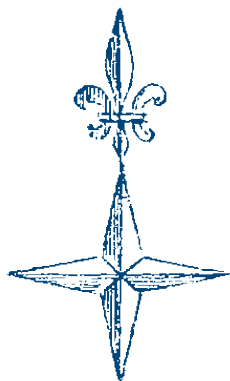


Captain Cook was here



Endeavour's Reading Room

Interesting books to read, enjoy, study and discuss



Image courtesy of
Cambridge University Press

Captain Cook was Here **Maria Nugent**

Cambridge University Press, 2009
164 pp ISBN 9780521762403

There is a long history of storytelling about Captain Cook's landing at Botany Bay, Australia, on 29 April 1770. In this book we learn more about the little known stories told by the Aboriginal people about this event – encounters marked by intrigue, fear, confusion and sometimes violence. The lively, dramatic account draws on art, objects, histories and myths to provide a new view of the eight days so pivotal in our history. The story, of course, does not end with the *Endeavour* sailing away. We still need to be challenged by the impact of Cook's arrival on the land and its people.



HMB ENDEAVOUR



Recommended for secondary and tertiary students

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Recommended for secondary and tertiary students

Other reviews :

<http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/publications/eras>

<http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2009/05/smith.html>

<http://epress.anu.edu.au/apps/bookworm/view/Aboriginal+History+Volume+34,+2010/5611/review23.xhtml>

<http://www.captaincooksociety.com/ccsu2115.htm>

Author biography:

Maria Nugent is a Research Fellow in the Australian Centre for Indigenous History at the Australian National University Canberra. Before going to ANU she held fellowships at the State Library of New South Wales, Monash University, and the National Museum of Australia. She also has professional experience as a public historian, including with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Australian Heritage Commission. Her research focuses on Aboriginal people's historical narratives and remembrance under colonial conditions; landscape and spatial approaches in history and heritage; Aboriginal women's craft production; and cross-cultural relations and encounters in Australian exploration and settlement. Over twenty years she has had a close relationship with the Aboriginal people at Botany Bay, particularly at the La Perouse Aboriginal community. She also wrote *Botany Bay : where histories meet*, and has provided historical research and advice to the NSW Government on the redevelopment of Cook's landing place at Botany Bay.

Maria Nugent may be available for interview through ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences

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(From <https://researchers.anu.edu.au/researchers/nugent-ml>)

Rationale / Introduction / Links to areas of study:

This information gives an overview of the book which could be used to

- foster discussion
- inspire academic research
- stimulate creative writing and creative representations (eg drama, art)
- serve as a supplementary text
- present a new point of view
- spark debate

Depending on the desired perspective, the abilities and composition of the class, and the time available, teachers may choose to engage with one small part of the book, a separate section or perspective from the book, or the book as a whole. The following is intended to signpost the content as a guide only.

Links to areas of study in the current NSW syllabus include:

English : Area of study, Belonging, Stage 6

“... consider aspects of belonging in terms of experiences and notions of identity, relationships, acceptance and understanding.” (NSW Board of Studies)

History, especially Stage 4 Topic 3, and outcomes 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.7, plus selective topic 1 for Stages 4 and 5

Aboriginal Studies : Preliminary course Parts 1 and 2 Part 1 Aboriginality and the Land – dispossession and dislocation of Aboriginal peoples from Country and impact of British colonisation on Country Part 2 Heritage and Identity – Impact of colonisation on Aboriginal cultures and families

Visual Arts: a range of areas, including outcomes 4.2, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 5.4, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10

There are similar links in the syllabi of other states, including SOSE in Queensland, S&E in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia, S&H in Tasmania

Chapter outlines :

Prologue

Setting the context and outlining her intentions “to show something of that open-ended quality, to reflect upon the lively and constant interplay between past and present, and to propose yet more possibilities for interpreting this particular past and its many and changing meanings.”(p xi)

In the beginning

The first day

‘Discovery’ of the bay at dawn on 28 April 1770 which looks promising because it ‘appeared to be tolerably well sheltered from all winds’

People on shore were observed by Banks, and a landing party was sent ashore mid- afternoon

Awkward attempts to communicate positively ended in Cook resorting to use of his musket

Always beginning

Discussion about E. Phillips Fox’s painting ‘The Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay 1770’, painted in 1901 after the re-enactment in Botany Bay, and various other artworks depicting the landing

Using artwork to retell stories

The First day continued

Various accounts, observations and details from the first landing day including of various objects such as the shield and spears

In between

The second day

Efforts concentrated on getting wood and water, in the same area as already occupied by the natives

Still no meaningful contact and goods intended as gifts not touched

The beginnings of Banks’ acquaintance with many plants

Another unresolved encounter with the local people again retiring without any successful communication

The third day

Shouting and the lighting of fires by the locals

No successful attempts at direct communication

More collecting of specimens including shells

The fourth day

A funeral and burial of a sailor who died of consumption

Renewed but unsuccessful efforts by Cook to make contact with the local people, offering superior goods

Overland hunting party

After mimicry incident with Monkhouse et al spears thrown by locals to deter, not harm

The fifth day

Morning on board. Afternoon excursion where avoidance rather than interaction became the strategy from the locals. No more attempts to advance and follow

Mention of artist's representations

The sixth day

Cook 'on a mission' to form some connections with the natives, but although they were out and about they remained steadfastly uninterested in meeting with the strangers

Banks, by contrast, gave up chasing the elusive locals and concentrated on his large collection of specimens, engaging in "mutual disregard"

Discussion of some of Tupaia's and others' artworks (eg Plate 19)

The seventh day

Endeavour did not sail because of the unfavourable wind

Name of ship and date carved into a tree on shore

Cook still determined to try and make contact with the locals but fails again

Banks continues botanising, having given up on the locals altogether

Surgeon Monkhouse has an interesting encounter

In the end

The eighth day

Departure from 'Sting Ray's Harbour' postponed for another day

More collecting of specimens and no sightings of the locals

Did Cook feel a sense of failure about not making meaningful contact with the locals?

Never ending

Aboriginal storytelling since the original encounter with Captain Cook has continued, and ensured that it is not a closed chapter in history

Interesting stories from Aboriginies about the early settlement

The character named 'Captain Cook' may in fact represent someone or something much larger : 'the nature of the relationship between the locals and the newcomers and the ways in which things structure that relationship'. (p 114)

Various oral and written accounts and comments, then and now, about the impact of Europeans on the traditional owners of the Country

Quite detailed analysis of a range of artworks using varying techniques depicting the different eras and facets of the story

The *Endeavour* sails

Endeavour heads north. The wheels for further settlement had been set in motion

29 Plates of relevant artworks, past and contemporary

Excellent and detailed source list

Quotes for discussion:

“When it comes to the matter of Captain Cook in Australia as well as in Australian history and imagination, one might say that it’s a classic case of *always beginning, never ending*. This is a story still in the process of being told, a history that is constantly in the making. There is always something new, or more, to say.” (p.x)

How can history be definitive and unchanging whilever there is scholarship undertaking more research into various topics?

“From what I have said of the Natives of New-Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon Earth, but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them.” From Cook’s journal, reproduced (p. 54)

Does this illustrate one of the inherent problems of colonisation, missionaries and others who assume people will act and respond like them, and want to be like ‘they’ are?

Artist Gordon Bennett ... “is interested in the ways in which visual representations of these historical events and processes obscure the hidden injustices inherent within colonial relations. His paintings draw attention to the ways in which Aboriginal people have been oppressed not only by colonial domination but also by the colonists’ documentation or representation of history.” (p 131)

Art works have long been used to make political and social statements. How do the examples in this book do this?

“There is no mention of any local people lining the headlands to see the ship leave. That is not to say they didn’t witness it. No doubt they watched its departure. If they had used retreat as their final movement in their strategy for dealing with these strangers, then they must have been happy with the seeming speed of its effects.” (p.137)

Did this remain the case until the First Fleet arrived, or were there similar encounters with other explorers, eg the French?

Suggested activities:

Depending on your class and the time available, and what aspects of the book you are focussing on, you may wish to try one or more of the following :

- Debating on issues raised in the book, and European exploration and colonisation in general
- Creative writing exercises, including from different perspectives
- Discussing and creating artwork depicting actions and emotions
- Performing dramatic role plays and interpretations
- Researching particular issues raised in the book
- Interviewing members of local Indigenous communities
-

Technology :

Include one or more of the following components to satisfy requirements for the integration of technology into the unit :

- Make a book trailer or promotional flyer for an author talk
- Make a vodcast or podcast of an interview with other students about their opinions of the book
- Create a simple computer game or animation related to the story
- Word process various styles of writing
- Format text in a variety of styles
- Experiment with design and layout options
- Create PowerPoint presentations
- Evaluate a range of multimedia texts eg websites
- Conduct an online interactive session or email conversations with the author

Further references:

An extensive list of sources appears at the end of the book, pp 138 – 150

Evaluation :

Assessment could be through a series of informal activities and observations, plus a formal assessment task which outlines the outcomes, task requirements, assessment criteria and marking guidelines. This may be a piece of creative writing, the presentation of some research, a response to a given question or a group activity.

We want to hear from you!

Let us know how the book and activities worked with your students.

Encourage your students to write and send in their own book reviews or comments to us.

We welcome any constructive feedback. Email education@anmm.gov.au