

The Chinese

Lesson Focus: You will learn about significant individuals and groups and their impact on the Australian gold rushes.

Keywords: emigrate, immigrate, migrant, descent, racist, resentment

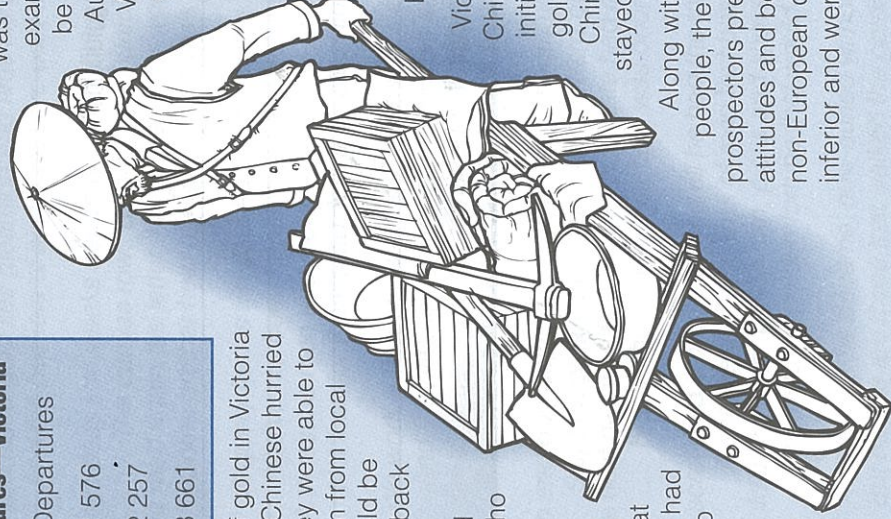
Chinese people played a major role in the Victorian goldfields. Along with many other people from different parts of the world, the Chinese rushed to the Victorian goldfields to find their fortune. The Chinese were very experienced gold prospectors. They could generally live on less, withstand poor conditions and were more patient than other prospectors. The table below shows the significant number of Chinese people.

Chinese Arrivals and Departures—Victoria

	Arrivals	Departures
1855	11 493	1 576
1856	1 217	2 257
1857	816	3 661

When news of the discovery of gold in Victoria reached China in 1853, many Chinese hurried to the Victorian Goldfields. They were able to do this as they could get a loan from local Chinese traders. The loan would be repaid with the gold they sent back from Australia. If the loan was unpaid, the man's family would become slaves to the trader who had lent him the money.

When the Chinese arrived on the goldfields, they presented a very different culture from that of the mining population. They had their own camps and tended to keep to themselves. Most Chinese migrants could not speak English. They worked in teams and often on ground previously worked by the



European miners. The success they achieved with these methods made them very unpopular. Their unpopularity also grew with the resentment attached to their different ways of dressing, eating and living in general. The Europeans did not understand their customs and the Chinese did not understand the customs of the European miners.

The resentment of the European miners grew and a Royal Commission looked at the issues. The result was the 'White Australia Policy'—a perfect example of the attitudes which would now be considered racist. Chinese arriving in Australia had to pay a £10 entry fee at Victorian ports—no other migrant group was charged this fee. The Chinese got around this by landing in South Australia and walking to Victoria. The Chinese also had to pay a Protection Fee, a Miner's Right and a Residence Ticket; then a 'Protector' was appointed to keep the Chinese separate from the European population.

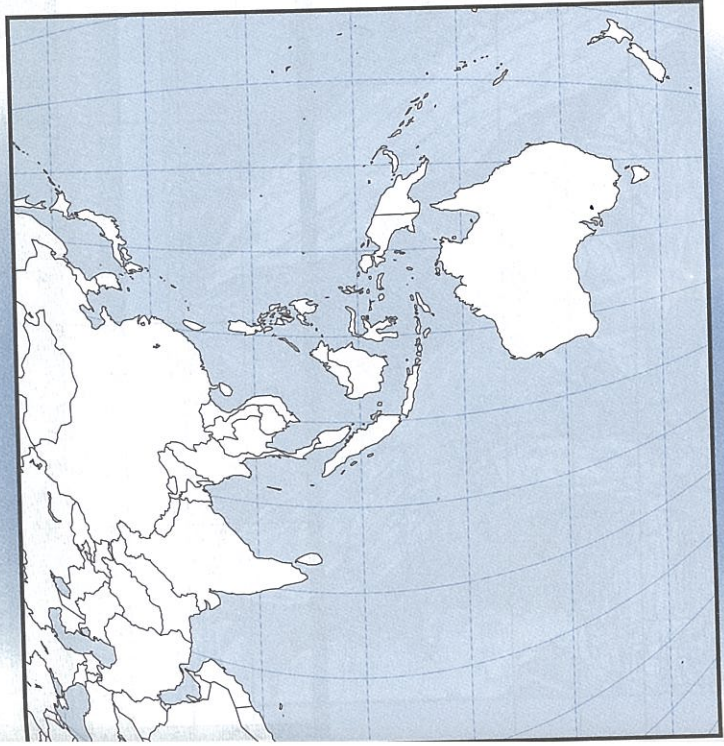
Violence between European and Chinese miners was common, often initiated by the Europeans. As alluvial gold began to run out in 1857, many Chinese returned home. However, a few stayed to settle permanently in Australia.

Along with the persecution of native Aboriginal people, the treatment of Chinese gold prospectors presented a clear example of the attitudes and beliefs of the time. People of non-European descent were considered to be inferior and were treated accordingly.

Use the information to answer these questions.

1. Tick true or false.
 - (a) The Chinese caused a lot of violence on the goldfields. True False
 - (b) The Europeans discriminated against people who were not of European descent. True False
 - (c) All migrants were charged an entry fee to Australia. True False
 - (d) A protector cared for and looked after the Chinese. True False
2. What were the strengths of the Chinese people searching for gold?

3. On this map, show the likely path the Chinese took to travel to the Victorian goldfields to avoid the entry fee.



4. (a) Why did the European people dislike the Chinese?

(b) Do you think their treatment of the Chinese was fair? Explain.
