

Things to think about: The Journals of Captain Cook

Why did trade with the various indigenous peoples that Cook encounters seem to happen so automatically? How would you interpret Cook's judgment of the people he encounters as honest or dishonest (inclined to steal)? How does he interpret this?

What is the reason for the rules that Cook promulgates on 39-40?

Why did Cook give Tahitians names from classical mythology and history (41)? In general how would you characterize his selection of names for places, people, and things--and also his selection of items in need of naming?

How did Cook deal with the fact that death (accidental or otherwise) was a constant possibility in dealings with the peoples he encounters?

What astronomical observation and phenomena did Cook record? Did he treat them in a different way than other observations (botanical, zoological, geological, anthropological)?

Why is the loss of the quadrant so serious (49)?

On what basis did Cook attempt to derive the theology of Pacific peoples? (see, for example, his discussion of the treatment of Tahitian corpses on 47 and of the Easter Island statues on 338.)

Why did he recount the incident at the bottom of 52/top of 53?

Why was Cook concerned about the spread of venereal disease in Tahiti and Hawaii?

What was Cook's attitude to dog-eating (59)? Cannibalism (383)? Eating strange food in general (e.g. 378)?

Why did Cook make observations about the actual or potential productivity of the land in the places he visits?

What is the animal referred to on 126, 145, 146, 150, 153, 154? What do these repeated observations suggest about the theories and methods of 18th-century naturalists?

How did Cook deal with conflicts between his own observations and the theories of learned "philosophers"? (e.g. 389)

What do the misfortunes of Orton (131-2) suggest about shipboard morale and discipline?

What did Cook mean by "nature" with reference to the dress of female Australians (153)?

How did Cook characterize the native people of Australia, in comparison with the others he had encountered in the Pacific?

What does Cook's identification of Easter Island (335) suggest about the nature of European "discovery"?

Why did Cook think that Pacific islanders were mistaken to view his crews as "invaders"? (386)

When Cook identified the Tahitians and Hawaiians as belonging to the same nation, what did he mean?(530, 537)

What are the implications of the set of gifts mentioned on 535-6?

Why were the Nootka people so outstandingly successful in their transactions with Cook and his party?