While this collection is specific to one property, it gives you the chance to use objects to explore the nature of nineteenth century pastoral settlement in eastern Australia, and to create hypotheses that can be tested by further investigation.

Look at the collection of objects from the display on the following pages. Then follow the stages of investigation set out in the remainder of this unit to use the images to create your own story of pastoral settlement in Australia in the 19th century.

Using these objects as evidence
The objects on display are all carefully described; but in this unit we are going to ignore those descriptions and instead ask you to be a history detective. You will have to look at a number of the objects on display, ‘interrogate’ them to work out what they are and what their meanings are, and then put all this together to tell the story that is represented in the display. When you have done this you will be able to compare your story with the official one told by Museum curators.

In doing this you will not only be exercising your skills of analysis and interpretation, but you will also be starting to create your own idea of what it means when we read in history texts about ‘pastoral expansion’ in Australia.

Settlers and Settling In
In the early 19th century, free settlers began arriving in Australia in search of wealth and opportunity. The colony expanded as retired military officers, immigrants and emancipists turned to pastoralism. As properties became more established, colonial Australia was shaped by the settlers’ cultural, religious and political ideas.

Settlers and Settling In draws from the extensive Faithfull family collection. From William Faithfull’s arrival in 1792, it follows the lives of his descendants and relatives. Featuring objects that reflect their experiences as soldiers, surveyors, teachers and pastoralists, the collection offers a rich picture of the lives of free settlers in colonial Australia.

The investigative activities in this unit are:

Activity 1 Imagining a sheep station
Activity 2 What themes in Australian history does your property tell you about?
Activity 3 ‘Interrogating’ museum objects from a nineteenth century pastoral property
Activity 4 Testing your ideas
Activity 5 Identifying gaps in your story
Activity 6 How is a museum display created and curated?
Activity 7 Telling your story of nineteenth century pastoral settlement in Australia

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Settlers and Settling In

© National Museum of Australia and Ryebuck Media Pty Ltd 2006
ACTIVITY 1

Imagining a sheep station

What was a sheep station like in nineteenth century Australia?

A sheep station was a property on which sheep were raised primarily for wool for export to overseas markets.

1 Imagine and create a property, using the map on the next page.

Think about the buildings, equipment, people and activities that would have been associated with such a place.

For example, there will be a home for the owners. What other buildings are needed? What about equipment and tools — what is needed for all the activities that are carried out on the station? There will be sheep — what is needed for them, and for the shearsers who will shear their wool? What other workers are needed? Think male and female, indoor and outdoor, skilled and unskilled, single and married. There would be many jobs: you need someone to make shoes for the working horses; cut wood for the kitchen fires; be a teacher to children on the property; be maids for the women of the house; and so on.

2 Now plan your property using the map on the next page. Decide where you will place the buildings on your property. You may also want to add some other features.

Once you have done this we will investigate what your property is telling us about settlement in nineteenth century Australia.

Tom Roberts
born England 1856; arrived Australia 1869; lived in Europe 1881–85, 1903–19; died 1931

Shearing the rams 1888–90
oil on canvas on composition board
122.4 x 183.3 cm
Felton Bequest, 1932
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Can you create a pastoral property?

Australia

Investigating settlement in nineteenth century Australia
ACTIVITY 2

What themes in Australian history does your property tell you about?

We are going to study your property, using objects on display in the National Museum of Australia that are typical of such sheep stations.

But first, we need to think about what a study of a place can tell us about itself.

Look at your classroom. If somebody was to study it, what would they learn?

One thing they would learn about is education — what this society studies and how classrooms operate. Another is technology — what equipment you use to help you learn. Another is fashion — what clothes you wear. Another is values and attitudes — what your society believes in and builds into what it teaches and the rules it applies. And so on. Explore what other themes you can identify that a person studying your classroom would be learning about.

Now do the same for your pastoral property. What themes does a study of your property help us to explore? One will be economic — how the society created wealth, and who shared in it. Another will be population — who came to that property, and from where. A third will be technology — what equipment was used on the farm. Another will be environment — how the land was used, and what impact this use had on its sustainability. You will also start finding out about work — who did what? And also about gender roles, and class — who had status, and who did particular jobs? And so on. What other themes can you identify? Add these to a diagram like this:

You may need to add more boxes to the diagram for the list of themes you have identified.

Once you have done this you are ready to start looking at evidence to explore these themes. As you look at the evidence that follows make brief notes in the table on the next page and, at the end, use the evidence to create a series of statements or conclusions in the final column.
Exploring a nineteenth century pastoral property

Evidence Summary Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>A study of a nineteenth century pastoral property has helped me understand that:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and leisure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY 3

‘Interrogating’ museum objects from a nineteenth century pastoral property

How good are you as a detective?

You have already seen some objects from a nineteenth century pastoral property on display in the National Museum of Australia's Horizons gallery. This gallery looks at immigration to Australia since 1788.

Your task now is to look at these objects more carefully and answer the following questions about them.

Then you need to decide for yourself what the objects tell you about Australia's pastoral story. You may find that there are gaps in the story; or that some elements get more, or less, emphasis than they should, thereby possibly distorting the story. That’s for you to decide at the end.

Good luck with your ‘interrogation’ of these objects!

Settlers and Settling In  EVIDENCE SET 1

1. Describe each object.
2. What activity are they all associated with?
3. Do they suggest high or low rank?
4. Why would this occupation and activity have existed in nineteenth century Australia?
5. What do they tell you about the themes that you listed in Activity 2? Add information to the notes column in your Evidence Summary Table.

Settlers and Settling In  EVIDENCE SET 2

1. Describe each object.
2. What would the objects be used for?
3. Why would this activity be needed in this place at this time?
4. What do they tell you about the themes that you listed in Activity 2? Add information to the notes column in your Evidence Summary Table.

Settlers and Settling In  EVIDENCE SET 3

1. Describe each object.
2. What do they all have in common?
3. Would the activity be the same for males as for females?
4. Would this have been available to everybody?
5. What do they suggest to you about attitudes and values held at the time?
6. What do they tell you about the themes that you listed in Activity 2? Add information to the notes column in your Evidence Summary Table.

Settlers and Settling In  EVIDENCE SET 4

1. Describe each object.
2. What do they all have in common?
3. Is this clothing associated with occupation? If so, in what ways?
4. Is this clothing associated with wealth? If so, in what ways?
5. Is this clothing associated with status? If so, in what ways?
6. Who would have owned this clothing?
7. What do they tell you about the themes that you listed in Activity 2? Add information to the notes column in your Evidence Summary Table.

Settlers and Settling In  EVIDENCE SET 5

1. Describe each object.
2. For what specific activity would the belt have been worn?
3. How is physical exercise different for men and women?
4. What do these objects tell us about attitudes and values of people at the time?
5. What do they tell you about the themes that you listed in Activity 2? Add information to the notes column in your Evidence Summary Table.

Settlers and Settling In  EVIDENCE SET 6

1. Describe each object.
2. What is the physical environment like?
3. Who are not in the photos who would have been associated with these activities?
4. What does this collection suggest to you about society at Springfield?
5. What attitudes and values can be seen here?
6. What do they tell you about the themes that you listed in Activity 2? Add information to the notes column in your Evidence Summary Table.

Settlers and Settling In  EVIDENCE SET 7

1. Describe each object.
2. Why would sheep have increased in size over time?
3. Why would the appearance of the wool on sheep have changed over time?
4. How would this change have been achieved?
5. What attitudes and values can be seen here?
6. What do they tell you about the themes that you listed in Activity 2? Add information to the notes column in your Evidence Summary Table.
ACTIVITY 4

Testing your ideas

You have been taking notes and creating your own interpretations of the objects associated with nineteenth century pastoral life. Here are the National Museum of Australia object descriptions, to help you make sure the notes you have made are accurate. Read through these and make any additions or adjustments to your notes as necessary.

National Museum of Australia text and captions from the Settlers and Settling In module

Private William Faithfull (1774–1847) arrived in New South Wales in February 1792 with Captain Joseph Foveaux’s company of the New South Wales Corps. Promoted to corporal he was discharged in October 1799 to work as manager on Foveaux’s farm. At his death, William had a 2000-acre property at Richmond and his eldest son, William Pitt, had established Springfield near Goulburn.

William Pitt Faithfull was granted land on the Goulburn Plains of New South Wales in 1827. In 1838 he established Springfield as a merino stud with ten rams selected from Sir William Macarthur’s Camden Park flock. Still in operation today, Springfield has grown and evolved. Over the years, it has included a school, stables, shearing sheds, a flour mill, staff cottages and a family museum. Comprising over 1500 items, this rich collection not only reflects the development of the wool growing industry but also illuminates daily life during the early settlement of rural Australia.

Mary Deane (1813–1889) migrated to New South Wales from Devonshire, England, in 1838. With her sister Ann, she established a private school for young ladies in Macquarie Place, Sydney. Their school was progressive, offering the girls instruction beyond deportment and character building. After marrying pastoralist William Pitt Faithfull, Mary established a library at Springfield and contributed to the education of her own family and the children of employees.

In 1844, Mary Deane married William Pitt Faithfull, founder of the pioneering merino stud Springfield. As the property and homestead grew and developed, so did the Faithfull family. Between 1844 and 1859 Mary gave birth to nine children. The social and cultural experiences of the next generation of Faithfulls would be shaped by the wealth and success of the property.

As pioneering matured to settlement, family life, social patterns, tastes and pleasures were drawn from the traditions and practices of 19th century England. On properties such as Springfield, family picnics, cricket matches, hunting, painting, music, embroidery and time for prayer filled daily life and were important signs of civilised society in colonial Australia.

Uniform tunic about 1870s

Infantry Officer’s sword about 1860

Marksman’s badge 1870

National Museum of Australia

These items were part of William Percy Faithfull’s Volunteer Rifles kit. William served in the New South Wales Volunteer Rifles from 1860 until 1871 — the last three years as an officer. He received a 50-acre land grant as a reward for his service.

Shako 1870s

National Museum of Australia

This shako may have been worn by William Percy Faithfull’s younger brother, Lucian (1855–1942). ‘VR’ on the star-shaped plate stands for Volunteer Rifles. The shako was replaced as military headwear by the more practical grey felt sun helmet in 1873.

Edgar Reginald Deane (about 1835–1912) was born in Devonshire and moved to Springfield after his aunt Mary married William Pitt Faithfull in January 1844. He was appointed a licensed surveyor in 1859 and practised in the Goulburn district. Edgar also served as a member of the Goulburn Land Board from 1855 until the mid-1890s. He was actively involved in horse breeding, especially of horses for trotting.

Marking settlement

New South Wales was rapidly settled through the 19th century, particularly after the 1861 Robertson Land Act opened the country to free selection. Land surveyors played a key role in controlling this expansion — much of George Faithfull’s and Edgar Deane’s surveying work was measuring and marking land taken up by selectors in the Goulburn area.
Draft portion plan 1879
National Library of Australia
This draft plan was prepared by Edgar Deane and details two blocks of land acquired by William Pitt Faithfull. These blocks became part of Springfield. The hatching and shading indicate that this was hilly country.

Surveyors about 1865
by ST Gill
National Library of Australia
This image shows a survey team at work in woody country, using a circumferentor and Gunter's chain. The axeman is blazing a tree to mark a line. Surveyors Edgar Deane and George Faithfull worked in country like this.

Thomas Jones scale 1900s
Negretti and Zambra protractors 1900s
National Museum of Australia
These instruments were used by Edgar Deane to measure land and to compile plans. Plans were prepared for all selected blocks of land. They show the block's dimensions and its physical details.

Circumferentors measure angles and bearings. They were easier to use in rough country than theodolites. This one was made by Angelo Tornaghi of Sydney who learned his trade with instrument makers Negretti and Zambra in London.

School copybooks belonging to Mary Deane's nephew and children 1840s–1860s
National Museum of Australia
The repetitious work done on sewing samplers and in school copybooks helped students in the 19th century to improve and perfect their needlework and penmanship skills.

Sewing sampler stitched by Mary Deane 1800s
National Museum of Australia
An educated family.

In raising her own family, Mary Faithfull's commitment to education continued. Mary's daughters received a thorough education at home, while her sons were sent to The King's School in Sydney, the University of Sydney and abroad to study.

Henry Montague (Monty) Faithfull taken between 1865-1871
photographer unknown
National Museum of Australia
Mortarboard probably belonging to William, George or Monty Faithfull about 1863-1871
National Museum of Australia
The Misses Dean nameplate
about 1833–1844
National Museum of Australia
When the Deane sisters opened their school in Sydney, formal schooling had progressed beyond the elementary education offered in the early decades of the colony. Education was regarded as essential for the reformation of convicts, the civilising of pastoralists and to ensure the intellectual and moral advancement of free settlers. Boys were encouraged to pursue a profession, while girls learned how to run a household.

Blue silk Empire line dress about 1800–1815
National Museum of Australia

The journey
This dress probably belonged to Ann Deane, a widow from Devonshire who brought it with her when she migrated with her children from England to Australia in 1838. Her son and two daughters were born when this style of dress was fashionable and its high waist and looser fit would have offered her some comfort while she was pregnant. Made of valuable silk, and likely to be a family heirloom, this dress went with the Deanes to Springfield when Ann’s youngest daughter Mary married William Pitt Faithfull, founder of the pioneering sheep station.

A treasured dress
Generations of women in the Faithfull and Maple-Brown family cared for this dress. In 2004 it was removed from the wardrobe of the Faithfull family museum, where it had hung since the 1950s, and was brought to the National Museum of Australia. The Museum’s conservation team treated the dress for display, recreated the petticoat and bustle pad, and constructed a mannequin to give it volume and form.

The style
The Empire style (late 1700s – 1820s) saw a classical revival in women’s fashion, inspired by Grecian robes and emphasising elegance and simplicity. A high waist, bib-front and columnar skirt made the Empire dress less restrictive than many other 19th century styles. However, beneath this light, free-flowing garment lay several layers of underwear. A shift and petticoat were worn as well as a stay (soft corset) with a busk (strip of wood, bone or metal running down the centre of the stay) to ensure correct posture. A small roll-shaped bustle pad was inserted behind the waist to lift the fabric.

Details
The bodice of this high stomacher-front dress was fastened by two lining extensions crossing over the breasts and pinned closed. The bib-front was then brought up over the top and fastened to each shoulder strap by pins or a small stitch. Small roll-shaped bustle pads were features of the Empire style and were tacked or tied onto the back of the dress. The bustle was positioned below the shoulder blades and helped lift the fabric, allowing it to fall in vertical folds away from the body.

Essential accessories
The woman who wore this style of dress would have added a number of finishing touches. She was crowned with a cap or bonnet that elongated her figure. Her hair was curled on top and ringleted at the sides. For modesty, she filled the low neckline of her day dress with a chemisette (sleeveless bodice) or fichu (lightweight triangular scarf). Drapery was important and shawls were popular. Shoes were round-toed and low. Gloves, fans and parasols completed the outfit.

The Misses Dean advertisement
1838
National Library of Australia
Among the Misses Deane’s pupils were the two nieces of William Pitt Faithfull. Faithfull would often visit the school to collect his nieces and it was there he met Mary who would later become his wife.

Top hat belonging to William Pitt Faithfull 1850–1880s
National Museum of Australia

Boots probably owned by one of the Faithfull daughters about 1880–1890s.
National Museum of Australia

Bonnet probably belonging to Mary Faithfull about 1850s
National Museum of Australia

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Reproduction of the Carte de Visite of Sydney University cricket team 1871
Edmund Barton Papers, National Library of Australia

Monty Faithfull’s cricket belt 1850–1870s
National Museum of Australia
Cricket belts were considered an integral part of cricketing attire between 1845 and the 1870s. This belt probably belonged to Monty Faithfull, Captain of the Sydney University Cricket Team which included Australia’s first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton.

Illustration from Exercises for Ladies, 1838
National Museum of Australia
Exercises for ladies, calculated to preserve and improve beauty, and to prevent and correct personal defects, inseparable from constrained or careless habits founded on physiological principles.

Robert Lionel and Monty Faithfull after kangaroo hunting 1870s
National Museum of Australia

Faithfull family picnic, Springfield, New South Wales 1880s
National Museum of Australia
During the Victorian era, picnics became a popular summer pastime, allowing for more casual socialising and an escape from formal dining rituals. No picnic was complete without a fresh pot of tea.

Moustache cup 19th century
National Museum of Australia
It was fashionable for gentlemen to wear a fine bushy moustache in the 19th century. The moustache cup was designed with a ledge across the inside of the rim to keep the moustache clean and dry during tea drinking.

Teapot in padded case belonging to Faithfull family about 1850–1900
National Museum of Australia

Today’s merino sheep are twice the size of the ‘small, weedy, thin-locked bare-headed sheep’ that came with the First Fleet in 1788. Early breeding was haphazard, mixing 20 breeds of sheep. In the 1850s, professional sheep-classers brought a more systematic approach. The Australian merino was bred to be drought-hardy — regular droughts killed unsuitable animals in any case. New spinning technologies in British factories demanded long-stapled, broader wool; this was the kind of wool that Australian breeders aimed for in their merinos.

Merinos over time
When sheep-classer Thomas Shaw first arrived in Australia in the 1840s, he found sheep ‘not fit to class as respectable goats’. He told breeders that they should adapt their sheep to the soil and climate. Shaw and other classers helped stud owners to develop a hardy, long-legged merino with long-stapled wool and a high grease content — this protects the fleece against climatic extremes.

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The display that you have been working with does not try to tell the whole story of pastoral life in nineteenth century Australia, or even of the one property — Springfield — from which the objects came. You will know from looking at your summary table that there are many themes that have not yet been touched on. These gaps will distort the story that you are developing. Here are some questions and thoughts about what the display has told us. Decide if you can answer these questions, and if not nominate some objects or information that you would like added to the display in each case. For example, you may decide that the existing display does not tell you about Aboriginal occupation of the area before the European occupation of the land, and that you would like to see objects that tell us about the life of the Aboriginal people (such as tools, paintings, a description of an Aboriginal social group, some of their language), as well as what happened to them (was there an impact from disease, violence, co-operation?).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Best current exhibit</th>
<th>Suggested new exhibits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 What was there before the pastoral property? How did Aboriginal people use the environment? How were they dispossessed? What happened to these original occupiers of the area?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Pastoral properties were working properties. Where is work represented in the display? Who did various jobs? What was their life like? Did they have families? Did they go to school?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 There are horses in some of the photographs that you have studied, but was there any other technology? How did it change over time?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 We see glimpses of the environment. But was it always like that? How did the physical nature of the property change over time?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Springfield was a large house. Who did the domestic work? What were relations like between the owners and the servants and workers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 What were the daily lives of people like on sheep stations? What did they do for entertainment, relaxation or amusement? What about their food? Or their health? What about the education of young people?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Springfield was also part of a wider community in the Goulburn area, with the town of Goulburn growing over time. How were properties such as Springfield integrated into the economy of the area?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Springfield was situated near water, roads and railway. How did these affect the property and the lives of the people on it?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are there other gaps or silences that you have identified in the story of nineteenth century pastoral settlement in this display? If so, add these to the table above, and suggest new exhibits that might illustrate those aspects of the story.
How is a museum display created and curated?

You are nearly ready to tell your own story of nineteenth century pastoral settlement in Australia, as you understand it at this stage.

Much of what you are basing your story on is from the Museum display. But who chooses what is on display in a museum? Does their choice influence the way the story is represented?

Here is an interview with Cheryl Crilly, one of the curators at the National Museum of Australia responsible for gathering, and ultimately presenting the objects from the Springfield collection that will be one major part of the Museum’s gallery dealing with the theme of nineteenth century pastoral settlement. How does this interview add to your understanding of nineteenth century pastoral settlement?

The Springfield collection is one of the most significant and exciting collections in the National Museum. There are literally thousands of objects — we have on display fewer than 100 at the moment. My colleague Denis Shepherd and I were given the task of selecting a few of them to whet the appetite of viewers for more, until the new [Horizons] gallery is ready [to be called Australian Journeys].

Having these objects and the others from Springfield means that there is a particular part of the Australian story we in the Museum will be able to present in a real and rich way.

The collection provides in effect a set of primary sources for us to understand how a place, an environment, an industry, a family and a community all operated during nearly 200 years in Australia. It helps us understand part of the Australian journey — a journey through time and place, as well as through values, attitudes, achievements and failures. It also helps us make connections in history.

Let’s think about just one object in this collection — the 1813 dress. It belonged to Ann Deane, the mother of Mary Deane who married William Pitt Faithfull in 1844. It is a silk dress. Silk had to be manufactured, so immediately we are being given signposts that there are connections between this dress in this room and a whole world of trade with China. It is a certain style, so it connects us with the history of fashions. It would have been an expensive item to buy, so it alerts us that we need to be conscious of differences of wealth and class in understanding this period of British history — and of course the values and attitudes of the owner of the dress also came to Australia with it.

We know the widowed Ann came here as an unassisted migrant with her three children in 1838, so it helps us to empathise with the
experience of immigration — what did people bring with them, and why? How did they feel about this huge change in their lives?

Ann left the dress in her will to her eldest daughter, also named Ann — we’re getting a glimpse here into social customs, as well as economic realities: that women’s economic and financial status and rights were different to those of men at that time. We are looking at the whole idea of dowries, and of men having the right to the fortune of the women they married.

We know Ann was pregnant with Mary and several of her other children when she wore it — what better way to empathise with people than to be able to see the clothes they wore while they were creating this part of history? We can even still see her perspiration stains on it! What was it like to be pregnant more than 150 years ago? What happened to the children of this new generation of the family? And to their children? The dress stimulates such questions, and puts us into a frame of mind to want to explore further and find out more.

The dress was then locked away for many years. Amazingly, it did not deteriorate. Fabric is very fragile, so it’s just so rare to have a piece of clothing that is so old. We received the dress, together with everything else from Springfield, in 2004. This means that a new part of the dress’ journey is about to begin — and now it gains an entirely new element to it, that of conservation and presentation.

We’ve got the dress on display so that it can inspire viewers to make connections like those I’ve mentioned, and therefore understand aspects of Australian history in a more tangible and real way. But we can’t keep it out for too long. Light affects fabric, so we have to keep the light levels low, and we will have to ‘rest’ it after about a year. Meanwhile, we can study it to learn more about how the dress was made, what thread was used, how it was stitched, how it was dyed, what underwear was worn with it — and this research into who had these skills and how they gained them means that we are using the dress to gain an understanding of aspects of everyday life in the past. It also helps us to know how to conserve it better — to make it last longer as one of Australia’s national treasures.

So we think it is a wonderful object to have, a rich object that tells us about the past, but which is also still on its lifetime journey, still delighting people, and still helping us to understand aspects of who we are and where we have come from. I look at it, and I feel enriched!
ACTIVITY 7  Telling your story of nineteenth century pastoral settlement in Australia

Your task now is to tell the story of nineteenth century pastoral settlement in Australia, based on the knowledge and understandings that you have developed through this unit.

Here are some suggested ways you might do that:

• Create a poster based on the Museum display that you have explored in this article.
• Critically analyse how a textbook covers the story.
• Collect and comment on some stories, poems, novels or songs — such as the writings of Mary Durack, Jeannie Lawson, Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson, or the songs of Ted Egan or the bush ballads.
• Create a storyboard for a film about an aspect of the theme.

• Or try this critical evaluation of the museum that was designed specifically to explore and promote outback pioneering life — the Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame in Longreach, Queensland.


The continuing currency of the pioneer legend as manifested in stories of pastoral expansion and pastoral culture is also reflected in the great popularity of the Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre in Longreach, Queensland. The large museum represents Australian pastoral history and asserts the national significance of pastoralism. According to its website, the Hall of Fame is dedicated to a singular narrative of heroic pioneers making personal sacrifices and enabling the formation of modern Australia:

“The Outback — remote, remorseless and magnificent in its magnitude — the heart of Australia. It was conquered by pioneers who gave up the comfort of coastal settlement to carve a new life in the unknown interior of this vast continent. Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre is dedicated to the story of these unsung heroes, the men and women who opened up outback Australia.”

The Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame opened in 1988 as part of the celebrations marking two centuries since British colonisation began. Donald Horne wrote scathingly of the Hall’s failure to present a complex view of Australian history. Horne felt the museum did little more than maintain selective and legendary narratives of heroic individuals working on sunlit plains to build the nation. Those responsible for the institution ‘tried to rig Australian history’, he contended,

“so it was virtually confined to the sheep and cattle industries, then they tried to rig it so that these industries consisted almost exclusively of white men on horseback. A few Abos and sheilas also got in — but no banks, no pastoral houses, no government infrastructure, no scientific research, no country towns. The emotionally basic objects were the branding irons, the stock-whips and the saddles.”

The popularity today of the Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre, despite its distance from major population centres, is testament to the strength with which visitors relate to the Hall of Fame’s theme, philosophy and aims, its website notes. At Longreach, pastoral history and culture are treated reverently. The museum describes its monumental architecture as ‘cathedral-like’. Before the Hall opened, a designer of the museum exhibitions told a reporter: ‘In many respects what we’re dealing with in the Hall of Fame is a religion.’ Journeying by tourists to the Longreach site, Robin Trotter observes, ‘has acquired almost pilgrimage status.’ Inside the Hall, ‘bush personalities’ are elevated into ‘near-divinities.’

George Main, ‘Never Enough Grass’ — research essay, National Museum of Australia pages 6–7

1 Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre website, accessed September 2005 <www.stockmanshalloffame.com.au>
3 Stockman’s Hall of Fame, Longreach, Queensland, souvenir supplement, National Library of Australia.