Perspectives on Contact: Source Activity 1

Source A
Captain Cook reached the southern coast of New South Wales in 1770. He then sailed north, continuing to chart the Australian coast all the way to the tip of Queensland. There, on Possession Island, just before sunset on Wednesday 22 August 1770, he declared the coast a British possession:

“I now once more hoisted English Coulers and in the Name of His Majesty King George the Third took possession of the whole Eastern Coast . . . by the name New South Wales, together with all the Bays, Harbours Rivers and Islands situated upon the said coast”

From Captain Cooks Journals I (p.387-8)

Source B

Samuel Calvert and John Gilfillan, Captain Cook taking possession of the Australian continent on behalf of the British Crown AD 1770 1865, National Library of Australia, an7682920

This well-known painting was created by an artist called John Gilfillan and exhibited in Melbourne in 1857. This version of the image was created by the engraver Samuel Calvert to be published as a coloured insert in a newspaper called the Illustrated Sydney News in 1865. The article accompanying the image compares Britain’s colonisation of Australia to Rome’s colonisation of Britain and states that Australia’s history began with Captain Cook. This image has been repeatedly used in school textbooks to represent Cook’s arrival here.

Gordon Bennett (1955 – 2014) was an Australian artist of Aboriginal and Anglo-Celtic descent. He used “familiar and recognisable images that were part of an Australian consciousness to explore and question the meaning of these images” and national identity. [http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/gordonbennett/education/04.html](http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/gordonbennett/education/04.html)

**Questions**

1. Source A and B are about the same event. What does Source A tell us?

**Using Source B and C**

1. Gordon Bennett based his painting on the one by Calvert and Gilfillan. What aspects are repeated in Bennett’s painting and what is left out?
2. Who is the artist’s focal point in Source B and who is it in Source C? What effect does this have on the viewer?
3. Each source is giving us a different perspective on contact. Whose perspective is each source from? Use evidence from the source (e.g. reference the title, style of painting, the colours, the focal point and the symbols in the painting and what you know about the artist) to answer the question.
4. Is one source more useful than the others in a study of perspectives on contact? Explain why or why not.