Historical interpretations and contested debates

Extract:

“The genocide debate had begun with the Human Rights Commission’s Bringing Them Home report in 1997 into the removal of Indigenous children, past and present. When the report pointed out that the taking of children with the intent of destroying a group was, according to the UN Convention on Genocide, a form of genocide, many Australians were horrified and resistant. The debate soon widened to include consideration of whether the huge loss of Indigenous life in the wake of settlement could also be considered a case of genocide.”


Note:

The extract above has been provided to offer an example of one historical interpretation/ contested debate in Australian History. There are many others – and the worksheet that follow could be used for different content as required.

TASK:

• Read the chapter ‘The Genocide Debate’ from which the extract (above) is taken (pp. 9-14).

• Identify TWO different interpretations (sides) of this issue as detailed in this source (e.g. you could choose arguments made by Ann Curthoys and compare to those of Keith Windschuttle etc.). You will need to fill out TWO Worksheets on p.2 (one for each interpretation).

Note: you may need some additional research to be able to consider the two interpretations more fully. If you do need additional material pertaining to this topic, visit:

Debate rages over "peaceful" white settlement – available at: http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/stories/s277827.htm


Historical Interpretation Worksheet

1. Identify the author's assertion.
What thesis is the author trying to prove?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

2. Evaluate the evidence presented by the author.
Is the evidence pertinent? How?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Are the sources reliable? Why?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

3. Analyse the reasoning used in the argument for fallacies.
Cause/effect – Is a clear connection shown? Are possible causes missing?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Comparison – What similarities/differences are cited? Are they valid?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Generalisations – Are there oversimplifications? Is there stereotyping?

_____________________________________________

Debate – Are opposing views accurately stated? Have all alternatives been refuted?

_____________________________________________

4. Identify unsta ted assumptions included in the argument.
What has been left out?

_____________________________________________

Are the assumptions valid?

_____________________________________________

5. Identify the author’s values/beliefs.
Do values/beliefs interfere with objectivity?

_____________________________________________
Conclusion:

The strengths of this interpretation are:

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

The weaknesses of this interpretation are:

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Other historical interpretations/contested debates in Australian History to explore

**The debate over ‘Anzac’**

The past is not sacred: the ‘history wars’ over Anzac  

Intelligence Squared Debate: Anzac Day is More Puff Than Substance  

It's war: Anzac Day dissenters create bitter split between historians  

**‘Invaded not settled’**

Calls for curriculum to say Australia was invaded not settled  

It's not 'politically correct' to say Australia was invaded, it's history  

'This is our reality': UNSW student weighs in on history debate  