

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
HISTORIES AND CULTURES

LIVING CULTURES – FOODS

YEAR 5

FORAGERS OR FARMERS?

Learners analyse a range of sources to investigate the ways that Tasmanian Aboriginal people skilfully managed their environment in order to have reliable access to a range of food resources through the purposeful use of fire.

CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

Organising idea 5

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' way of life are uniquely expressed through ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.

ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

Geography

Students identify and describe the interconnections between people and the human and environmental characteristics of places, and between components of environments.

Design and Technology

Students explain how social, ethical, technical and sustainability considerations influence the design of solutions to meet a range of present and future needs.

CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

Geography

The influence of people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, on the environmental characteristics of Australian places (ACHASSK112).

Evaluate evidence to draw conclusions (ACHASSI101).

Design and Technology

Investigate how and why food and fibre are produced in managed environments and prepared to enable people to grow and be healthy (ACTDEK021).

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

Critical and Creative Thinking

Inquiring – identifying, exploring and organising information and ideas

Organise and process information

Level 4 – analyse, condense and combine relevant information from multiple sources

Intercultural Understanding

Recognising culture and developing respect

Explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices

Level 4 – describe and compare the knowledge, beliefs and practices of various cultural groups in relation to a specific time, event or custom

Learning Goals

Learners will:

- » Develop an understanding of the methods used by Aboriginal people to manage natural resources.
- » Develop an understanding of fire as a technology used in the cultivation of plants and animals.
- » Analyse a range of sources to draw conclusions about the actions of Aboriginal people.

Learning Sequence

Activating and Engaging

Story Sharing

View *Bush Tucker* from the 'Living Cultures – Foods' section of The Orb, particularly the clip titled *Practice*.

View *Native Food* from the 'Living Cultures – Foods' section of The Orb, particularly the clip titled *Variety and Preparing*.

Learning Maps

Provide learners with images of Tasmanian agriculture, include images of machinery, paddocks, livestock, as well as the Tasmanian landscape paintings.

Ask small groups of learners to sort the images into those that depict agricultural activities or sites and those that don't.

Prompt learners to provide the justification for their decisions. Record their responses.

Using a graphic organiser such as a KWL chart to record responses, and ask learners to identify the types of technologies and processes that would be used in the agriculture category. Record responses.

Ask learners to identify the types of technologies they think were available to Tasmanian Aboriginal people in the past.

Elicit learners' ideas about the types of food Aboriginal people in the past accessed and how they might have done this.

Exploring and Discovering

Land Links

Learning Maps

Have the whole class view the images provided below. Ask learners to identify any evidence of agriculture in the images. Record their responses.

Organise learners into groups or prepare for a whole class discussion. Either give each group a copy of one of the images below along with the associated extract and questions or lead a whole class discussion.

Record learner's responses.

Image A:



John Glover, 'Mills' Plains', 1836. Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart.

Extract A: Adapted from Gammage. *Plain Facts: Tasmania under aboriginal management*. Landscape Research, 2008. Vol 33, No 2, 241-254

When Europeans arrived, the Aborigines of Tasmania were managing their land by using fire to arrange its vegetation. They did so to ensure that all species flourished as the Law required, to make resources abundant, convenient and predictable.

Aboriginal people burnt country to create open forests and grassy plains. They did this because many animals and birds prefer to feed in grassland, shelter in open forest and stay close to the edge between both. People made edges plentiful by alternating belts of forests and plain.

In his painting Glover shows Tasmanians but they were no longer living on their Country when Glover painted this picture.

In Glover's painting the foreground shows young wattles and casuarinas, trees which regenerate quickly after fire. They are young because Aboriginal people burnt the old; they are there

because they were stopped from burning and the forest began to overtake the plains that had been created by using fire.

- » When Europeans arrived was the landscape natural or created by Aboriginal people using fire? Give reasons for your answers.
- » What was the purpose of using fire to create grassy plains and open forest?

Image B:



Joseph Lycett, 'View from Near the Top of Constitution Hill, Van Diemen's Land', c. 1821 National Library of Australia (NLA)

Extract B: Adapted from Gammage. *Plain Facts: Tasmania under aboriginal management*. Landscape Research, 2008. Vol 33, No 2, 241-254

The view is south towards Bagdad over forest-plain belts. You can see a mosaic of grassy plains and belts of open forests. These belts of forest sheltered animals and concealed hunters, and were very common.

The observations of early Europeans evidence this mosaic pattern of grassy plains and open forest. George Augustus Robinson noted copses and their animals in many places. About ten miles west of Mt William in the northeast he:

crossed a large plain with excellent grass, about a thousand acres. The country . . . is very picturesque, grassy plains interspersed with Copse . . . Kangaroo is very plentiful. Passed over a large tract of ground where the bush had been burnt by the natives. This is a delightful country to walk in.

West of Derby he:

came to a large plain of tolerable good feed; it was of great extent and abounded with kangaroo. I had seen no place like it on this side of the island, and the clumps of trees of various sorts gave it a delightful park-like appearance. I named it kangaroo park. This country had been well burnt off.

On Bruny Island, Robinson:
traversed a vast extent of clear country interspersed with clumps or copse intended as a cover for the kangaroo, the whole range for miles forming a

beautiful picturesque scenery. This has been done by the natives: when burning the underwood they have beat out the fire in order to form these clumps.

People also wedged forest into plain so that no matter how the wind lay they could approach prey undetected.

- » What do the early European explorer's observations tell us about their understanding of how the landscape was managed by Aboriginal people?
- » What do their descriptions tell us about how Aboriginal people managed the landscape?
- » Do you think people were actively cultivating the land for food? Why do you think this?

Image C:



Joseph Lycett, "Aborigines Using Fire to Hunt Kangaroos", c. 1821, from his Drawings of the Natives and Scenery of Van Diemens Land, London 1830, PIC R5689, NLA. Lycett says this scene is Tasmanian. Tom Gunn points out that Tasmanians did not use woomeras, shown here.

Extract C: Adapted from Gammage. *Plain Facts: Tasmania under aboriginal management*. Landscape Research, 2008. Vol 33, No 2, 241-254

Here dense forest rises from low ground to separate grassy hills. A sharp edge divides trees from grass. Fires block kangaroos from the forest and drive them to the spears. Yet the hunters are protecting the forest: they have fired its lee edge so that the wind takes the flames into the grass. When the wind lay the other way they would burn the opposite edge: that must always have been so, otherwise those sharp edges would be frayed by fire.

This landscape is shaped to make game accessible. A skilful burning regime, has kept the forest dense and the grass open.

Tasmanian Aboriginal people used plains by patch-burning them, making mosaics of fresh grass to concentrate feed, and trees or old grass to shelter game and hunters. On Bruny Island, George Augustus Robinson reported:

travelling through an extensive swamp covered with lofty shrubs. Passages about two feet wide are formed in a serpentine direction and at short distances are open clear spaces, supposed to have been burnt out by the natives so that they might be better able to pursue the kangaroo.

In 1827, Henry Hellyer followed an Aboriginal track and noted patches:

The [area] has a cultivated and diversified appearance . . . from its having been lately burnt in several extensive tracts, looking fresh and green in those places, and in others so completely covered with fields of blooming heath that it resembled vast fields of clover divided by shrubs.

He suspected their purpose:

It is possible that the natives by burning only one set of plains are enabled to keep the kangaroos more concentrated for their use, and I can in no way account for their burning only in this place, unless it is to serve them as a hunting place.

- » How did Aboriginal people use fire to hunt kangaroo?
- » Were Aboriginal people purposeful in how and why they created the landscape patterns they did?
- » Can this be understood as being a form of farming? Give your reasons for or against.

View the YouTube clip: [Bill Gammage discusses 'The Biggest Estate on Earth'](#) from the beginning to minute 8.03.

Lead a whole class discussion on the topic of forager or farmer and record responses on the KWL chart.

Synthesising and Applying

Lead a class discussion about what learners now think about Tasmanian Aboriginal people having actively cultivated the land for food.

Have learners create a persuasive or informative text on the topic of Tasmanian Aboriginal people - foragers or farmers?

Success Criteria

Learners:

- » Describe the methods/technology used by Aboriginal people to access food.
- » Participate in group work and discussions.
- » Synthesise their own conclusions in a persuasive or informative text.

Resources

- » [The Orb](#)
- » [Australian Curriculum](#)
- » [Aboriginal Sharers of Knowledge \(ASK Program\) Guidelines](#)
- » [Aboriginal Sharers of Knowledge \(ASK Program\) Application Form](#)
- » The Aboriginal Education Library: email aboriginal.education.library@education.tas.gov.au or telephone 03 6165 5480 for more resources, including the ones listed below.
- » The Eight-Way Framework of Aboriginal Pedagogy
- » YouTube clip: [Bill Gammage discusses 'The Biggest Estate on Earth'](#)

Glossary

Agriculture

The cultivation of land, including crop-raising, forestry, stock-raising etc.; farming. **M**

Belt

An area characterized by some distinctive feature (as of culture, habitation, geology, or life forms) especially: one suited to a particular crop. **MW**

Copse

A thicket, grove, or growth of small trees. **M**

Cultivate

To bestow labour upon (land) in raising crops; till; improve by husbandry. **M**

Lee

The side or part that is sheltered or turned away from the wind. **M**

Mosaic

Composed of diverse elements combined, resembling a mosaic. **M**

M Macquarie

MW Merriam Webster



State of Tasmania (Department of Education)
Published: March 2019