

TEACHERS NOTES



HIGH ADVENTURE, TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY AS WE JOURNEY AROUND THE WORLD IN THE WAKE OF ONE OF THE GREATEST EXPLORERS OF ALL TIME—JAMES COOK.

Captain Cook

OBSESSION AND DISCOVERY

Captain Cook – Obsession and Discovery

SERIES SYNOPSIS

‘I had ambition not only to go farther than any man had been before, but as far as it was possible for a man to go.’ —James Cook

Geographer, historical consultant and bestselling British author Vanessa Collingridge searches for the man behind the legend as she traces his story in a series that is part biography, part travelogue—and completely enthralling.

A hero to some, a villain to others, this son of an English farm labourer described more of the globe than any other man in three incredible voyages.

Discover the man and his times. Step back into the 18th century to experience what it was like to navigate uncharted and unknown waters in search of a legendary Great Southern Continent and then a Northwest Passage through the Arctic ice; as well as to be among the first Europeans to visit exotic Pacific islands like Tahiti.

Sail the uncharted coast of New Zealand, proving it isn’t part of the ‘Great Southern Continent’. Land with Captain Cook at Botany Bay and travel north as he claims Australia for king and country—a ‘discovery’ that goes unquestioned for over a century.

Meet some of the men of the *Endeavour*, *Resolution*, *Adventure* and *Discovery*, and learn what sea-life was like for the sailors and scientists who made it all possible, including the celebrated gentleman-botanist Joseph Banks and a young naval officer named William Bligh.

It’s a tale of obsession and discovery, respect and brutality, courage and madness, from the pomp and splendour of the royal courts of England to death on a beach on the far side of the world.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Curriculum links include SOSE/HSIE, particularly in History (Significant Events & People; Time, Continuity & Change); Geography, English and Media Studies.

Captain Cook — Obsession and Discovery is yet to be classified by the Office of Film & Literature Classification. The series received a PG classification for its television broadcast.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

James Cook was born in northern England on 27 October 1728, and died in what is now known as Hawaii on 14 February 1779. During the 50 years of his life, Great Britain engaged in clashes with the other major imperial powers, France and Spain. Towards the end of his life Britain started losing control of its North American colony, the United States of America. It was one setback during a century that established the platform for Britain to emerge as the world’s superpower in the 19th century. Although Cook didn’t live to see the new century, his explorations played a major role in its development and helped open trade routes that enabled Great Britain to dominate the world economy.

Cook’s explorations were carried out by sea, in small wooden sailing ships. Within 40 years of his death, the first steamship was crossing the Atlantic. In many ways, Cook’s time was the last age of global exploration, before technology changed the nature of exploration. He pushed the limits of where humans could travel on the planet, and it was his work that proved that no great southern continent existed.



Cook was also a product of a society that was dominated by social class. Coming from a poor background, Cook had to rely on patronage (support from wealthy friends and acquaintances) to get his start in life. The program implies that one of the motivating factors for Cook to take his last voyage was to gain a knighthood which would show his acceptance by the ruling class. Achievement was the only way someone of Cook's poor background could hope to move up the social ladder.

- The following is a list of events spanning Cook's lifetime. In groups, select topics to briefly research, and then bring the groups together to create a timeline that places the events in chronological order.
 - a. The War of Jenkins' Ear
 - b. Tea becomes increasingly popular through the trading of the East India Company
 - c. Canada passes to Britain
 - d. Spanish reach Easter Island
 - e. George II becomes King of England (just before Cook is born)
 - f. King George's War in America along the St Lawrence River
 - g. American War of Independence
 - h. Clive of India gains control of Bengal
 - i. Anglo-French War in North America
 - j. The 'Black Hole' of Calcutta
 - k. Boston Tea Party
 - l. Serious criticism of the slave trade starts to emerge
- Before you watch the program, write a list of things you know about Captain James Cook. What would you change or add after watching? If you have changed some things, why?



EPISODE I: A LIKELY LAD

This episode covers Cook's early life, and finishes with him entering the Pacific Ocean in command of his own ship, the *Endeavour*. The journey from a poor farming background to command of a naval ship on a major scientific journey of exploration was not typical of the times. Cook's advance was due to two key elements; patronage and talent. It was these that enabled him to rise above the farming struggle for which his birth destined him.

- The program suggests that Cook can be seen as both a hero and a villain because he pushed the borders of the British Empire to the very ends of the earth. Whose perspective would see him as a hero? Who would see him as a villain? Start two columns headed 'Hero' and 'Villain'. As you watch the program, see how many things you can include under each heading. After you have finished watching, compare your lists. Reflect upon the perspectives involved in each list. Discuss the idea that a person can be both a hero and a villain.
- In the program, Professor Andrew Lambert of Kings College, London, says Cook was 'one of the great celebrities of the western world. Everybody wanted to know about Cook, from the Empress of Russia to the King of England'. Create a magazine spread that reflects this idea. In your spread make sure you have:
 - » a cover that captures reader interest about Cook

- » a focus article that shows what he's done, emphasising his bravery, personality and great skills
 - » illustrations that make Cook appear attractive, the 'poster boy' of the times
 - » readers' letters commenting on Cook
 - » eye-catching headlines
- How does the visit to the family church help you understand 18th century British society and Cook's place in it? What evidence is used to make this point?
 - Think about the scene where the young James Cook climbs Roseberry Topping. Write a diary entry or poem showing what he might have been thinking and feeling as he sat there looking at the view.
 - It is clear that James Cook had a lot of assistance to become a sailor. The system where someone successful helps a young person in their education and career is called patronage. Who were Cook's patrons? How important were they in advancing his career? What would have become of Cook without patronage?
 - Research Cook's contribution to mapping. Explain why he is rated so highly as a navigator. Why was his skill as a map maker so valuable for a) himself and b) Great Britain?
 - Why is the Battle of Louisburg so important for Cook's career? What evidence is given to support this claim?
 - Vanessa Collingridge mentions a story of Cook attending Elizabeth Batts' christening and saying, 'If this child lives, I'll marry her'. She then describes this story as 'more retrospective legend building'.
 - » How does she show the story must be incorrect?
 - » What does she mean by 'retrospective legend building'?
 - » What other examples of legend building about Cook can you find throughout the program?
 - Cook's London house he establishes with Elizabeth at 7 Assembly Row, Mile End, was destroyed in 1959 to build a brewery. Do you think the house where Cook planned his most important expeditions should have been preserved? What would you put on a plaque to be placed at the site of his home?
 - What are the reasons for the British to send a naval expedition into the Pacific in 1768? In what ways did these reasons reflect the time, described in the program as the 'Age of Enlightenment'? Why was Cook chosen to lead this voyage?
 - The *Endeavour* was 109 feet (35 metres) long. Measure this distance in the playground and see how many students you can comfortably fit along that length. The *Endeavour* had a large crew (94), however it was designed as a bulk carrier. How comfortable do you think the ship would have been to sail on?
 - What was scurvy? Why was it such a threat to sailors? How did Cook overcome the threat of scurvy?



EPISODE 2: TAKING COMMAND

This is the episode that deals with the achievements that have made Cook so well known in Australia.

Following his observation of the transit of Venus, Cook opens secret orders written a year earlier and sets sail on the history-making adventure in search of a great southern continent. If Britain can find and map it, they can claim it for the Empire.

Cook is carrying an additional passenger, Polynesian priest and fellow navigator Tupaia. Cook's first encounter with New Zealand's Maori is a disaster, so he turns to Tupaia who acts as go-between for later landings. In circumnavigating New Zealand, he proves it is not the 'Great Southern Continent'.

Continuing east into the unknown and landing in Botany Bay, Cook is challenged by what he encounters—Australia's flora, fauna and Indigenous people. Cook's landing will make him an iconic figure in modern history, but not unless he can navigate his way out of the maze of the Great Barrier Reef—a potential disaster that could kill them all.

- Tahiti was a new discovery for Europeans. The program makes it clear that Cook and his crew had very different perspectives about Tahiti. Prepare two posters to help understand how one's perspective impacts upon the way something is viewed. In one, advertise Tahiti the way Cook would see it: an opportunity for scientific research and to stock the *Endeavour* with breadfruit to help his crew avoid scurvy. In the other, advertise the sailors' view of Tahiti: a tropical paradise with friendly natives and a lifestyle far removed from their own in Europe.
- Why was the observation of Venus so important? How successful was Cook's observation? What evidence does the program offer that Cook was disappointed in the result?
- The program talks about Cook's secret orders to find the 'Great Southern Continent' that in 1769 was thought to exist.
 - » Research the views of the time about the existence of such a continent.
 - » Use that research to write a set of 'secret orders' for Cook outlining what you want him to do and why you think it important.
 - » Write a journal entry for Cook after he's just opened the orders. Try and convey his sense of pride, excitement and apprehension at undertaking such an important exploration.
 - » Script two-person plays where members of Cook's crew discuss their thoughts about entering the South Pacific to find the 'Great Southern Continent'. (Remember that 18th century sailors would have had limited geographical knowledge and were often superstitious.)
- Joseph Banks paid his way on board the *Endeavour*. How much did he pay? See if you can find out what this amount could buy in 1770. Research the career of Joseph Banks and write a brief entry for an encyclopaedia of biography about his life and achievements.
- 'I do not know why I may not keep him as a curiosity, as some of my neighbours do lions and tigers.' —Joseph Banks. In this quote Banks is referring to the Tahitian priest Tupaia who he has brought on board as an 'exotic souvenir'. What does the quote tell you about his view of the native peoples he would come in contact with throughout the expedition? Do you think it was a typical British view of the time? Try and find evidence to support your answer.
- How did Cook treat Tupaia? What does this tell you about Cook's personality? Can you explain the differences between Banks' and Cook's approaches?
- Experts in the program speak about Cook's strengths as a leader and as a seaman. Review what you've learned so far about Cook. Think about what *you* would regard as positive and negative qualities. Then draw up two columns to reflect your views. Keep adding to the list as you watch this and the remaining episodes.



- Why did Cook and Banks have such differing views about the existence of a great south continent?
- Create an interview with 12-year-old Nick Young, getting him to explain how he and the crew felt when they first sighted what they thought was the coastline of the 'Great Southern Continent'.
- Listen carefully to what Barney Tupura has to say about Cook's first contact with the Maori. Where does his knowledge of the events come from? Does that make it valid history?
- Vanessa Collingridge makes the point that the first contact between Cook and the Maori 'is one of those rare moments when history is told from both sides.' What are the two viewpoints? Create two versions of this meeting to reflect the two perspectives.
- Create a journal entry for Cook written on 29 October 1769, the day they sailed out of Tolaga Bay. In the entry, have Cook explain why the landing at Tolaga Bay was so much more successful than the one in Poverty Bay. Have him reflect upon the lessons he has learnt.
- Why does Cook spend six months navigating around New Zealand? What were the two key results of these six months?
- After mapping New Zealand, Cook faces a choice about what to do next. Outline the options he has available and explain why he made the choice he did.



- Today at Botany Bay there is a plaque commemorating Isaac Smith and there are monuments to both Cook and Banks. After watching the program, design plaques containing what you think are the reasons they deserve recognition at this spot.
- Dr Penelope Edmonds comments about the fact that Tupaia was unable to speak any Aboriginal languages, and says, 'Imagine how things might have been different if Tupaia could have communicated with the people at Botany Bay.' Discuss how different history could have been if there had been meaningful contact with the Indigenous people.
- All on board the *Endeavour* were amazed by the unique birds, animals and plants they saw at Botany Bay. In the 18th century it was the ship's artists who created the visual images that would return to London to inform Europe. Try sketching a bird or animal that Cook would've seen at Botany Bay, then write a description. Which would you prefer to rely on to inform people in Europe?
- Vanessa Collingridge says, 'To Australians, Cook was the heroic British discoverer of their land'. Debate the suggestion that the date of Cook's landing at Botany Bay (29 April 1770) should be celebrated as Australia Day instead of the date of Arthur Phillip's landing in Sydney (26 January 1788).
- Captain Cook's Cottage in Melbourne is described as 'a cottage James Cook never lived in, standing in a place he never visited.' Create an advertisement for the real estate agent in Great Ayton in Yorkshire to help him sell the cottage to Australia in 1934.
- 'Australia and the British Empire laid claim to James Cook and spun him into an imperial icon.' What do you think Vanessa Collingridge means when she says this? What are the implications of regarding James Cook as the discoverer of Australia? Does he deserve this title? Do you agree that 'history had given first prize to James Cook'?
- Discuss the suggestion that Tahiti and New Zealand have a much greater claim to James Cook than Australia does.



EPISODE 3: BEYOND SPECULATION

This episode shows Cook's career reaching a peak. The *Endeavour* completes its voyage after Cook claims the east coast of New Holland for Britain without any reference to the local inhabitants—an act that still has ramifications in modern Australia. His mapmaking is recognised and he is promoted and given command of a voyage that will add a further third to the known world.

- Why is Cooktown so important to Cook and the *Endeavour*? Discuss how different world history might have been if Cook had never been able to leave Cooktown.
- Describe Cook's relationship with the Guugu Yimithirr tribe. In groups, script the scene when the local people come on board the *Endeavour* and see the sea turtles the crew have taken for food. What will be the main arguments on each side?
- 'They may appear to be the most wretched people on earth, but in reality they are far more happier [sic] than we Europeans. They live in a tranquillity which is not disturbed by the inequality of condition; the earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life.' —James Cook
 - » What do you think Cook means by 'inequality of condition'?
 - » In simple English, what is Cook saying here?
 - » How do you think these views would've been received by his superiors in England?
 - » What is the significance of this passage being edited out of his published journal?
- On 22 August 1770, Cook claims the entire east coast of New Holland for Britain, naming it New South Wales. His secret orders specified that he was to take possession of the 'Great Southern Land' on two counts: that it was uninhabited, and if it was inhabited, to open up dialogue with the native people and gain their consent.
 - » Did either of these conditions apply to the east coast of New Holland in 1770?
 - » Do you regard Captain Cook's action as legal?
 - » What are some of the modern implications of Cook's action?
- Where is Batavia? Research what it was like in 1770. Create a poster advertising the advantages of landing in Batavia.
- What impact did landing in Batavia have on Cook's voyage?
- Write a journal entry expressing Cook's feelings as he sails into sight of the white cliffs of Dover. Reflect on what he would regard as the successes and failures of his two years and eleven months at sea.
- Design a poster for a talk Joseph Banks may give in London where he could exhibit some of the strange things he has brought back from the voyage on the *Endeavour*.
- What are Cook's plans for his next great voyage of discovery on the *Resolution*?
- Vanessa Collingridge says, 'James Cook's maps of the lands he's claimed are so accurate they've helped Britain become the world's largest and most powerful empire'. How could maps contribute to the development of an empire in the 18th century?
- After viewing the section on John Harrison's clocks, sketch the clock Cook took on board the *Resolution* and explain

why it was so important. How successful was it?

- How useful was Tupaia's map in helping Cook explore the South Pacific? What does this tell us about the knowledge of the Polynesians?
- Read Samuel Taylor Coleridge's epic poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1797-99). What does the poem add to your understanding of sea-based exploration? What part or parts of the poem resonate for you?
- Cook took the *Resolution* farther south than anyone had previously been. After viewing the images of the Antarctic, write a diary entry for one of the sailors to convey his thoughts when they finally reach 71 degrees south and hit a wall of ice.
- How does Cook eventually prove that the 'Great Southern Continent' is a myth?
- How is Cook nursed back to health when he falls ill? How does this help you understand the dangers of sailing so far from land in the 18th century?
- Throughout his voyages in the South Pacific, Captain Cook returns to New Zealand as a place to rest and restock. Research Cook's visits to New Zealand and his achievements while there. Use this information to help create a proposal for a 'Story of Captain Cook' museum at Queen Charlotte Sound in New Zealand, and an Australian newspaper editorial stating that it should be placed at Kurnell. Debate the issue and decide where you would place it.



EPISODE 4: NORTHWEST PASSAGE

Cook's obsession with discovery continues as he searches for the mythical Northwest Passage that was thought to exist above Canada. Britain wants to find a fast route to China to secure its place in the lucrative tea trade. But pushing against a wall of Arctic ice in atrocious conditions is too much for the ships of the day—and for Cook, who is losing the respect of his crew—so they return to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), where Cook meets his death.

- Write a journal entry for Cook describing his feelings about being placed in charge of retired sailors at Greenwich Hospital.
- Explain the importance of tea to the British Empire.
- Discuss why searching for the 'Northwest Passage' was so critical for Britain.
- Script a discussion between James and Elizabeth Cook as James explains why he wants to lead an expedition to find the 'Northwest Passage'.
- Draw up two lists that show the arguments for and against Cook taking command of the 'Northwest Passage' expedition. Why do you think Cook finally decided to go?
- What evidence is there to support the suggestion by Vanessa Collingridge of Cook 'as a media celebrity'?
- What difficulties are there for historians relying upon the books from the time that were written about Cook's expeditions?
- What evidence is there that Cook's third expedition (1776-79) was ill prepared?

- Historian Andrew Lambert talks about the lineage Cook establishes in the Royal Navy that continued into the 20th century. What do you think he means? What are some clear examples of that lineage at work?
- When Cook revisits New Zealand on his third voyage he appears to go against the wishes of his crew and local Maori in not killing Chief Kahura. Outline the arguments for and against Cook's lack of action. What would you have done?
- What evidence is there that Cook was losing control of himself on his third voyage?
- As a class, discuss the proposition that the career of the Tahitian Mai (also known as Omai) is symbolic of Cook's impact on the South Pacific.
- Write a journal entry for Cook when he was at his lowest ebb, reaching the walls of Arctic ice that would prevent him from continuing to search for the 'Northwest Passage'. Try to convey his feelings about having to head south to the Sandwich Islands.
- Discuss how different history might have been if the *Resolution* hadn't broken a mast and had to return to Kealakekua Bay.
- Explain why the Hawaiians were so upset to see Cook return to Kealakekua Bay so quickly.
- Create a timeline for Cook on 14 February 1779. What are the key events? Could Cook have done anything to prevent his death?
- Write a poem or memorial verse that could be read at the service when Cook's remains are buried at sea.
- Vanessa Collingridge states: 'With no one to carry his personal story forwards, history could make what it wanted of James Cook.' Using the program and your own research, what do you think history has made of Captain Cook? Do you think it is an accurate view? How different could it have been if Elizabeth Cook had donated all James' letters to a public archive?
- What do you think of Vanessa Collingridge's final summary of Cook as a 'flawed and lonely genius'? What are alternative viewpoints? What evidence is there to support this or alternative viewpoints?
- Explain how viewing *Captain Cook — Obsession and Discovery* has helped you understand the way history is constructed.



CONCLUSION

Your class has been commissioned to create a souvenir newspaper for sale at a Captain Cook tribute museum. Work in groups to create the 'Cook Times', a newspaper that examines the life, career and impact of Captain Cook. It should be illustrated. Some suggestions for inclusion could be:

- » An editorial — Cook: hero or villain?
- » A front page feature article — Cook's Greatest Discovery
- » News stories on various aspects of his career
- » Letters to the editor commenting upon his career
- » An interview with a prominent historian evaluating Cook's contribution to history
- » Interviews with representatives of various indigenous groups commenting upon the short and long term significance of Cook's arrival

- » A cartoon that comments upon an aspect of Cook's career
- » An article of opinion arguing that Cook was the greatest symbol of the British empire
- » A map showing his voyages
- » An article tracing Cook's early years

If you had an unlimited budget, what artefacts would you purchase to include in your Captain Cook tribute museum? Write a brief explanation of the significance of each item you would include, so that visitors have a clear idea of not only what they are seeing, but why it is important. Sketch the main room in your museum as a guide for the architects commissioned to create it.

Create a brochure advertising the museum. It should be designed to attract visitors of all ages. Some of the things to consider when designing it include:

- » Where the museum is located (and why it is there)
- » The museum's purpose
- » The highlights of the museum
- » Illustrations that capture the key elements of the museum
- » Any unique attractions that will make the museum stand out.



REFERENCES AND FURTHER RESOURCES

BOOKS

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- George Collingridge, *The Discovery of Australia: A Critical, Documentary and Historic Investigation Concerning the Priority of Discovery in Australasia by Europeans before the Arrival of Lieut. James Cook, in the 'Endeavour', in the Year 1770*, Hayes Bros, Sydney 1895
- Vanessa Collingridge, *Captain Cook: Obsession and Betrayal in the New World*, Ebury Press, London, 2002
- James Cook and Philip Edwards (introduction), *The Journals of Captain Cook*, Penguin Classics, 1999
- Captain James Cook and A. Grenfell Price (ed), *The Explorations of Captain James Cook in the Pacific, as told by selections of his own journals, 1768-1779*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1969
- John Dunmore, *Mrs Cook's Book of Recipes: For Mariners in Distant Seas*, Australian National Maritime Museum, 2006
- Tony Horwitz, *Blue Latitudes: Boldly Going Where Cook Has Gone Before*, Henry Holt and Company, USA, 2002
Related website includes timelines and maps - www.bluelatitudes.com
- Richard Hough, *Captain James Cook: A Biography*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1995
- Nick Lomb, *Transit of Venus: The Scientific Event that Led Captain Cook to Australia*, Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney, 2004
- Ray Parkin, *HM Bark Endeavour: Her Place in Australian History*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1997
- Michael Pearson, *Great Southern Land: The Maritime Exploration of Terra Australis*, Department of the Environment and Heritage, Canberra, 2005

WEBSITES

Australian National Maritime Museum

www.anmm.gov.au

Australian Screen — Captain Cook's Cottage

<http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/captain-cooks-cottage>

BBC British History — Empire and Sea Power

www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire-seapower/life-at-sea-01.shtml

Historian Andrew Lambert retraces Cook's voyage in the replica *Endeavour*.

The British Empire

www.britishempire.co.uk

A comprehensive coverage that provides a strong contextual base for study.

Captain Cook Memorial Museum, Whitby, UK

www.cookmuseumwhitby.co.uk

Captain Cook — Obsession and Discovery series website

abc.net.au/captaincook

Captain Cook's Schoolroom Museum, Great Ayton, UK

www.captaincooks.schoolroommuseum.co.uk

Captain Cook Society

www.captaincooksociety.com

Vanessa Collingridge

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanessa_Collingridge

Cook's Cottage, Melbourne, Australia

<http://www.thatsmelbourne.com.au/PlacesToGo/CooksCottage/Pages/CooksCottage.aspx>

Endeavour: Captain Cook's Journal 1768-71

www.nla.gov.au/pub/endeavour/index.html

The Fortress of Louisbourg, Canada

www.louisbourg.ca

The Mariners' Museum

<http://www.marinersmuseum.org/education-programs/>

The National Archives Learning (UK)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/british-empire/>

A further education-based site to support a study of the British Empire. The exhibition includes documents such as extracts from Cook's letters.

National Library of Australia — Gateways. Who Got to Australia First?

www.nla.gov.au/pub/gateways/issues/83/story01.html

Penobscot Bay History Online

<http://penobscotmarinemuseum.org/pbho-1/history-of-navigation/history-navigation-introduction>

Contains information on navigation in the 18th century and shows some of the instruments Cook would have used.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner - 1817 text version [http://web.archive.org/web/20110111103844/http://](http://web.archive.org/web/20110111103844/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=Col2Mar.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=all)

etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=Col2Mar.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=all

South Seas: Voyaging and Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Pacific (1760-1800)

<http://southseas.nla.gov.au>

State Library of NSW - the Papers of Sir Joseph Banks

www.sl.nsw.gov.au/banks



Captain Cook ~ Obsession and Discovery

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