

Deciding what is historically significant in a source (learning activity)

- **Importance** - to the people in the past
- **Profundity** - how deeply have people's lives been affected?
- **Quantity** - how many lives have been affected?
- **Durability** - for how long have people's lives been affected?
- **Relevance** - in terms of the increased understanding of present life

Read the following source and decide what is historically significant...

Note: this area can use any selection of source material relevant to the study

(i) Which **parts** are, for you, of **historical significance**?

(ii) State **what** that significance is for **you**

(iii) Select **one part/aspect** of the source, which is, for you, **most historically significant**, and give **reasons** for your choice.

Assessing historical significance

Students of history need to know the difference between the **results** of an event and its **significance**.

For example, it is relatively easy to identify the results of the Coranderrk Inquiry by researching in books or on the Internet - but what is the **Inquiry's historical significance**?

1. Discuss **why** we need to **understand** the **significance** of an event.

2. **Why** can some events in history said to be **more important** than others?

Assessing the historical significance of the Coranderrk Inquiry

1. **Brainstorm** - have you got any ideas as to why the Coranderrk Inquiry might be an important event in Australian history?

2. In **groups**, find out **information** about the Coranderrk Inquiry from a selection of sources
Different groups can consult different sources so that the class works together as a collaborative group.

3. **Describe** the main features of the Coranderrk Inquiry in no more than 200 words.

4. Use a whiteboard board or class wiki to gather all of the feedback from the groups. Collate all of the relevant points that have been researched.

5. **Why** was the Coranderrk Inquiry **important**?

In order to judge its importance we need to look at not only what happened immediately after the event but sometimes many years later.

6. **How** has the Coranderrk Inquiry **potentially affected** our lives today? (Think about society as a whole as well as your own experience).

7. Use the information from the class brainstorm and your responses to the questions in this activity (and further research):

Write a piece of extended writing answering the Essential Question:

What is the historical significance of the Coranderrk Inquiry held in 1881?

8. **How** does being able to **evaluate historical significance** help us in our **understanding** of history?

Possible extension questions – historical significance

- Which of these individuals do you think made the most important contribution to the Coranderrk Inquiry? Explain your response.

William Barak Ann Bon John Green Edward Curr

- What was the most important **long-term consequence** of the Coranderrk Inquiry?
- Put the following 19th /early 20th century events in what you consider as their **order of historical significance**, giving reasons for your choice.

1835 John Batman attempts to make a 'treaty' with Aboriginal people for Port Phillip Bay, near present day Melbourne by 'buying' 243,000 hectares.

1851 The Port Phillip District officially becomes the colony of Victoria on 1 July.

1869 Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines is established. The Governor can order the removal of any child to a reformatory or industrial school.

1886 The Victorian Aborigines Protection Act excludes 'half-castes' from their definition of an Aboriginal person. As a result nearly half the residents of the missions and reserves have to leave their homes.

1901 Federation - The Commonwealth Constitution states "in reckoning the numbers of people... Aboriginal natives shall not be counted". It also states that the Commonwealth would legislate for any race except Aboriginal people. This leaves the power over Aboriginal Affairs with the states. Aboriginal people are excluded from the vote, pensions, employment in post offices, enlistment in armed forces and maternity allowance.

- Why were the consequences of the 1886 **Victorian Aborigines Protection Act** (also known as the 'Half-caste Act') so profound for Aboriginal people in Victoria?
- How could the events of 1881 surrounding the Coranderrk Inquiry be described as important for 19th century Aboriginal/European relations?
- What might have happened if Coranderrk had not been dissolved?



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