

## Activity worksheet 1

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The First Peoples of Australia made some extraordinary achievements in surviving harsh environments. They were masters of resource gathering and land management. They had no machinery like we use today. Everything they used in daily life was created by hand, and developed and refined for specific purposes over time. They made scientific discoveries in astronomy and practised marriage customs that took the science of genetics and heredity into account. They used medical treatments derived from natural sources that healed people from illness and injuries. These clever people also built some of the world's first boats and traded throughout the Pacific islands.

### Definitions

Historians call objects made by humans or evidence left behind by humans, **artefacts**. We can use artefacts to study people and civilisations from the past. They can reveal a lot of useful information about the past. When an artefact was made by the people we are studying in the time period, we call it a **primary source**.

When studying history, we call any objects made by people 'artefacts'.

Areas such as caves or rock platforms that contain engravings, paintings, smoke stains, shell mounds, rock-cut grooves or other markings are also called 'artefacts'. Lots of Indigenous Australian artefacts have been left behind by the ancestors of today's Australian Indigenous peoples. Some have been unearthed by archaeologists, while others are with us today because they were handed down through the generations.

The following activities involve learning about some Australian Indigenous artefacts. The purpose of these activities is to help you become familiar with the historical terms 'artefact' and 'primary source'. You will also gain experience in making observations about primary sources and will learn to write down your ideas about them.

### Study questions

Read pages 30-33 of *The Little Red Yellow Black Book*, then answer the following study questions about artefacts:

1. Which artefacts have been found that most clearly reveal that the Macassans traded with people living in Arnhem Land?

*(Read pages 30-31)*

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2. Make a list of the known trading items that are mentioned on pages 31-32.

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3. Why do you think there are so few of these surviving as artefacts today?

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4. Which of the items traded between the Macassans and the Yolngu people were most likely to have survived over the centuries?

*Hint: think about the materials from which certain artefacts were made. (Read page 31)*

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5. What artefacts help historians build a picture of how the Torres Strait Islander peoples on the islands of Mer, Erub and Ugar gathered fish to eat? Explain how these worked. *(Read page 33)*

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## Activity worksheet 2

6. Complete the table by writing about each listed artefact. Explain what facts we can find out about the people who left the artefacts behind, their lifestyle, beliefs and customs and how and why they may have used the artefacts. The first one has been done for you as an example. Use your own background knowledge to help you draw some logical conclusions.

Artefacts	Historical information gained from artefacts
<p>a) <b>Rock engravings of animals and sea creatures</b> — images made by etching smooth rock surfaces with grooves and filling them with white paint to define the edges.</p>	<p>a) <i>The discovery of rock engravings tells us that Australia's First Peoples greatly valued art as a means of expression. They may have used engravings as a way of recording aspects of their history. The subjects of the engravings tell us that these animals and sea creatures were observed by them, and reveals that the people may have viewed them as sacred or important in other ways. The methods by which engravings were made into rock also shows that the people had access to sharp and hard tools, and that they must have transmitted knowledge of their rock engraving techniques to the next generation.</i></p>
<p>b) <b>Axe-grinding grooves</b> — indentations made in rocks from repeated use to sharpen stones into pointed axe heads.</p>	<p>b) _____            _____            _____</p>
<p>c) <b>Mounds of discarded shells</b> — deposits of food waste from shellfish that lay in a pile or in a shallow pit; also known as a 'kitchen midden' or a 'shell heap'.</p>	<p>c) _____            _____            _____</p>
<p>d) <b>Black marks on cave ceilings</b> — charcoal deposits on cave ceilings are caused by smoke from fires.</p>	<p>d) _____            _____            _____</p>
<p>e) <b>Red ochre</b> used in Mungo Man's burial (p 6) — red ochre is a mineral powder used in ceremonial painting.</p>	<p>e) _____            _____            _____</p>

7. List some measures that could be taken to ensure continued survival of the artefacts historians have found in Australia.

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