Goldfields 'contentions' Research Project.

For this project your pair can either focus on a particular feature of life on the goldfields of Ballarat in the 1850s or a specific aspect of the Eureka Stockade rebellion.

Some possible contentions about life on the Ballarat Goldfields and the Eureka Stockade Rebellion are provided below.

A contention is a controversial statement of opinion.

Your group needs to choose one of the contentions provided (or negotiate your own), develop a research proposal and then use Primary and Secondary Sources to gather evidence that either supports or discredits your contention.

You then need to conduct a presentation using the evidence you have gathered describing whether you support the contention or not.

The suggested contentions with a ** are for those students who want to stretch themselves with a more difficult topic; and if it has *** it is an even more challenging topic. Bonus marks will be awarded for pairs of students completing these contentions.

Possible Contentions:

Part A: Life on the Goldfields:

1) There was no time for fun on the goldfields.
2) Today's women have an easier life than those of the 19th Century goldfields.
3) Mining was not the best way to make money on the goldfields.
4) The goldfields were not really a multicultural society.
5) Sovereign Hill is incredibly fake and not reliable as a secondary source.
6) Horses were essential to business and the economy in the 19th Century goldfields.
7) It was easier being a school student in the goldfields than it is now.
8) 1850s fashion had more style than today's.
9) During the 1850s goldrush, the best technology was simple technology.
10) The past might be a good place to visit but you wouldn't want to live there.
11) Either 'The diggings were no place for women and children.' Or 'Life was much better with women and children in the town.'

Part B: Blood on the Southern Cross – The Eureka Stockade Rebellion

1) Either 'The highly respected police force had no option but to uphold the law.' Or 'The police force was a corrupt rabble of ex-convicts with no respect for the diggers or the law.'
2) They have come to the goldfields in their thousands from the four corners of the earth. 'They were free men, adventurous, hardy and industrious. They came to the goldfields in peace, in search of fortune and dreams of wealth.'
3) Either 'History will condemn the miners for not paying their dues and abiding by the laws of the land.' Or 'The gold licences were unfair; they taxed the lucky and unlucky alike.'
4) Either 'The attack on a Sunday was a justified, well executed military strategy.' Or 'It's just not right; it's cowardly. Not on a Sunday, God's holy day.'
5) Governer LaTrobe was justified in introducing the Gold Licence fee, because he needed revenue to run the new colony of Victoria and cope with the rapid influx of migrants.
6) The Ballarat Reform League was just made up of uneducated thugs who didn't want to pay their taxes.
7) ** Either 'Twenty Two miners lay dead, but it was a price worth paying.' Or 'If Peter Lalor had encouraged the miners to pay for their gold licences rather than resist, they would have gone on to live long and prosperous lives.'
8) ** Commissioner Robert Rede demanded the police increase the licence hunts from once per month to twice a week. Either 'Was he so out of touch with the mood of the diggings and thought this would work?' Or 'Was he deliberately antagonizing the diggers?'
9) ** Henry Seekamp was the real villan of the Eureka Stockade and deserved the 6 month prison sentence he received.
10) *** We would have had a far better outcome if the diggers had followed John Humffray rather than Peter Lalor as "The pen is mightier than the sword".
11) *** Eureka Stockade was not a stand against unfair licences by common workers, but a democratic revolution stirred up by middle class foreigners
12) *** Historians are incredibly sexist. The Eureka story is usually told as if half the participants weren't even there. A large number of women played very significant roles in the events surrounding the Eureka Stockade, and yet it is only the male contributions that are recognized.

Extra Notes:

To help clarify your thinking as a group, please ensure you complete the 6 thinking hats activity before starting the project.

Your presentations must express well-informed opinions based on your research, which is to be documented in a bibliography and evidenced in your final product.

Students going on Camp can use Sovereign Hill, The Ballarat Art Gallery, The Eureka Stockade site, The Ballarat Cemetery and the Sound and Light Show as sources of information for your project (Photos, videos, recording sounds, written pieces, interpretive signage etc).

For students not going on camp, most of these same things can be found online and in some of the resources we have purchased (Numerous books plus DVD of the Blood on the Southern Cross Sound and Light show)

Whether you go on camp or not you must use both Primary and Secondary sources.