

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

Effect of the Gold Rushes on the People (continued)



Children

Child mortality was high in Victoria. In 1856 almost half the deaths in the colony were of children, most of whom were infants. Up to half the children passengers on the immigrant ships died of measles, typhoid, scarlet fever, malnutrition and contaminated water.

Increase in multiculturalism

While most of the immigrants came from the United Kingdom, many also came from America and Europe. This introduced more cultural diversity into Australian colonies.

Chinese

Thousands of Chinese miners arrived to dig for gold. By 1858, one in five of all the men in Victoria, excluding Aborigines, were Chinese. Prejudice against the Chinese grew, and first Victoria then NSW passed laws to restrict the numbers of Chinese entering the colonies. The Victorians also imposed a tax on the Chinese. Ship owners got around the laws of Victoria by dropping the Chinese in South Australia. They then walked overland, carrying their possessions, to the gold fields of Victoria. Violence against the Chinese increased as their numbers grew.

After the gold rushes many Chinese returned to China. Others started market gardens or furniture manufacturing businesses or Chinese restaurants.

The Push for Rights

Gold rush immigrants were generally independent and hard-working. They believed in helping themselves. They were determined to make their fortunes, and many set up businesses after returning from the gold fields. Most were skilled tradesmen, white-collar workers or professionals from British cities and could read and write. Later these immigrants argued for social, political and educational reforms.

White Australia Policy

There had been racial violence throughout the history of Australia, as can be seen in the killing of Aboriginal people by early colonisers and squatters. In the 1850s, many Chinese were attacked or killed. Australians began to talk about keeping Australia 'white' by restricting the immigration of Asian and black people.

In 1901, the *Immigration Restriction Act* was passed. A special dictation test was held which enabled the government to restrict immigrants, especially Asians, until it was abolished in 1959.

