

Anti Chinese League Meeting at Sovereign Hill Debriefing Notes and Questions for Teachers

Background

This theatre piece recreates a meeting from the late 1850s. The meeting is called to attempt to establish an Anti-Chinese League in Ballarat. While it is not known if this meeting took place or what unfolded if it did, there were advertisements for it in the local paper which tells us that the sentiment was there.

Similar meetings occurred in other places ([See newspaper articles in Trove](#)), . Anti Chinese riots occurred in the [Buckland River](#) (near Bright in Victoria) in 1857 and at [Lambing Flat](#) (near Young in NSW) in 1860 – 61. The flag you see on the stage is similar to [one used at Lambing Flat](#). The language used in Sovereign Hill's meeting has been based on documentation from the time.

Some of the issues and language used in this interpretation may be offensive and difficult for some students. We hope that this meeting challenges students and provokes questions and emotions leading to fruitful class discussions and perhaps further research. The [New Gold Mountain kit](#) provides a range of primary and secondary sources.

Discussion points

Questions

- Were there any parts of the meeting that you did not understand?
 - E.g. cutting the pigtail (queue), inter-racial marriage being frowned upon, heathens.
- How might we go about finding answers to your questions?
- What do you know about the context? I.e. why was Australia a British-run colony? what was the 'war with china'?

Language

- What words / phrases / and techniques were used to persuade the audience?
 - E.g. inclusion "It is good to be amongst like-minded, white Christian folk"
 - Fear mongering diseases and "heathens"
 - Serious accusations such as "juvenile prostitution".
- What was the role of the government 'Protector'?
- What words did you find most offensive?
- Which words or phrases do you think would be unacceptable today? What words would be comparable in today's language?
- What does this say about how Australian Society has changed?

Racism/Issues

- Which characters did you think were most racist? Why?
- Which characters did you find most reasonable? Why?
- What other instances of a protectorate system have occurred in Australian History?

- When was the White Australia Policy adopted? What happened to the Chinese already living in Australia?

Modern History

- Could such a meeting occur in Australia today?
- Can you think of any modern issues that might be similar to the anti Chinese issue?