Dirk Hartog
1616 - 2016

Learning Sequence 2:
The Hartog Plate and other historical evidence

The resource was developed with support from the Western Australian Government through Royalties for Regions, HTAWA and the Western Australian Museum.
LEARNING SEQUENCE 2: The Hartog Plate and other historical evidence

This learning sequence also aims to build an understanding of the Historical context of the 1616 Landfall and to enhance student curiosity.

Activity 1 - Did Dirk Hartog leave the pewter plate as a message or to claim the land?

i. Dirk Hartog used the Brouwer Route during his 1616 voyage but travelled too far east and sighted the coast of the unknown Southland. Hartog ordered the Eendracht’s crew to drop anchor by an island 75 kilometres from the coast. He and a number of his crew went ashore and investigated the location for several days. They constructed a post on which they nailed a pewter plate from the galley of the Eendracht. The point where Hartog left the plate is now called Point Inscription. He named the part of the coast he charted ‘Eendracht’s Land’.

ii. An archaeologist from the Museum of Western Australia made the following comment about the location of Hartog’s landing:

“Cape Inscription must remain the site of prime significance, being ... proof [of] the oldest European monument recovered from Australian soil. The locality is thus an important point of reference to the history of the discovery of Australia and the early cartography (maps) of its western coast”.


This comment highlights the meaning of the historical concept significance. The location meant more than just the actual landing of the Dutchmen, but echoed across history as evidence of

- Europeans leaving a monument or claim on Australian soil in 1616
- the discovery of Australia
- the mapping of the unknown continent.

iii. The image below shows the landscape that the Dutchmen saw on the island. What do you think was the reaction of the captain, Dirk Hartog and the Upper merchant to this sight? What would they have been looking for? Do you think they found it?

Location of the Hartog post on Cape Inscription

Photo: F. Baker © Western Australian Museum 1997

iv. Was the Hartog Plate a claim on the Southland or a message to other Dutch and European traders passing this region?

Source 1 - The Hartog Plate was a claim

Here are VOC instructions to their captains who discovered new territory:

To all the places which you shall touch at, you will give... either the names [of the Netherlands] or of the towns situated therein, or any other [names] that [are] fitting and worthy. Of all which places, lands and islands, the commander and officers... will... take formal possession, and... erect a stone column in such places as shall be taken possession of; the... column recording... the year, the month, the day of the week and the date, the persons by whom and the hour of the day when such possession has been taken on behalf of the [Netherlands].

http://theconversation.com/australians-might-speak-dutch-if-not-for-strong-emotions-20080

Source 2 - The Hartog Plate was a message

Hartog’s pewter plate was certainly not just [a] sign left behind so Hartog and his crew could boast: I was there first. It was similar to a “postal stone”, the message being a sign left behind on a remote shore, to communicate with Navigators to follow. The VOC had a... practice to leave such signs on far lands particularly newly encountered shores. The method is also known to have been used by Portuguese, French and English early mariners. [A researcher, Dr Wendy van Duivenvoorde, has found that] 40 rock inscriptions still survive in Madagascar.


1. What did the VOC require the traders to do at places they landed?
2. How well did Hartog follow these instructions from the East India Company?
3. What was a postal stone?
4. If Dirk Hartog did not write down the reasons why he left his plate, how do we know whether the plate was a Dutch claim of ownership of the Southland or just a message to other sailors? That is, how can we tell fact from opinion in this action?

v. Student Activity: The stages of Hartog’s journey

Students can be shown the website below and use the exercise Hartog’s journey to the Spice Islands to order the stages of Dirk Hartog’s return voyage in 1616 - 1617.

http://www.dirkhartog2016.nl/dirk-junior/contents/timeline

Activity 2 - Visit to Shipwreck Galleries in Fremantle

The Shipwreck Galleries contain rich resources on the Dutch role in the discovery, mapping and unique history of Western Australia. A tour of the galleries will expand student knowledge, engagement and curiosity about the experiences of Dutch, French and British traders and explorers in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia.

Some ideas that can be gathered from a tour of the Museum are listed here. See Guide to touring the Shipwreck Galleries.

“Return from the second expedition to the East Indies, 1599” by Hendrik Cornelisz, Courtesy of Museum of WA
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i. Enter at the Woodblock Gallery and use the Painting “Return from the second expedition to the East Indies, 1599” by Hendrik Cornelisz. Use the Visible Thinking routine “See, Think, Wonder” to discuss the painting.

ii. To build the context of Hartog’s journey students will be encouraged to explore:
   a. the reasons for Dutch trade
   b. the wide range of goods traded
   c. maps from the 1600s
   d. how and when the coastline of Western Australia was drawn
   e. marine technology during the 1600s, including information on the cross staff, sextant, astrolabe and issues with measuring longitude before the invention of the chronometer
   f. conditions on the East India ships (what was ship life like for Hartog and his crew?)
   g. the main Dutch traders/explorers who reached the Western Australian coast
   h. the story of the Hartog and De Vlamingh plates
   i. what happened to each of these Dutch trading ships: Batavia, Vergulde Draeck, Zuytdorp and the Zeewyk.

iii. Ask students to consider which artefacts in the Museum most help them to understand the way of life of Dutch traders during the 1600s.

iv. Students can be encouraged to take photos or sketch four significant objects of trade or technology from a Dutch ship. Ask the students to think about why they chose the items, what stories are associated with the items and why they are historically significant. (Students could choose paintings, models of East India ships, a cannon, spices, an elephant tusk, a diary, a map etc)

Activity 3 - Post excursion exploration

i. Post excursion discussion - share significant images/sketches and discuss student learning associated with each and questions originating from the visit. What themes, stories or adventures would you like to explore further? What else did you discover about Hartog and the pewter plate? Instruct the children to write a short reflection on the artefacts they chose and areas they would like to explore further.

ii. The following resources will be useful to consolidate the tour of the Shipwreck Galleries or can be used to stimulate more questions if you are unable to visit the Museum.

   Visit the Rijksmuseum (online)

   There are many images of items in the Shipwreck Galleries on Trip advisor. Type “Tripadvisor Reviews Shipwreck Galleries Fremantle Greater Perth Western Australia” into your search engine.

iii. Class review - brainstorm key themes from the excursion/observation of artefacts from the 1600s.

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![Diagram with themes: Journeys/Dangers, Technology of ships/navigation, Hartog and other important Dutch traders, Spice trade/other items of value, Development of the map of Western Australia]