

# TALKING MACHINES

## Talking Machines Education Resource

**Theme:** People

**Film Title-** Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home - Cootamundra

### About the Clip:

Synopsis: The Cootamundra Girls Home has been the subject of many documentaries over recent years. This film takes a brief look at the home from a different angle; with relation to the placement of the girls on farms throughout the area as well as documenting memories from a variety of viewpoints- including a former girl, community members and peers and the families of those who hosted on farm placements. This film speaks to the girl's role on farms as well as referencing issues of loss of connection to country and family and coping mechanisms.

Duration: 13.29 minutes

### Study Module:

**Curriculum Focus:** History – NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum

**Strand:** Historical knowledge and understanding; Historical inquiry and skills

### Theme:

- Depth Study 1: Making a Better World? – The Industrial Revolution (1750 – 1914)
- Depth Study 2: Australia and Asia – Making a Nation

### Key Concepts:

- evidence; continuity and change; cause and effect; perspectives; significance

### Curriculum Applicability:

- The technological innovations that led to the Industrial Revolution (**ACDSEH017**)
- The nature and significance of the Industrial Revolution and how it affected living and working conditions, including within Australia (**ACOKFH016**)
- The emergence and nature of significant economic, social and political ideas in the period, including nationalism (**ACOKFH019**)
- The experiences of men, women and children during the Industrial Revolution, and their changing way of life (**ACDSEH081**)
- The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (**ACDSEH020**)
- The short and long-term impacts of the Industrial Revolution, including global changes in landscapes, transport and communication (**ACDSEH082**)

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- Living and working conditions in Australia around the turn of the twentieth century (that is 1900) (**ACDSEH090**)
- The impact of World War I, with a particular emphasis on Australia including the changing role of women (**ACDSEH096**)

## Historical Skills:

- **Chronology, terms and concepts**
  - Use chronological sequencing to demonstrate the relationship between events and developments in different periods and places (**ACHHS164**)
- **Analysis and use of sources**
  - Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources (**ACHHS169**)
  - Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources (**ACHHS171**)
- **Perspectives and interpretations**
  - Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past (**ACHHS172**)
  - Identify and analyse different historical interpretations (including their own) (**ACHHS173**)
- **Explanation and communication**
  - Develop texts, particularly descriptions and discussions that use evidence from a range of sources that are referenced (**ACHHS174**)

## General capabilities:

- **Critical and Creative Thinking**
  - Developing questions about aspects of the past that require historical argument
  - Identify and clarify information and ideas
  - Organise and process information
- **Personal and Social Capability – social awareness:**
  - Appreciate diverse perspectives
- **Ethical Understanding**
  - Recognise ethical concepts
  - Explore rights and responsibilities
  - Consider points of view
- **Intercultural Understanding**
  - Investigate culture and cultural identity
  - Explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices

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## **Context/ Background Information:**

Awareness relating to the story of the Cootamundra Girls Home has increased over recent years following the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from the Families in 1997 (Commission of Inquiry). The nation was made aware of how widespread the practice of removal was, which affected every Aboriginal community but was outside the consciousness of mainstream Australians. The Cootamundra Girls' Home provides contemporary Australia with physical evidence as a means to comprehend the pain and suffering of past assimilation practices.

The site provides tangible evidence of the Government policy and practice of taking Aboriginal children away from their families and communities, severing all ties with their culture in order to assimilate them into mainstream Australian society. Placement of Aboriginal girls in the institution of the Cootamundra Girls' Home caused cultural dislocation for the former residents and ongoing associated problems within the Aboriginal community. The place as a means to reconnect to the past is associated with commemoration and healing of these individuals and communities.

The Talking Machines Project: revives Riverina rural technology collections with video testimonies, captures the histories and stories of generations of Australian men and women who farmed the Riverina, through the rusted metal frames and once sharp blades of dormant farm machinery they used and looks at the Cootamundra experience from this angle. The project creates a series of thematic trails across the Riverina and key objects have been selected to support the development of these themes which in turn speak to Australia's role in the industrial revolution- this is the focus of an educational resource. Australia's role in the industrial revolution and the impact of the revolution is little documented in Australian education resources- these films provide an access point for teachers on examples of the impact of the revolution upon rural Australian society. It should be noted that the full impact in Australian society occurred after the curriculum notes on the European based experience- thus date relating to the manufacture and use of some equipment may not align with those published in the curriculum.

## **Discussion Pointers:**

- What does this film represent? Can you find evidence of stories of displacement in your text books, especially in the local histories of your town? Can you find evidence of this in your local museum? Discuss the reasons for your answer.
- Brainstorm your image of people working in rural Australia. Discuss your results after watching this film? (Does this include people from other cultural backgrounds, women, kids etc)?
- Environment/place can be an important element of identity. Is this the case with the people in the video? Explain the reasons for your response. (Aunty Faye's art)
- Is there a hidden story here? What is hidden/not shown?

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## **Suggested Classroom Activities:**

- Look at interviews online relating to the Cootamundra Girls Home. Search SBS On Demand for documentary footage relating to the Girls Home.
- Make a site visit to the Cootamundra Heritage Centre, talk to the Curator (see contact details below).
- Go to the Girls home as a group – arrangements for a site visit can be made by contacting the office of the Bimbadeen Aboriginal Training College in Cootamundra on (02) 6942 1129.

## **More Information, Contact Details & Arrangements for Visits**

The Cootamundra Heritage Centre is located on Hovell St, (adjacent to the Railway Precinct) in Cootamundra and is open seven days per week from 9am to 4.30pm.

For further information, please contact the Heritage Centre on (02) 6940 2190 or you will find information on the web at:

<https://mgnsw.org.au/organisations/cootamundra-heritage-centre/> or

<http://www.cootamundra.nsw.gov.au/tourism/attractions/cootamundra-heritage-centre.aspx>