Captain James Cook and the Opening of the Pacific 1760-1800
Themes

• Introduction: Cook’s voyages
• Europeans and the Pacific
• Politics, Discovery and Science
• Cook’s voyages and cultural contact
• Cultural misreadings and the construction of knowledge
Introduction

Who was Captain James Cook?
Introduction: The voyages

1768-71
1772-75
1776-80
Introduction

• Voyages and the collection of Knowledge
• Geographical knowledge
• Scientific knowledge
• Cultural knowledge
Europeans and the Pacific
Politics, Discovery and Science

• Political objectives
• Scientific objectives
  – Joseph Banks
• Discovery
  – Of geography
  – And of . . .
Cook’s Voyages and Cultural Contact

- Intent of the contact between Cook and native peoples
- Reality of the contact
- The case of sexual contact
Cultural Misreadings

• How were they to understand each other?
• No common language
• The class of cultures, eg. Cannibalism
• The best example of cultural misunderstanding:
The Death of Captain Cook, 14 February 1779
Creation of Knowledge about South Pacific

- Cultural knowledge was perhaps the most important kind of knowledge that Cook brought back
- What kind of knowledge was it though?
  - A paradise?
  - A home of savagry?
  - In need of civilising?