grip of another ice age. Much of Australia was covered in thick forest with giant trees. But the trees weren't the only giants. At least 13 species of megafauna roamed Australia at this time.

The Indigenous Australians who moved from the coast into the interior of Australia came across reptiles, mammals and birds that were much bigger than animals from the same family that exist today. Archaeologists have found fossils which show that Indigenous Australians and megafauna lived side by side on the Australian continent for at least 10,000 years. Megafauna appear in indigenous legends and rock art. The *Genyornis newtoni* and *Zygomaturus trilobus* are two of examples of megafauna.

### The first astronomers

Indigenous Australians were the world's first astronomers. For more than 40,000 years, long before the ancient Babylonians and Chinese, Indigenous Australians have been observing the Sun, the Moon and the stars in the southern sky. The bright night sky was not only wonderful to gaze upon, it also gave Indigenous Australians information to help them to survive on the big continent.

Indigenous Australians made a calendar of

the seasons by observing the constellations as they moved across the sky during a year. This calendar told them to look for different kinds of food, such as fruit, tubers, seeds, birds' eggs and insect larvae in certain seasons. To help them remember the constellations, they created stories and the stars were the main characters. Different indigenous groups told different star stories in their own languages.



#### **Genyornis newtoni**

- two metres tall and weighing 200 kilograms;
- strong legs;
- couldn't fly;
- eggs weighed 1.6 kilograms;
- Indigenous Australians ate the eggs as part of their diet.



#### **Zygomaturus trilobus**

- two metres long and a metre tall;
- the size of a cow;
- plant eaters that lived in wetlands.



## Activity

## A Different World

1. Both Genyornis and Zygomaturus became extinct about 18,000 years ago. Using the information on page 10 and your research skills, suggest two possible causes for their extinction.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
2. Read the information about Procoptodon goliah. Fossils belonging to this species have been found near Aboriginal campsites at Lake Mungo. Prepare a bullet-point fact file on the giant kangaroo, similar to the ones on Genyornis and Zygomaturus on page 10.

*Procoptodon goliah was the largest kangaroo to have ever existed. It weighed about 240 kilograms and stood about two metres tall. Its face or snout was much shorter than the face or snout of kangaroos today. Procoptodon was a herbivore that pulled leaves from tree branches with its very long fingers. Its large feet were similar to a horse's hooves, which helped the giant marsupial to move speedily through the forests that covered Australia at the time. It became extinct about 20,000 years ago.*



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Procoptodon\\_BW.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Procoptodon_BW.jpg)  
Nobu Tamura

3. How did observing the star constellations in the sky help the First Australians to survive?

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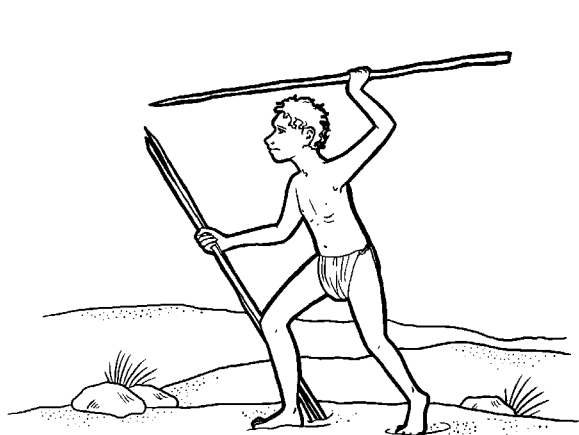
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### Southern Cross

Some Indigenous Australians thought the Southern Cross was a wedge-tailed eagle with a throwing stick. Coastal groups in northern Queensland thought the Southern Cross was a stingray (the cross) being hunted by a shark. Draw the constellation on the back of this page. Copy the one from page 10. Work with a partner to create your own star story about the Southern Cross and write your story next to the constellation.

- ☐ Think about the statement below. Share your ideas with a partner.

*Indigenous men worked harder than indigenous women.*



- ☐ Complete the table below with your opinions on the topic.

I agree because	I don't agree because
Sample	

- ☐ Take a survey of the opinions of the class on the topic, 'Indigenous men worked harder than indigenous women'. Present your results in a graph or in tally form on the back of this sheet.

**My conclusions:**

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# Kinship

Our relationship with other members of the family is called kinship. Members of your family are called your kin. In European cultures, there are terms to describe how you are related to your family, such as: grandfather/grandmother, mother/father, son/daughter, etc. In some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, there are as many as 70 terms to name how a person is related to someone else.



## Kinship names

Kinship or "skin" names are given to a baby when they are born and come from both the mother's and father's side of the family. Kinship names give information to other Indigenous Australians about how they are related to a child. These names also describe a person's place in the community and his/her responsibilities and duties.

## Who could be your kin in indigenous culture?

English term	What the term means in indigenous culture
brother/sister	brother/sister/children of mother's sister/children of father's brother/other children the same age
cousin	children of father's sister/children of mother's brother
father/mother	father/mother/uncle/aunt/other people the same age as the father or mother
grandfather/grandmother	grandfather/grandmother/other people of grandfather and grandmother's age/respected Elder of the clan

## Why the kinship system is an important custom

For a clan to live peacefully, there had to be rules and laws. The kinship system decided important matters such as who a person could marry, who had to pay for another person's bad deeds and who had to look after the older or sick people. An interesting kinship law was 'the mother-in-law' ban. It was a custom that all Indigenous Australians shared. A man or woman was never allowed to talk to his or her mother-in-law. This ban was introduced perhaps to avoid fighting or to show respect to the position of a mother-in-law in the family.