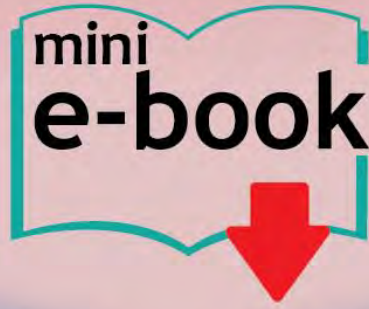


History

Indigenous Guides And Trackers



For Upper Primary



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Preview

Title: **Indigenous Guides And Trackers** For Upper Primary
 Published by **Ready-Ed Publications** © 2019
 Taken from: Australian History Series Book 5: The Australian Colonies
 Author: Lisa Craig Illustrator: Alison Mutton

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Indigenous Guides and Trackers

The early settlers in Australia found themselves in a place that was very different to the European continent. It was a place, according to Adam Lindsay Gordon, where, "bright blossoms are scentless and songless birds bright". The bush could be a dangerous place filled with strange animals and dark silence. Settlers observed the remarkable bush knowledge and skills of Indigenous Australians. Their ability to find water and food in the desert and track missing people in the rugged country became legendary in Australia.

Indigenous Guides

The First Australians had a deep knowledge of the land, built up over many hundreds of generations. When the colonists arrived, they wanted to explore the continent to discover agricultural land and mineral deposits. Explorers soon realised that they could not do this without the help of Indigenous Australian guides.



Successful Expeditions

- *Mokare was a Nyungar man who accompanied various explorers in the early days of settlement in the Albany area of Western Australia. In 1821, Mokare guided Phillip Parker King on his expedition to King George Sound. Mokare informed the military garrison in Albany about indigenous customs and beliefs. This resulted in a peaceful relationship between the groups.*
- *Edward John Eyre and Wylie, his indigenous guide, made an epic trek across the Nullarbor Plain from Fowler's Bay to Albany (1840-41). Both men almost died from starvation and heat in the desert, but Wylie's bush skills were an important factor in keeping them alive to complete this incredible journey.*

Indigenous Trackers

The bush skills of Indigenous Australians were also put to use in tracking fugitive convicts, criminals and bushrangers. Trackers were called in to search for people who had become lost in the bush. On many occasions, trackers were able to locate missing people in a few hours by reading the "signs" in the forest or desert. Some famous trackers in the 1800s were:

- *Mogo and Mollydobbin, who, in 1834 tracked various missing persons in the Fremantle area of Western Australia.*
- *Djungadjinganook or "King Richard" who tracked the missing Duff children in 1864 near Natimuk in western Victoria. He found them safe after 9 days.*
- *Wannamutta and Werannabe who were instrumental in tracking Ned Kelly to the final showdown at Glenrowan in 1880.*

Activity

Indigenous Guides and Trackers 1

□ Read page 3 and answer the following questions:

1. Explain why the Australian bush for the first settlers was a place where, *"blossoms are scentless and songless birds bright"*.

2. Discuss this question with a partner then make a list.

Why might it have been easy for early settlers to become lost in the bush?

3. Use your knowledge of Indigenous Australians to help you complete this table of bush skills that would have been useful to early explorers. Some examples have been given to start you off.

<p>Finding Water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Observed the flight of birds</i>	<p>Obtaining Food</p>
<p>Making Shelters</p>	<p>Using Bush Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Tea tree oil for antiseptic</i>

4. Why did indigenous guides and trackers have such a thorough knowledge of the territory in which they lived?

Activity

Indigenous Guides and Trackers 2

- Study the illustration by Samuel Calvert (1891) and read the extract from Edward John Eyre's journal about his trek with Wylie to Albany in 1840.

May 18th - THIS morning we had to travel upon a soft heavy beach, and moved slowly and with difficulty along, and three of the horses were continually attempting to lie down on the road. At twelve miles, we found some nice green grass, and although we could not procure water here, I determined to halt for the sake of the horses. The weather was cool and pleasant. Having seen some large kangaroos near our camp, I sent Wylie with the rifle to try and get one. At dark he returned bringing home a young one, large enough for two good meals; upon this we feasted at night, and for once Wylie admitted that his belly was full. He commenced by eating a pound and a half of horse-flesh, and a little bread, he then ate the entrails, paunch, liver, lights, tail, and two hind legs of the young kangaroo, next he broiled a penguin, that he had found dead upon the beach, upon this he forced down the whole of the hide of the kangaroo after singeing the hair off, and wound up this meal by eating the tough skin of the penguin; he then made a little fire, and laid down to sleep, and dream of the pleasures of eating, nor do I think he was ever happier in his life than at that moment.



Eyre's Journey to Albany

1. How does the artist show that the journey to Albany had been hard on Eyre and Wylie?

2. What problems were the explorers experiencing at this stage of their journey?

3. Do you think that Eyre could have completed this journey without Wylie? Give reasons with your answer.

Page 4

1. The Australian plants and animals were different to those of Europe. Flowers had no smell and brightly coloured birds did not sing sweetly, but squawked.
2. There were wide open spaces without roads or settlements; the bush was thick and dark; people wandered deep into the bush to explore and became lost.
3. Finding water: followed animal tracks, looked where vegetation grew, carried digging sticks. Obtaining food: hunting and collecting skills, knowledge of edible bush tucker, use of hunting tools. Making shelters: building simple bark huts, knowledge of location of caves, rock ledges. Using bush resources: making artefacts for carrying food and water, making blankets, clothes from animal fur, making string or rope from fibres.
4. Indigenous Australians were taught from an early age about the landscape of their territories. The Dreaming stories passed on vital information about how to survive in harsh conditions.

Page 5

1. The explorers' clothes are tattered and they are quite thin. The horses appear exhausted.
2. The horses were tired and wanted to lie down; the soft sand on the beach made walking heavy-going.
3. Student's opinion. Wylie was instrumental in obtaining food and keeping Eyre's spirits up.

Preview