

# LUSTRE

PEARLING & AUSTRALIA



EDUCATION RESOURCE



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Cover Images  
Lacepedes *riji*  
Courtesy Aubrey Tigan, Mayala elder  
Detailed view of pearls.  
Courtesy Cygnet Bay Pearls.

The crew of a pearl lugger, Broome, c.1900–20,  
Courtesy National Archives of Australia

Fine, luxurious, iridescent... from ancient bush traditions and the courts of emperors, to exquisite modern jewels and socialite adornments, pearls have been a sign of status. They are among the oldest of gems known to humans, and the only ones to be created within the soft tissue of a living creature.

In northern Australia, pearling has been a major economic force for over one hundred years, but the industry began long before European settlement. *Lustre: Pearling and Australia* delves into the gritty human story of pearling, weaving together intersecting strands of Aboriginal, Asian and European histories to reveal insights into one of Australia's oldest industries.

This education resource supports the *Lustre* exhibition, and includes suggestions for during and post-excursion activities, templates for student use, plus a selection of source analysis questions which may be completed as a standalone activity.

The resource is designed to support the Australian Curriculum, particularly for History in years 5 and 6. However, the exhibition themes and content, as well as some of the activity suggestions contained in this resource, lend themselves to other learning areas and year levels. A detailed list of curriculum links is provided at the end of this document.

For background information about pearling in Australia, see the WA Museum *Lustre* Exhibition Panels on [museum.wa.gov.au/lustre](http://museum.wa.gov.au/lustre)



Please note that we encourage students to sketch and take notes as they explore the exhibition, however, for cultural reasons, photography and video recording is strictly not permitted.



Pearls scattered over an oyster shell.  
Courtesy Cygnet Bay Pearls

# MUSEUM VISIT

## Spotto

Choose an item on display. Come up with two adjectives to describe it and explain its use, and get a partner to guess what the item is.

## Set The Scene

Choose a photograph on display in the exhibition.

Recreate the scene, carefully mimicking the pose and facial expressions of people in the photo and discuss their possible thoughts/feelings at the time when the photograph was taken.

## Someone Had To Think Of It

Study an early diving suit, and compare to a modern diving suit. Identify the features which have changed.

Can you list at least three things which needed to be invented or understood in order for the suit to change into what it is today?

## What If You Couldn't See It?

Imagine you were visiting the exhibition with someone who is visually impaired.

Ask your partner to close their eyes, then choose an item on display and describe it to them in as much detail as you can. You might want to talk about your chosen object's size, shape and use, what it is made from, its exact colour and any special designs or signs of damage.

Get your partner to open their eyes and point to the item they believe you were describing- does the image in their mind match the real thing?

## Translate It

Make a list of Aboriginal words included in the displays, and use the inferences made in the text displays to create definitions for the words. Later, you can illustrate the words, too!

## Museum Guide

Choose a small group of items on display which relate to the same theme. For example they could all be things from a pearling lugger, different examples of pearl jewellery, or items belonging to a master pearler.

Carefully read all the labels and information panels about your items. Then, imagine you are a museum guide, and using your own words present the information about your chosen display to the rest of your group. As a special challenge, can you do it without saying 'um' once?

## Pearling Passport

Australia's pearling industry began long before European settlement, and later attracted people from all over the world with promise of work, adventure and the possibility of fortune.

Your task is to find objects or photographs on display that somehow relate to people from different countries or cultural groups.

For each one you find, make a note of the country the person came from, their job, and whether you think they were happy to be part of the pearling industry.

Nationality (or Aboriginal Cultural Group)	Job / Role	Do you think the person was glad to be involved in pearling? (Explain)

## Four C's

Every object tells a story!

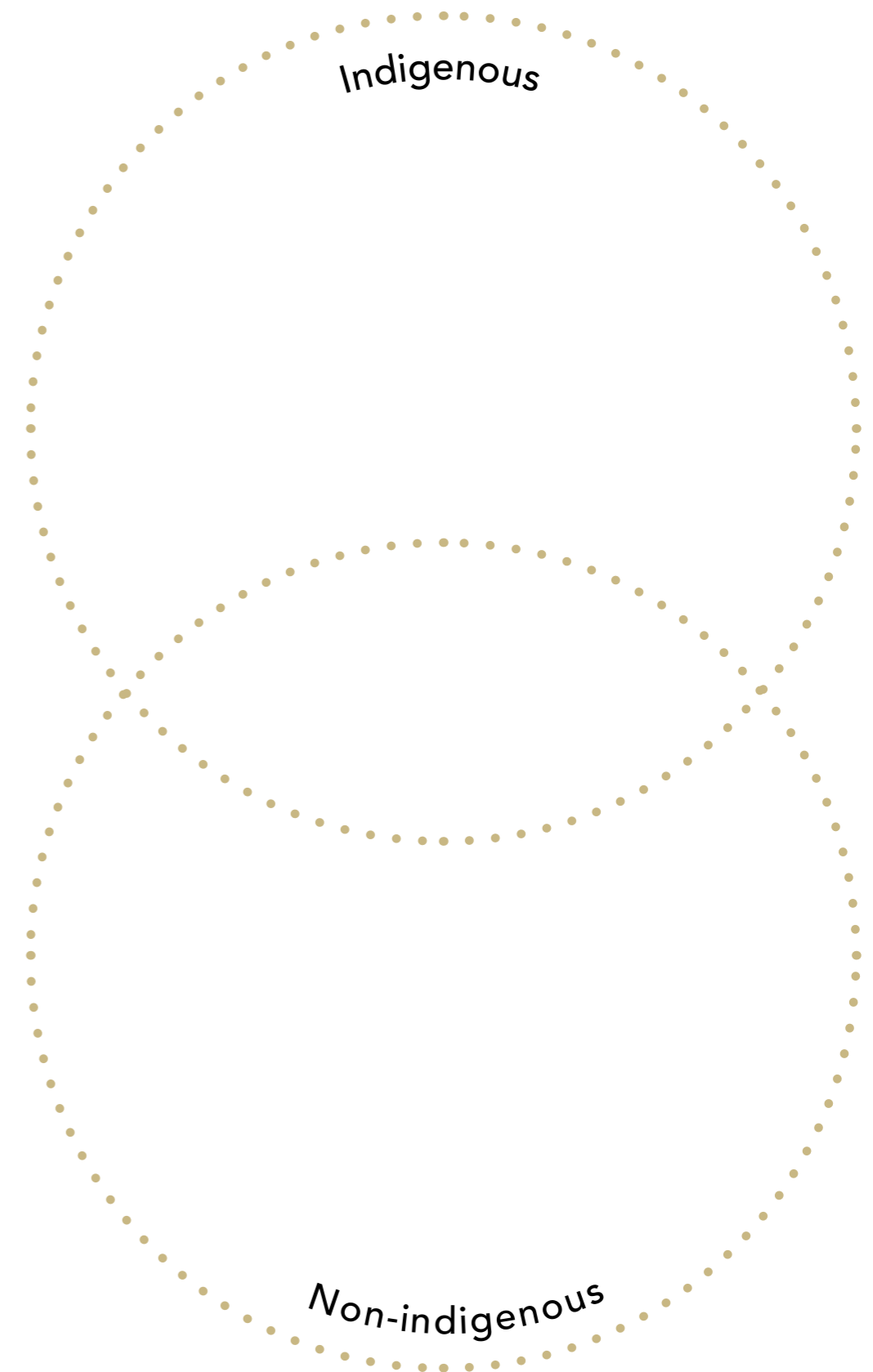
Find an item on display which relates to a story of **C**ourage, shows **C**reativity, or somehow links to **C**onflict or **C**ooperation between people.

Four C's	Object	Explain the reason for your choice
Courage		
Creativity		
Conflict		
Cooperation		

## Compare and Contrast

Pearlshell is prized by people all over the world, although it is sometimes used differently.

Refer to information within the exhibition to complete the Venn diagram, comparing the way pearlshell was used and decorated by Australia's indigenous and non-indigenous people.



## Standing On The Dock

Find the part of the exhibition relating to life in a pearling township, for example Broome. Imagine you are standing on a dock in the town. What are some things you might see, smell and hear?

<b>Smell</b>	
<b>See</b>	<b>Hear</b>

## Tools Of The Trade

Different jobs require different tools, and thinking about how these tools are used can sometimes help us imagine what it is like to do a particular job.

Select five different tools or pieces of equipment used by people working in the pearling industry, and complete the table.

Tool/Equipment	What is it used for?

If you were asked to set up a pearling business, what other materials and resources do you think you would need?

Is there a particular job related to pearling that you would like to try? Why?

## Who, What, When, Where, How, Why

The *Lustre* exhibition tells us a lot about pearls and pearling.

Imagine someone looking at the displays who has many questions about the industry, its history and importance.

What questions would that person be able to find answers to as they explore the exhibition?

Write the questions – and the answers – in the table below.

Q. Who...	Q. What...
A.	A.
Q. Where...	Q. When...
A.	A.
Q. How...	Q. Why...
A.	A.
What questions about pearls or pearling does the exhibition NOT answer?	

## POST VISIT ACTIVITIES

### Superpearl!

Create a comic strip depicting an aspect of pearling life.

### Seek.dot.com

Do you need a pearl diver? A master pearler? A pearl artist? Create a job ad, specifying the nature of the mission, the desired qualifications, experience and personal characteristics of the candidate.

### Review It

You've been asked to evaluate the exhibition for either a history, art, or education magazine. Choose one of the magazine genres and write a review of the exhibition, either as a feature article or a blog.

How does the focus of your writing differ from those who wrote for another audience?

### What Would You Make?

After examining the different objects and art pieces which have been made out of pearlshell, come up with your own design. Explain what and who you are designing your art piece/item for, identify its special features and give reasons for including these features.

### Send A Letter

Travel back in time 100-150 years ago, and stand in the shoes of a pearl diver. Write a letter home to your family explaining what your job is, describing the people around you and how you live.

### As Time Goes By

Using information gathered in the exhibition and from further research back in class, create a time line showing key events in WA's pearling history.

### To Snap Or Not To Snap?

Photography is not permitted in the *Lustre* exhibition. This is because many artefacts on display have strong cultural meaning, and the owners of these objects want to ensure that they are only ever seen within the context and the stories presented in this exhibition.

Hold a debate or write a persuasive essay on this topic.

## Story Time

Find an historical source relating to pearling in Australia and use it as inspiration to write a short story. Sources could be a quote, photograph or newspaper article. Feel free to use the ones used in this resource.

## Fact It Up

Prepare a fact sheet about the pearling industry today, focusing on sustainable practices and/or issues.

## Future Design

Observe how far we have come with technology in moving the pearling industry forward.

Create a design for something that may help the pearling industry in the future, for example a future diving outfit with technical applications like goggles with a GPS scanner over the top to locate pearl beds, or a small submersible robot that can collect pearls from the shells.

## Start With A Shell

Find a photograph of a pearlshell, and use it as one element of an artwork which somehow expresses the Aboriginal, Asian or European experience of pearling.

## IMAGINE IT

Below is part of a newspaper article, written almost 100 years ago. It describes what a pearl diver might see under water. The style of writing and language used at the time was quite different, and the article includes words you might not readily come across today.

1. Read the article through, looking for any unfamiliar words. Underline these words and use a dictionary to find their meaning.

*... It is reserved to the diver to see all the treasures and beauties of the wonderful and treacherous sea... Below the waves are fields of waving grass, of vivid emerald green, and gardens of strange sea flowers swaying to -and fro. There are rocky ledges and grottoes, and plains of white and yellow sand, peopled by myriads of living creatures, some exquisitely beautiful in form and colour, and others fiercely repellent and in a state of continuous warfare. Into these mysterious depths the diver alone can penetrate, and to him the strange and wonderful sights of the submarine world are revealed.*

*But even when fitted with the most modern equipment the diver can only descend to comparatively shallow depths, and his time is too precious to spend in the contemplation of the wonders of the vasty deep opening out before him. He slowly trudges along the ocean bed, or works his way through the wreckage of vessels, rotting skeletons of warships or peaceful merchantmen, intent only upon one object, and oblivious to all other surroundings... beautiful as they are.*

1918 'PEARLS AND PEARLING', Western Mail (Perth, WA: 1885 -1954), 23 August, p. 34, viewed 23 June 2015, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article37453929>

2. Using a highlighter, highlight all the things that a pearl diver could see. Create a drawing to illustrate the words in the text.

3. What did the writer want you to think, feel or understand by reading this article?

## Look At The Details

Study the two photographs closely. One shows the outside of a typical residence in Broome's Chinatown, where the Asian labourers and divers lived. This area regularly got flooded. The other shows the inside of a master pearler's home.



Courtesy Doug Fong



Courtesy State Library of Western Australia 4323B/18

For each photograph, list two things you can see in the foreground, middle ground and the background.

For each photograph, list two things you can see in the foreground, middle ground and the background.	Photo A	Photo B
Foreground		
Middle ground		
Background		

What do the photographs suggest about the lives of the white master pearlmen and the Asian workers?



## Ancient Links

Aboriginal people in the Kimberley have collected and used pearlshell for over 20,000 years, and some continue to do so now. Below are five quotes from Aboriginal people, sharing their thoughts about the importance of pearlshell today and in the past.

*When I carve pearlshell with the old designs I feel good and strong, connected to my father, my grandfather, my country. They come to me in dreams and tell me what to do, and what to carve. That's my inspiration.*

Aubrey Tigan Galiwa, Mayala elder, 2011

*When I carve shell it comes from our country.*

*I tell personal and spiritual stories.*

*It's about keeping our culture alive, and, when I dance, I am proud of who I am.*

Russell 'Wossy' Davey Jooda, Bardi dancer and pearlshell carver, 2015

*We are true Salt Water people. We live off the sea. When I make riji (engraved pearlshell) I think of everything out in the ocean — the loo (currents), the spout, the waves, the land and under the water. All got their own spirit.*

Aubrey Tigan Galiwa, Mayala elder, 2011

*People might come from the east to our country. Old people will give them something ... give them gifts with little carvings to take back to their home where they never see anything like that.*

Lulga Francis Djiagween, Yawuru elder, 2015

*When the boys dance, the binji binji (pearlshell head pieces) tinkle like keys and the sound makes the women cry because they are so proud of their sons. They can get married now.*

Roy Wiggan Bagayi, Bardi elder, 2010

Which of the people said that...

...when young men wore pearlshell decorations it was a sign of maturity? \_\_\_\_\_

...working with pearlshell makes them think about the world around them? \_\_\_\_\_

...carving pearlshell is an important part of their cultural identity? \_\_\_\_\_

...they get ideas for pearlshell designs from their ancestors? \_\_\_\_\_

...pearlshell items were used for gifts or trade? \_\_\_\_\_

Write one sentence to explain why pearlshell is special to Aboriginal people from northern Australia.

## Perspectives

Look closely at the different people shown in these photographs and discuss the questions below.



Pearlshell being landed on the beach at Broome. Courtesy of State Library of Western Australia 000873D



Aboriginal men in chains in Roebourne. Courtesy of State Library of Western Australia BA1713/2

1. Find definitions and consider the similarities and differences between the following: Slave, servant, indentured worker, apprentice, blackbirder, master, leader

Do you think any of the terms might be applied to the people in the pictures?

2. What are the people in the photograph doing? What do you think happened just before and just after each photograph was taken?

3. Choose three different people from the photographs. What do you think each one of them might have been thinking or feeling when the photograph was taken?

# CURRICULUM LINKS



## HASS (History)

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reasons people migrated to Australia from Europe and Asia, and the experiences and contributions of a particular migrant group within a colony.</li> <li>The role that a significant individual or group played in shaping a colony</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants, women and children</li> <li>Stories of groups of people who migrated to Australia since Federation (including from ONE country of the Asia region) and reasons they migrated</li> <li>The contribution of individuals and groups to the development of Australian society since Federation</li> </ul>
9	<p><b>Making a better world (Movement of Peoples 1750- 1901)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in the way of life of a group(s) of people who moved to Australia in this period, such as free settlers on the frontier in Australia</li> </ul> <p><b>Making a nation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</li> <li>The experiences of non-Europeans in Australia prior to the 1900s (such as the Japanese, Chinese, South Sea Islanders, Afghans)</li> </ul>

## The Arts (Visual Arts)

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain how visual arts conventions communicate meaning by comparing artworks from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants, women and children</li> <li>Stories of groups of people who migrated to Australia since Federation (including from ONE country of the Asia region) and reasons they migrated</li> </ul>
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## Science (Science as a Human Endeavour)

5-6	<p><b>Use and influence of science</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scientific knowledge is used to solve problems and inform personal and community decisions</li> </ul>
7-8	<p><b>Use and influence of science</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People use science understanding and skills in their occupations and these have influenced the development of practices in areas of human activity</li> </ul>

## Technologies (Design and Technologies)

5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate characteristics and properties of a range of materials, systems, components, tools and equipment and evaluate</li> </ul>
7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the ways in which products, services and environments evolve locally, regionally and globally and how competing factors including social, ethical and sustainability considerations are prioritised in the development of technologies and designed solutions for preferred futures</li> </ul>
9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain how products, services and environments evolve with consideration of preferred futures and the impact of emerging technologies on design decisions</li> </ul>