

Cultural Artefacts

Year 7 History



What is it?

These items highlight the rich cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. Each artefact showcases the deep connection to Country, and the sophisticated social and technological practices held by First Nations peoples across Australia.



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Possum skin cloaks

Before colonisation, every member of each language group in Victoria wore animal skin cloaks. In south-eastern Australia, it was a highly prized possession used for warmth, as baby carriers and for burial.

Only five historical cloaks remain. Two are in the Museum Victoria collection, one was collected from Gunditjmara Country (Lake Condah) in 1872 and the other from Yorta Yorta Country (Echuca) in 1853. The other three are in international museums.

Today, possum skin cloaks continue to be an important cultural artefact with many Aboriginal peoples exploring new uses and contemporary ways of making.



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Scarred trees

Scarred trees are trees that have had their bark removed by First Nations peoples, often to create canoes, shields or other cultural items such as coolamons (carriers). The scars left on the tree are evidence of land use, methods and cultural practices of Aboriginal peoples and their relationship to Country.

To learn more about scarred trees, watch this [video](#).



Coolamon

A coolamon is a multi-purpose shallow bowl made from wood. It can carry water, fruits, and nuts and can also be used as a baby carrier.

Sometimes, a tree scar can be evidence of where a coolamon has been harvested.



Grinding stones

Grinding stones are slabs of stone that have been used by First Nations peoples to grind and crush different materials. They are particularly useful for processing different types of foods before cooking

Small grinding stones are used to crush soft rocks and clays to create ochre and other pigments for art and ceremonies.



Rock art

Rock art is the oldest surviving human art form. Across Australia, rock art is a significant part of First Nations life and customs as it tells the stories of ancestors.

First Nations peoples' knowledge of rock art is continuous as the stories from these artworks have been passed down through thousands of generations.

