Digging up the Past

Digging up the Past is a half-day program that marries the subject of archaeology with dramatic fiction to engage students in exploration of the significance of cultural and historical sites.

Students are transported across Moreton Bay to the heritage site of St Helena Island National Park where they encounter actors-in-role and are placed at the centre of an unfolding drama about the importance of cultural sites within local development. Focusing on primary and secondary sources of information, students engage in a detailed study of the site itself, including an Aboriginal midden and historic prison structures. They participate in an archaeological dig, uncovering objects from the past as evidence that can be used to establish the site’s cultural significance.

‘Digging up the Past’ requires students to utilise academic skills in the context of the dig site: measuring, examining, identifying, categorising and sequencing, which form a part of the over-all learning experience. Throughout the program, students are asked to articulate questions, formulate answers, participate in problem solving and ask ethical questions on many levels. Through reflection and analysis of data, students are encouraged to critically examine the value of cultural sites in our society today and make personal value judgements based on their understandings.

Curriculum Intent

History and Social Sciences
Inquiry and Skills
Researching
- Apply a methodology to locate and collect relevant information and data from a range of primary sources and secondary sources (ACHASSI153)
- Sequence information about events, developments, periods and phenomena using a variety of discipline-appropriate formats and conventions including chronological frameworks that use dating conventions (ACHASSI155)

Analysing
- Examine primary and secondary sources to determine their origin, purpose and reliability (ACHASSI156)
- Analyse primary sources and secondary sources to identify values and perspectives on people, actions, events, issues and phenomena, past and present (ACHASSI157)
- Interpret and analyse data and information displayed in a range of formats to identify and propose explanations for distributions, patterns, trends and relationships (ACHASSI158)

Evaluating and Reflecting
- Evaluate and synthesise evidence to draw conclusions (ACHASSI159)
- Collaborate to generate alternatives in response to an issue or challenge, and compare the potential costs and benefits of each (ACHASSI160)
- Reflect on learning to propose personal and/or collective actions in response to an issue or challenge, taking into account different perspectives, and describe the expected effects (ACHASSI162)
Knowledge and Understanding

History: Investigating the ancient past
- how historians and archaeologists investigate history, including excavation and archival research (ACHASSK167)
- the range of sources that can be used in an historical investigation, including archaeological and written sources (ACHASSK168)
- the nature of the sources for ancient Australia and what they reveal about Australia’s past in the ancient period, such as the use of resources (ACHASSK170)
- the importance of conserving the remains of the ancient past, including the heritage of aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHASSK171)

General Capabilities

Critical and creative thinking
- Critical thinking is essential to the historical inquiry process because it requires the ability to question sources, interpret the past from incomplete documentation, develop an argument using evidence, and assess reliability when selecting information from resources. Creative thinking is important in developing new interpretations to explain aspects of the past that are contested or not well understood.

Ethical behaviour
- Ethical understanding involves students in building a strong personal and socially oriented ethical outlook that helps them to manage context, conflict and uncertainty, and to develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behaviour have on others. Students recognise that examining the nature of evidence deepens their understanding of ethical issues and investigate the ways that diverse values and principles have influenced human affairs.

Cross-curriculum priorities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
- Across the Australian Curriculum, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priority provides opportunities for all learners to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world’s oldest continuous living cultures.
- It celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories as part of the shared history belonging to all Australians. Students will examine historical perspectives from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewpoint. They will learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples prior to colonisation by the British, the ensuing contact and its impacts.

Sustainability
- Across the Australian Curriculum, sustainability will allow all young Australians to develop the knowledge, skills, values and world views necessary for them to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living. It will enable individuals and communities to reflect on ways of interpreting and engaging with the world. The Sustainability priority is futures-oriented, focusing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. Actions that support more sustainable patterns of living require consideration of environmental, social, cultural and economic systems and their interdependence.