

History 3

Chapter 2 — Britain's first colony in Australia

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content has been excluded as accuracy cannot be guaranteed, and it is better to be respectful than cover the entire curriculum inaccurately.

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Why Britain established a colony in Australia in 1788

For the teacher — not part of the student text.

Curriculum link (Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Levels 3-4 History): Owns content description VC2HH4K07 (code only; wording not reproduced).

Elaborations drawn on: VC2HH4K07 .E01, .E02, .E03, .E04, .E05, .E06 (codes only; wording not reproduced).

Scope notes (from the series TOC): place-naming here is taught by geography only — Sydney, Botany Bay, Port Jackson. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, including the naming of the Traditional Owners of these places, is taught elsewhere in the series (see Section 2C) and is excluded from this section. Terra Nullius is presented strictly as a British legal doctrine, attributed to Britain; the fuller contested-terms discussion sits in Section 2C.

Sources for facts beyond the curriculum referents (retrieved 2026-08-24): - National Museum of Australia, *The First Fleet*: 11 ships, about 1,420 people, about 789 convicts. - Australian National Maritime Museum, voyages of Jansz (1606), Hartog (1616), Tasman (1642), Cook (1770) and La Perouse (1788). - The UK National Archives, ADM 1/5312 — the 1768 secret instructions to James Cook (digitised copies via the National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales).

The story

History is the story of the past. In this section we find out why Britain started a colony in Australia in 1788.

Part 1 — Key words

First, our key words. We will use them all the way through.

Key words for this section

colony

A land where people from another country move and settle. It is still ruled by their old country.

penal colony

A colony that prisoners are sent to, instead of staying in prison at home.

navigation

The skill of finding your way across the sea. Sailors used the sun, the stars and maps.

economic resources

Useful things from the land or the sea, like wood and fish. A country wants these things and uses them.

Four cards defining the key words colony, penal colony, navigation and economic resources in simple language.

- **Colony** — a land where people from another country move and settle. Their old country still rules it.

- **Penal colony** — a colony that prisoners are sent to.
- **Navigation** — the skill of finding your way across the sea.
- **Economic resources** — useful things from the land or the sea, like wood and fish.

Part 2 — Sailors came long before 1788

Ships from Europe sailed to the coasts of Australia long before 1788. A sailor who was skilled at navigation was called a **navigator**.

When European sailors came to Australia

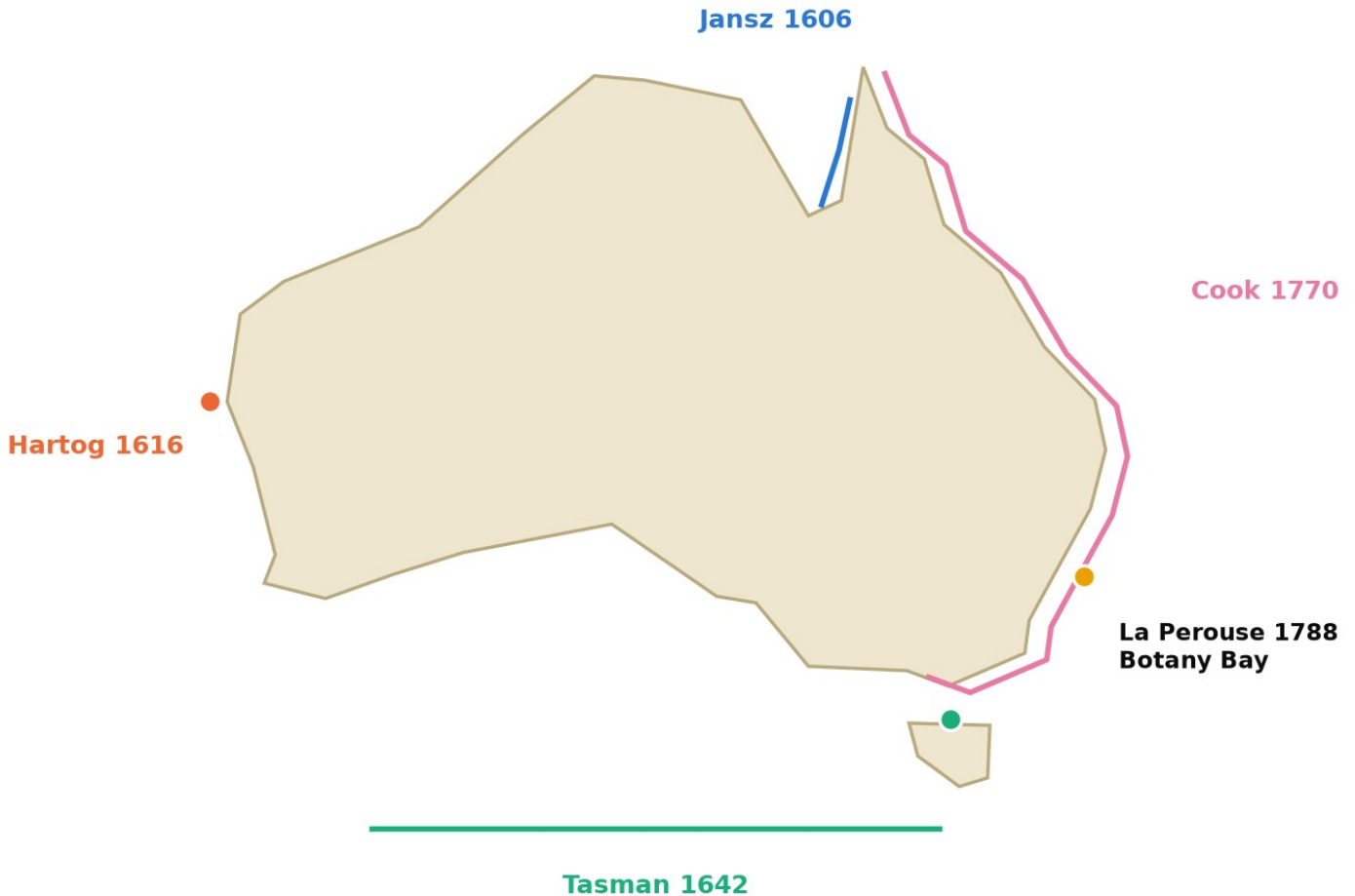


Timeline from 1606 to 1788 showing when Willem Jansz, Dirk Hartog, Abel Tasman and James Cook sailed to Australia, and when the First Fleet began the colony.

- **Willem Jansz (1606)** sailed to the Gulf of Carpentaria in the north.
- **Dirk Hartog (1616)** landed on the west coast.
- **Abel Tasman (1642)** sailed the seas far to the south.
- **James Cook (1770)** sailed up the east coast.
- **Comte de la Perouse (1788)** reached Botany Bay soon after the First Fleet.

This map shows where each of them went.

Where the sailors went along the coast



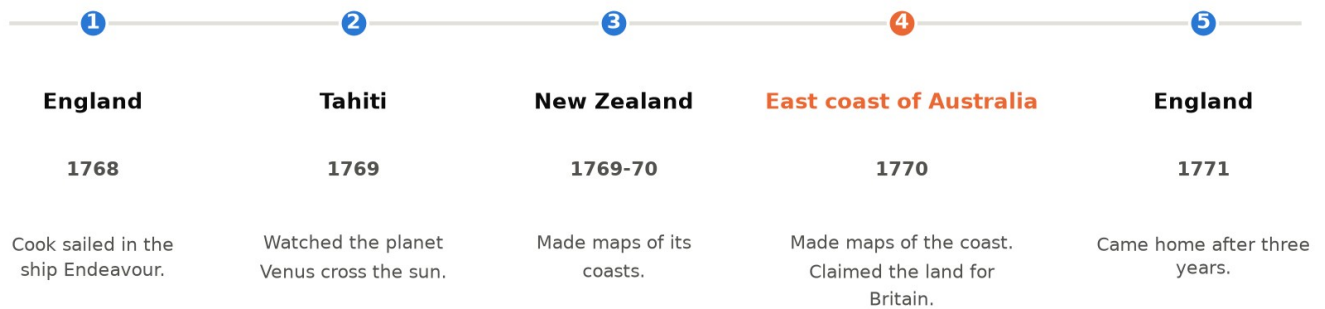
Simple map of Australia showing the coasts reached by Jansz in 1606, Hartog in 1616, Tasman in 1642, Cook in 1770 and La Perouse in 1788 at Botany Bay.

These sailors made maps and told their rulers about the coasts. So, long before 1788, countries in Europe knew about Australia.

Part 3 — James Cook's journey

James Cook left England in 1768 in a ship called the Endeavour. His journey took three years.

James Cook's long journey, 1768-1771



Numbered journey strip of James Cook's journey: England 1768, Tahiti 1769, New Zealand, the east coast of Australia 1770, and England 1771.

Before the journey, the British Admiralty gave Cook **secret instructions**. They were not for everyone to read.

Cook's secret instructions (1768)

Given by the British Admiralty to Captain James Cook

1. Sail to Tahiti and watch the planet Venus pass in front of the sun.
2. Then look for a great land far to the south.
3. Make maps of the coasts you find.
4. Claim new land for Britain.

Written again in simple words from the 1768 secret orders.

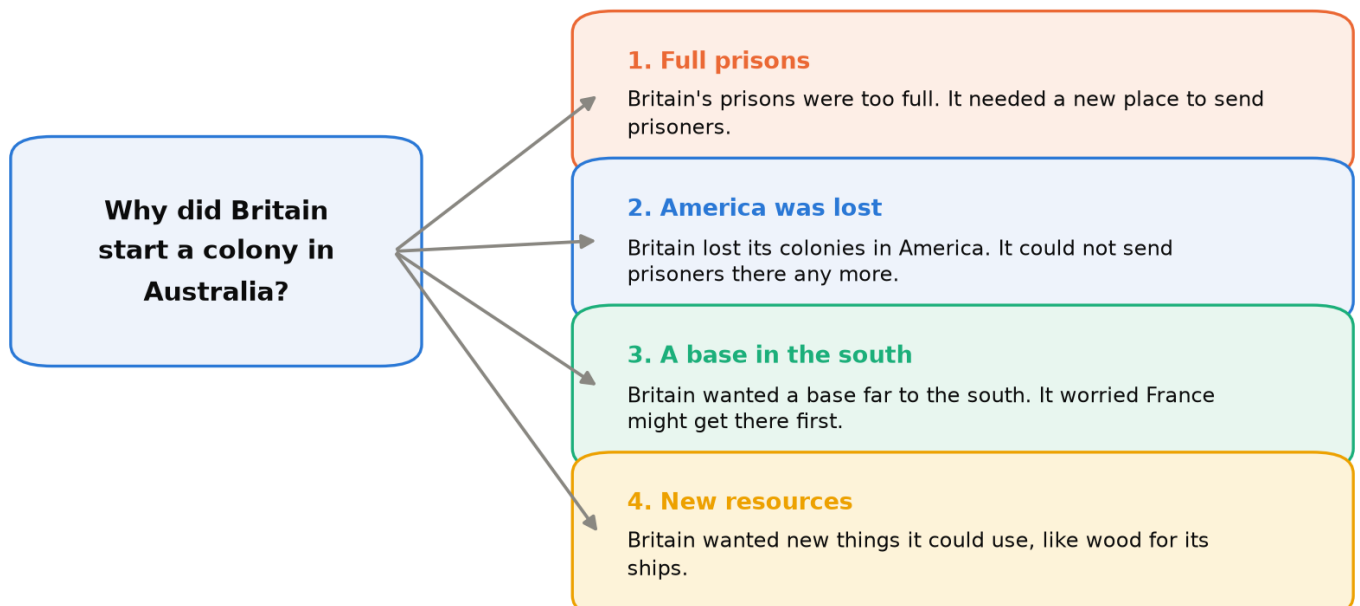
Card showing, in simple words, the four secret orders given to James Cook in 1768: watch Venus cross the sun at Tahiti, look for a great southern land, make maps, and claim new land for Britain.

The secret instructions told Cook to look for a great land far to the south, and to claim new land for Britain. Cook's maps made Britain think about starting a colony one day.

Part 4 — Why Britain wanted a colony

By the 1780s, Britain had four big reasons to start a colony in Australia.

Four big reasons

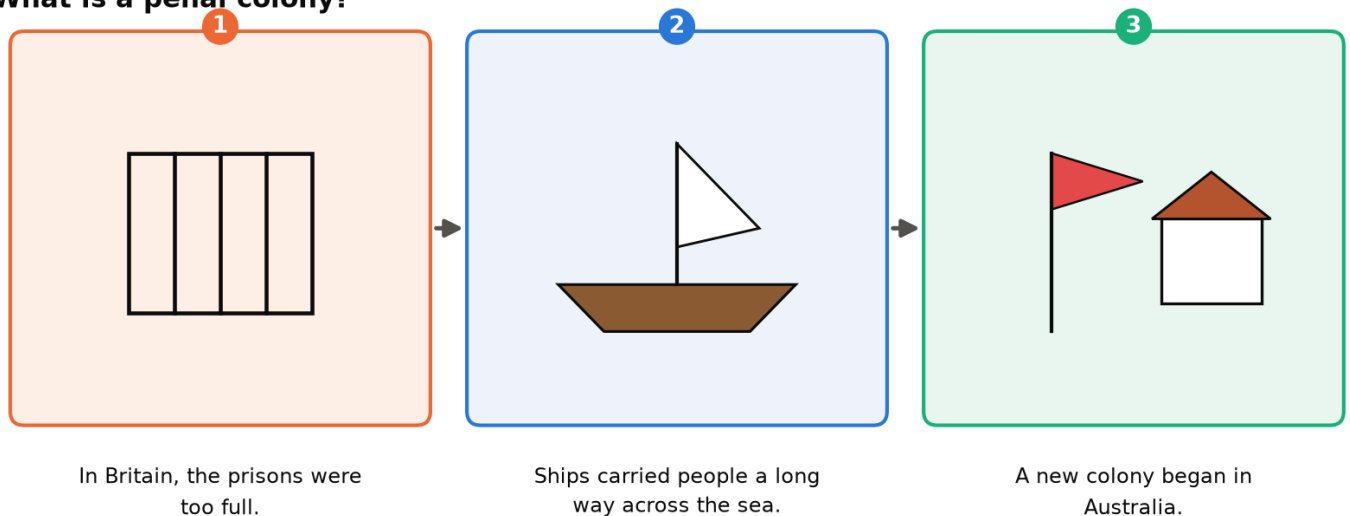


Four cards showing Britain's reasons for starting a colony: full prisons, the loss of its American colonies, a base far to the south, and new economic resources.

1. **Full prisons.** Britain's prisons were full of prisoners. It needed a new penal colony.
2. **America was lost.** Britain used to send its prisoners to America. After it lost its American colonies, it needed a new place to send them.
3. **A base in the south.** Britain wanted a base far to the south, so its ships had a safe place to stop.
4. **New resources.** Britain wanted economic resources from the land and the sea, like wood for ships.

This picture shows how a penal colony begins.

What is a penal colony?



Three pictures in order: full prisons in Britain, ships carrying prisoners far away, and a new colony beginning.

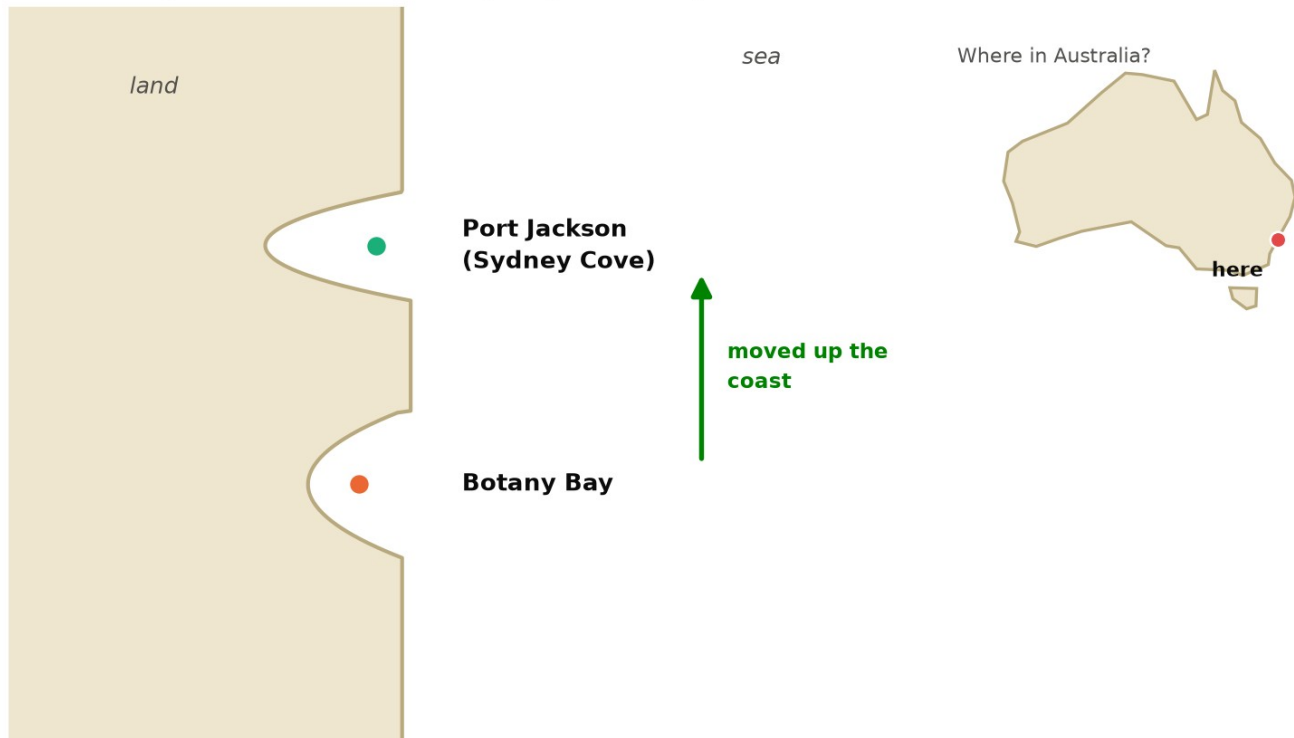
Part 5 — From Botany Bay to Port Jackson

In January 1788, the **First Fleet** reached Botany Bay. The First Fleet was 11 ships carrying about 1,420 people from Britain. About 789 of them were **convicts** — people sent to a penal colony for breaking the law.

But Botany Bay was not a good spot. There was little fresh water and poor soil. So Captain Arthur Phillip moved the fleet up the coast to Port Jackson. The British colony began at Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788.

For the new arrivals, a new life began. They built homes and started farms. They cut down trees and changed the land.

The colony moved from Botany Bay to Port Jackson



Botany Bay - first stop

The First Fleet arrived on 18 January 1788. There was little fresh water and poor soil, so the fleet did not stay.

Port Jackson - the colony begins

The ships moved up the coast. At Sydney Cove the water was deep and calm. The British colony began here on 26 January 1788.

Simple map of the coast showing the First Fleet moving up the coast from Botany Bay to Port Jackson (Sydney Cove) in January 1788, with two cards below giving the dates and reasons.

Part 6 — Terra Nullius

Britain also used a legal idea called **Terra Nullius**. It is an old name that means ‘nobody’s land’. Britain said the land had no owner, so Britain could claim it. This idea helped Britain decide to start a colony.

Terra Nullius - a British legal idea

Terra Nullius is an old name. It means 'nobody's land'.

Britain used this legal idea. Britain said the land had no owner, so Britain could claim it.

This idea helped Britain decide to start a colony in Australia.

In Section 2C we find out more about this idea, and the words people use.

Card explaining Terra Nullius as a British legal idea meaning 'nobody's land', used by Britain to claim the land.

In Section 2C we find out more about this idea, and the words people use.

Worked examples

Example 1 — with steps

Question: Why did Britain need a penal colony by 1786? Answer in one sentence, using 'because'.

Step 1 — Find the clue. Part 4 says Britain's prisons were full of prisoners.

Step 2 — Pick the key word. A colony for prisoners is a *penal colony*.

Step 3 — Say it in one sentence. Britain needed a penal colony *because* its prisons were full.

Example 2 — using a source

Question: Look at the card of Cook's secret instructions. Did the orders tell Cook to claim land for Britain? How do we know?

Think: A source is something old that helps us find out about the past. The card is a source. Read the card and look for the clue.

Clue: Order 4 on the card says, 'Claim new land for Britain.'

Answer: Yes. We know because order 4 on the card says, 'Claim new land for Britain.'

Practice tasks

With help

1. Fill in the blank. A land where people from another country settle, and that their old country still rules, is called a _____.

2. Fill in the blank. A colony that prisoners are sent to is called a _____.
3. Match each navigator to a year: Jansz, Hartog, Tasman, Cook — 1770, 1606, 1642, 1616.
4. Put these years in order from first to last: 1788, 1642, 1770, 1606.
5. True or false? (a) Terra Nullius meant 'nobody's land'. (b) The First Fleet stayed at Botany Bay.
6. Fill in the blank from the word bank (*Port Jackson, Botany Bay*): The ships moved from _____ to _____.

On your own

7. Give two reasons why Britain wanted a colony in Australia. Use 'because' in one of your answers.
 8. Why did the fleet move from Botany Bay to Port Jackson?
 9. How did Cook's secret instructions lead to the British colony? Write one or two sentences.
-

Source task

Teacher support: read the card aloud with the class before the task.

Look at the card **Cook's secret instructions (1768)** in Part 3.

- a. What was Cook told to look for?
 - b. What was Cook told to do with new land he found?
 - c. Which word on the card tells us the orders were not for everyone to read?
-

Answers

1. a colony
 2. a penal colony
 3. Jansz 1606; Hartog 1616; Tasman 1642; Cook 1770
 4. 1606, 1642, 1770, 1788
 5.
(a) true (b) false — the fleet moved to Port Jackson
 6. from Botany Bay to Port Jackson
-

Model answers

7. Britain wanted a colony because its prisons were full. It also wanted a base far to the south.
8. The fleet moved because Botany Bay had little fresh water and poor soil, and Port Jackson had deep, calm water for ships.
9. The secret instructions told Cook to find a great southern land and claim land for Britain. So Cook's maps helped Britain decide to start a colony.

Source task: (a) a great land far to the south. (b) claim it for Britain. (c) 'secret'.

The First Fleet: experiences of convicts, officials and the military in the first British colony

For the teacher

Read-aloud note. Student page text (headings, bullets, tasks, figure lettering and alt text) is at Year 3 or below and is gated by `src/check_2b_vocab.py`. *Teacher says* scripts run two years up (Year 5 read-aloud ceiling per house word policy). Subject words are defined at first use in the student glossary and are reported by the gate as exemption 2, not as violations.

Curriculum alignment (codes only; wording not reproduced).

- Content description **VC2HH4K08** (code only).
- Elaborations drawn on (linkage keys, not teaching order — D7): **VC2HH4K08.E01, .E02, .E03, .E04, .E05** (codes only).

A note on Country (D3, Rule 1). The content description names Gadigal Country. Under this book’s exclusions (§2A), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content is not taught in this section; that place-naming is referred to in teacher-facing metadata only and is never placed on the student page. Students learn the colony as Sydney (Port Jackson), matching the §2A precedent for VC2HH4K07.

How the section is built. One teaching sequence (Parts 1–10) · two worked examples (Parts 2 and 6) · scaffolded practice S1–S7 · three unscaffolded “You try” tasks (Part 11) · one short, image-led source task with teacher support (Part 12). Difficult history (the hulks, children transported, convicts in chains) is kept age-appropriate: short, true, plainly worded, and always paired with a person and a feeling word the band can use.

Referents (D4, D9) — retrieved 2026-08-24.

Referent used	Source
Ship list, group numbers, ports and dates of the voyage	Wikipedia, “First Fleet”; Wikipedia, “List of convicts on the First Fleet”
John Hudson, aged about nine, youngest convict; convicted December 1783, 7 years, sailed on the Friendship	Wikipedia, “List of convicts on the First Fleet”
Henry Kable and Susannah Holmes; married 10 February 1788; first civil suit against captain Duncan Sinclair, heard by David Collins	Wikipedia, “First Fleet”; “List of convicts on the First Fleet”
Arthur Phillip’s letter to Lord Sydney, 15 May 1788, calling Port Jackson “the finest Harbour in the World”; equal rations for convicts, officers and marines; Phillip left December 1792	Wikipedia, “First Fleet”; “Arthur Phillip”
Prison hulks on the Thames; John Howard, <i>The State of the Prisons</i> (1777)	Wikipedia, “Prison hulk”; “John Howard (prison reformer)”
Daily life at Sydney Cove; the Supply’s food run to the Cape of Good Hope (back May 1789); the Second Fleet’s arrival June 1790 with many sick convicts	Watkin Tench, <i>A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson</i> (1793); Wikipedia, “First Fleet”
Ralph Clark’s diary of the voyage	State Library of NSW (Mitchell Library), cited at collection level
John White, <i>Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales</i> (1790)	Wikipedia, “John White (surgeon)”
1794 view of Sydney Cove, earliest known oil painting of the settlement, attributed to the convict artist Thomas Watling (authorship debated)	State Library of NSW, Dixson Gallery, cited at collection level

Subject-word glossary (defined at first use on the student page).

Word	Meaning given to students
colony	a new home place that a far-away country runs
convict	a person sent away as a punishment for a crime
governor	the boss of the colony
marines	the soldiers who guarded the convicts
soldier	a person in the army
transported	sent away by ship as a punishment
hulks	old ships used as floating prisons
perspective	the way one person sees a thing
source	a thing from the past that helps us know about the past

Part 1 · Three groups on the ships

Teacher says: More than two hundred years ago, England was crowded and poor people went hungry. Stealing was a crime, and the courts punished it by sending people far away. In May 1787, eleven ships left England to start a new colony on the other side of the world. We call those ships the First Fleet. Three big groups sailed on them: the officials who ran things, the marines who guarded, and the convicts — the people sent away as a punishment for crimes.

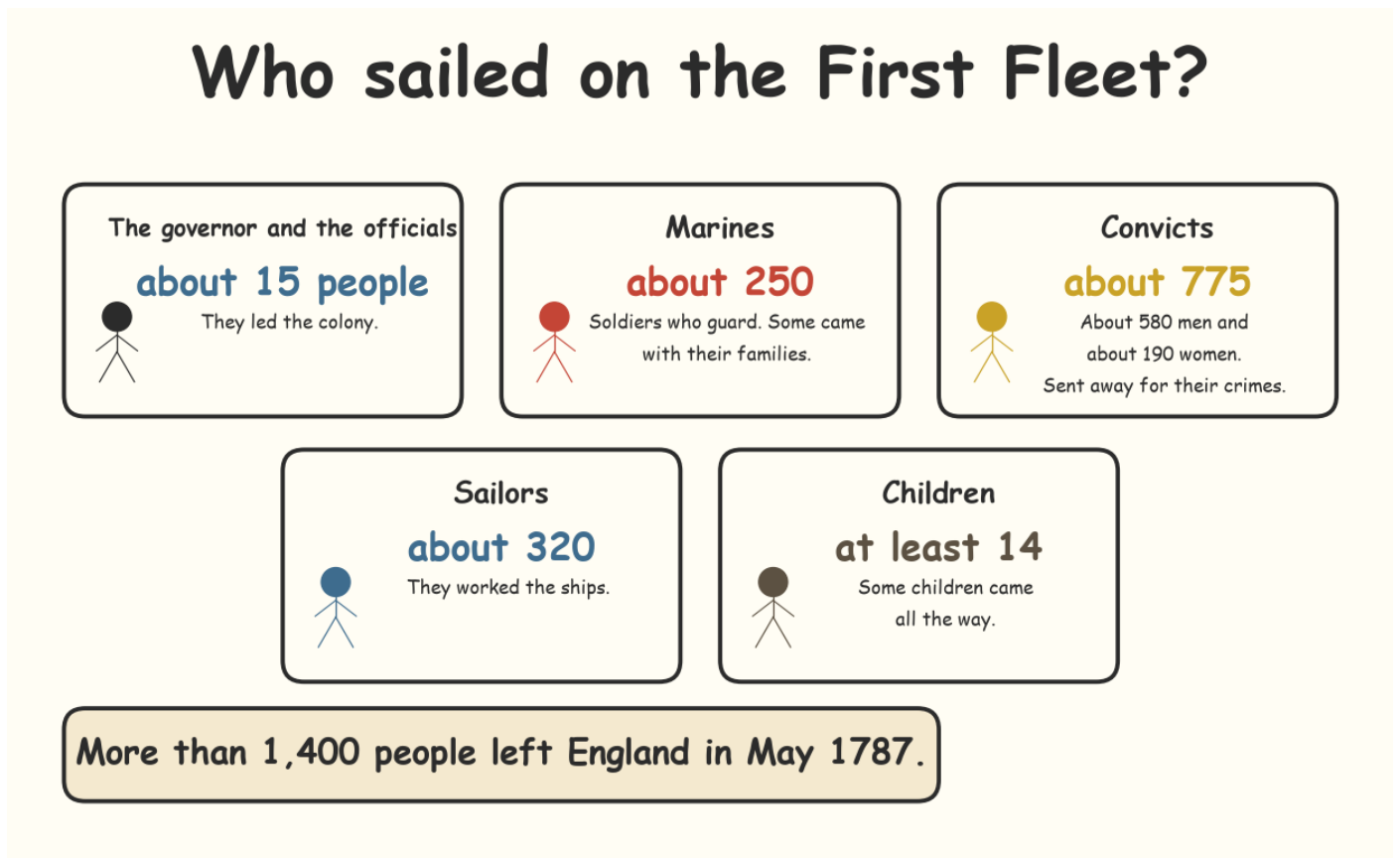
- Long ago, England sent ships to start a new **colony** far away.
- A **colony** is a new home place that a far-away country runs.
- We call the ships the **First Fleet**.
- Three big groups sailed:

- the **officials** — they ran the colony,
- the **marines** — soldiers who guarded,
- the **convicts** — people sent away for crimes.

Words to know

- **convict** — a person sent away as a punishment for a crime.
- **colony** — a new home place that a far-away country runs.
- **governor** — the boss of the colony.
- **marines** — the soldiers who guarded the convicts.
- **soldier** — a person in the army.
- **transported** — sent away by ship as a punishment.
- **hulks** — old ships used as floating prisons.
- **perspective** — the way one person sees a thing.
- **source** — a thing from the past that helps us know about the past.

Part 2 · Worked example 1: read the groups table



Five cards show who sailed on the First Fleet: about 15 officials, about 250 marines, about 775 convicts, about 320 sailors and at least 14 children.

Teacher says: This table is a summary — one card for each group. Historians built it from the ships' own lists. When we read a table, we ask three questions: Who? How many? What was it like for them?

We read one row together.

- Who? **Convicts.**
- How many? **About 775** — about 580 men and about 190 women.
- What was it like? **Crowded. Many slept below, and some slept in chains.**

S1 · Now you read the table.

- How many marines sailed?
- What did the sailors do on the trip?
- Which groups came with their families?

Part 3 · The eleven ships

The eleven ships of the First Fleet

 2 guard ships They keep the ships safe. Sirius Supply	 6 convict ships They carry the convicts. Alexander Charlotte Friendship Lady Penrhyn Prince of Wales Scarborough	 3 food ships They carry food for the long journey. Borrowdale Fishburn Golden Grove
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Three lists name the eleven ships of the First Fleet: two guard ships, six convict ships and three food ships.

- Eleven ships made the trip: 2 guard ships, 6 convict ships, 3 food ships.
- The food ships carried food for the long journey.

S2 · Put the ship names in the right list.

Word bank: Sirius · Supply · Alexander · Charlotte · Friendship · Lady Penrhyn · Prince of Wales · Scarborough · Borrowdale · Fishburn · Golden Grove

guard ships (2)

convict ships (6)

food ships (3)

Small crimes, big punishment

some bread

a shirt

a silver spoon

a pocket watch

some cheese

Long ago, courts sent people away for stealing small things like these.

7 years

14 years

For life

How long were they sent away for?



John Hudson was about nine.
He was the youngest convict
of them all.

Many of the people sent away
were poor. Some stole food
because they were hungry.

Cards show small stolen things — some bread, a shirt, a silver spoon, a pocket watch, some cheese — and the sentences: 7 years, 14 years or for life.

Teacher says: The range of crimes was wide. People were transported for stealing a horse, for breaking into a house — but also for tiny things: a loaf of bread, a shirt, a spoon. Many of the transported people were poor, and some stole food because they were hungry. John Hudson was about nine years old when he sailed — the youngest convict of them all.

- Long ago, stealing was a crime — even small things.
- Courts sent people away for **7 years**, **14 years**, or **for life**.

S3 · Look at the picture.

- Circle the five things people stole.
- Tick the box: a person could be sent away for 7 years. ☐ yes ☐ no
- John Hudson was about nine. Write one sentence about how he might have felt.

Prison ships on the river



dark

crowded

dirty

Some prisoners waited on these old ships
for the long journey.

One man spoke up.

In 1777, John Howard
wrote a book about
the bad prisons.

He wanted them
to be better.

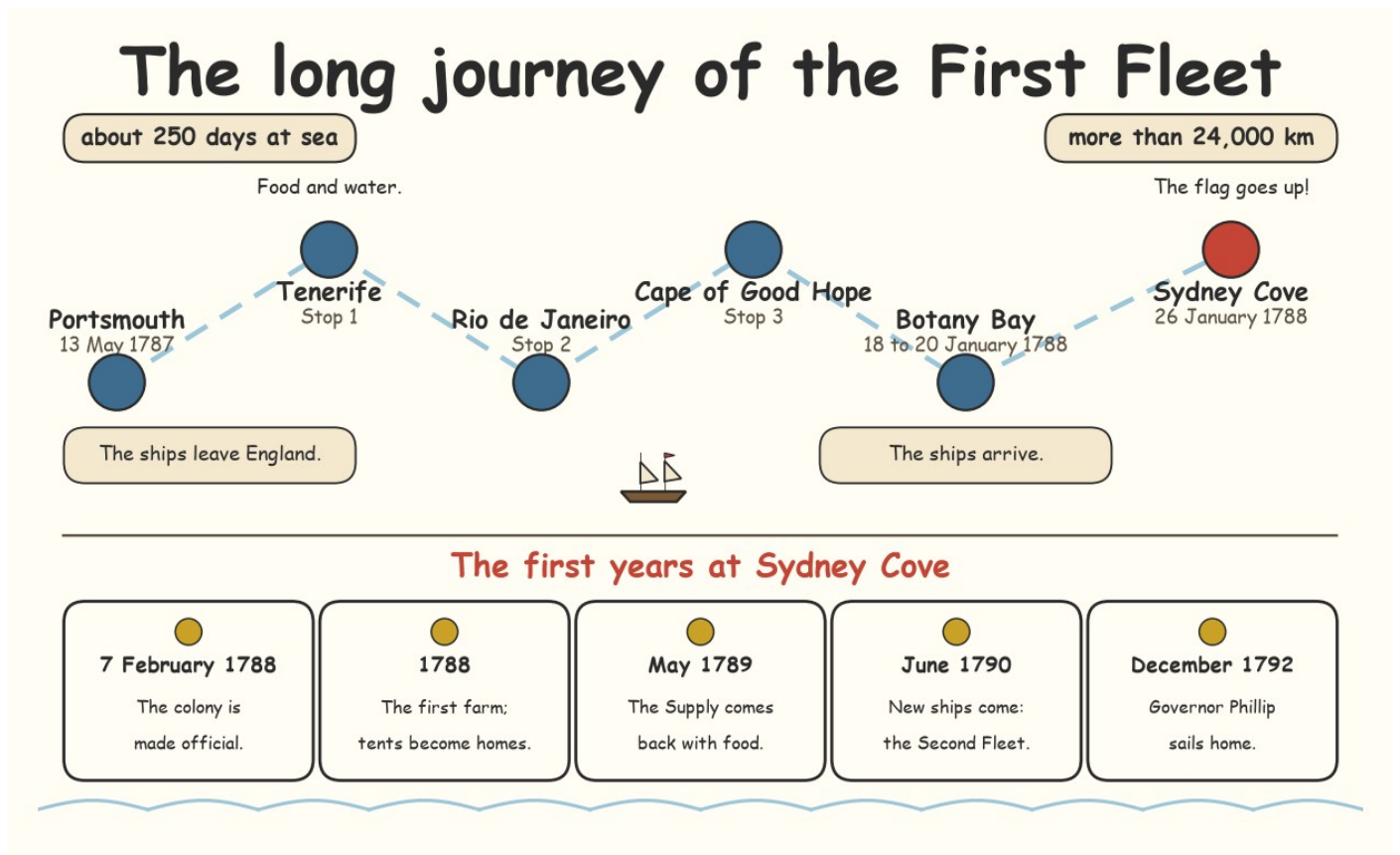
An old prison ship at night, its windows barred; clue cards read dark, crowded, dirty.

Teacher says: Before the ships left England, many prisoners waited on old ships called hulks. Life on the hulks was bad: dark, crowded and dirty rooms. In 1777 a man named John Howard wrote a book about the bad prisons. He wanted them to be better. His book is a source — it helps us know how prisoners were treated.

- Some prisoners waited on old ships called **hulks**.
- The hulks were **dark**, **crowded** and **dirty**.

S4 · Fill in the missing word: dark / crowded / dirty.

- At night, the hulks were _____.
- Many people in one small room — the hulks were _____.
- Not clean — the hulks were _____.



A timeline of the journey: Portsmouth 13 May 1787, then Tenerife, Rio de Janeiro and the Cape of Good Hope, Botany Bay 18 to 20 January 1788, Sydney Cove 26 January 1788; below, five cards tell the first years at Sydney Cove.

Teacher says: The Fleet left Portsmouth on 13 May 1787. It stopped at Tenerife, at Rio de Janeiro and at the Cape of Good Hope to take on food and water. After about 250 days at sea — more than 24,000 kilometres — the ships reached Botany Bay in January 1788. Days later they moved to Sydney Cove, and on 26 January 1788 the flag went up. On 7 February 1788 the colony was made official.

- The ships left Portsmouth on **13 May 1787**.
- They stopped three times for food and water.
- They arrived at Botany Bay in **January 1788** — about **250 days** at sea.
- They moved to Sydney Cove. The flag went up on **26 January 1788**.

We add one date together.

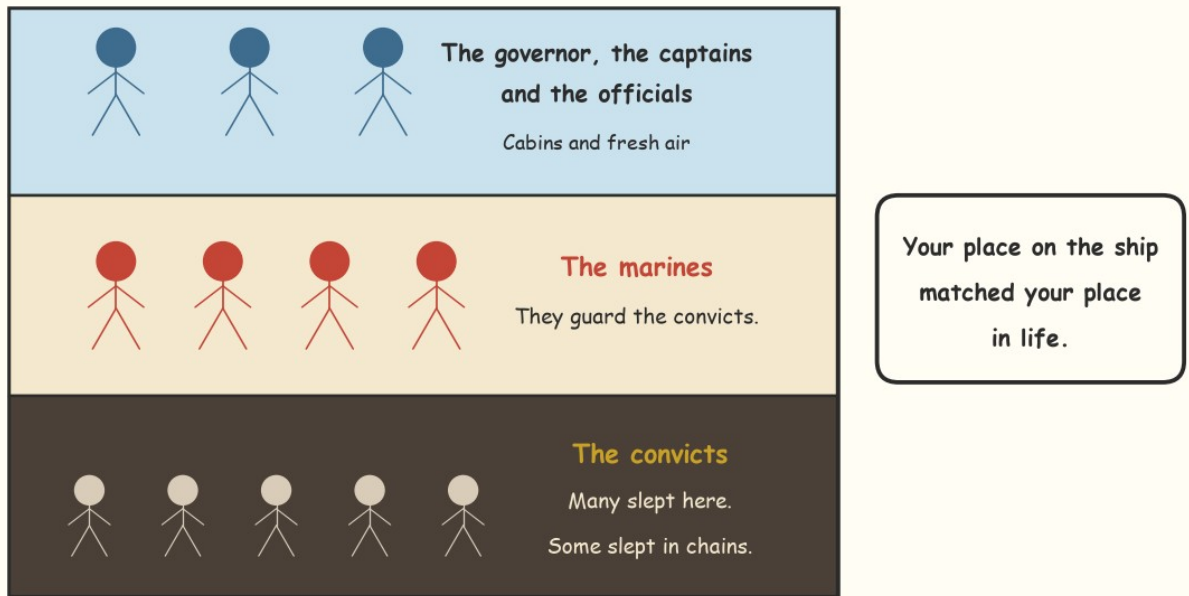
- Date: **7 February 1788**.
- What happened? **The colony was made official.**
- Now the timeline tells the story of the first years too.

S5 · You add two more dates.

Cards: May 1789 — the Supply comes back with food. · **June 1790** — new ships come: the Second Fleet.

- Write each date on your timeline copy.
- Write what happened next to it.

On the ship: who sleeps where?



A ship cut open to show three sleeping places: the governor, captains and officials on top in cabins; the marines in the middle; the convicts at the bottom, some in chains.

Teacher says: Your place on the ship matched your place in life. The governor, the captains and the officials slept in cabins, with fresh air. The marines slept near the convicts to guard them. The convicts slept below — many in chains. That is social standing: who counts, and who is made to count for less. Attitudes to the poor were harsh; most people in charge thought poor prisoners did not matter. Governor Phillip tried one fair thing in the colony: convicts got the same food as officers and marines.

- Top: the governor, the captains and the officials — cabins and fresh air.
- Middle: the marines — they guard the convicts.
- Bottom: the convicts — many slept here; some slept in chains.

S6 · Match the group to its place. Write 1 (top), 2 (middle) or 3 (bottom).

- _____ the convicts
- _____ the officials
- _____ the marines
- Why did the marines sleep near the convicts?

A day at Sydney Cove

Everyone worked: they cut down trees, made gardens, cooked, and carried water.



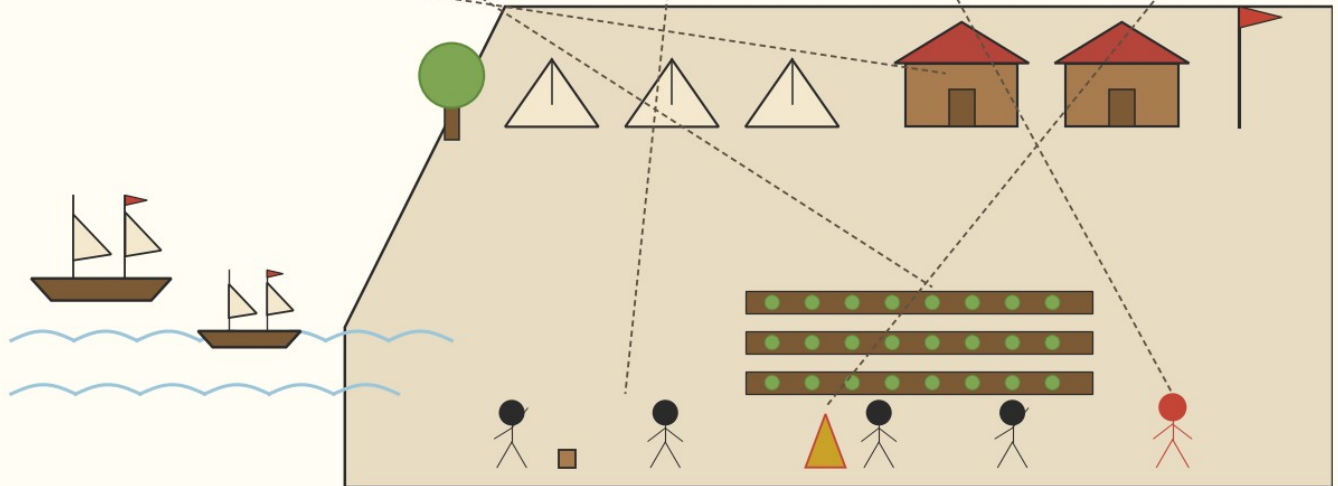
homes

the farm

work

guards

food



A busy day at Sydney Cove: ships at anchor, tents and homes, a farm, people cutting trees, digging, cooking and carrying water, and a marine on guard.

Teacher says: Everyone worked. They cut down trees, built homes and made gardens. They cooked and carried water. Food was short at first and the colony was hungry until the farms grew. Phillip sent the little ship Supply to the Cape of Good Hope for food; it came back in May 1789. In June 1790 new ships came — the Second Fleet — with more people, many of them very sick.

- Everyone worked.
- They cut down trees, made gardens, cooked and carried water.

S7 · Look at the picture.

- Tick the jobs you can see: ☐ cutting trees ☐ cooking ☐ carrying water ☐ guarding ☐ driving a car
- Write one thing people in the colony made or grew.

Four people see it four ways

 Governor Arthur Phillip He liked the deep, safe harbour. He worried about food.	 Captain Watkin Tench, a marine He wrote a book about it all, in 1789.
 Susannah Holmes, a convict She came with her baby son. She made a new home.	 A boy on the ship Home was far away. Everything was new.
A perspective is the way one person sees a thing. Four people, four ways of seeing!	

Four cards: Governor Arthur Phillip; Captain Watkin Tench, a marine; Susannah Holmes, a convict; and a boy on the ship — each with their own way of seeing the colony.

Teacher says: The same colony, four different ways of seeing it. Governor Arthur Phillip liked the deep, safe harbour, but he worried about food. Captain Watkin Tench, a marine, wrote a book about it all in 1789 — his book is a source. Susannah Holmes, a convict, came with her baby son and made a new home. And a boy on the ships saw everything new, with home far away. Four people, four perspectives.

- A **perspective** is the way one person sees a thing.
- Four people can see the same thing four ways.

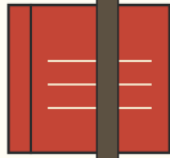
Say it · Say each person's words with a matching face.

Part 10 · How do we know?

How do we know?



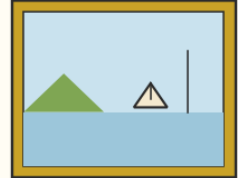
A book by
Watkin Tench,
written in 1789.



The diary of
Ralph Clark.
He wrote it on the ships.



A book by
John White,
about the journey, 1790



A painting of
Sydney Cove,
made in 1794

These are sources.

A source helps us know about the past.

Four source cards: a book by Watkin Tench written in 1789; the diary of Ralph Clark, written on the ships; a book by John White about the journey, 1790; and a painting of Sydney Cove made in 1794.

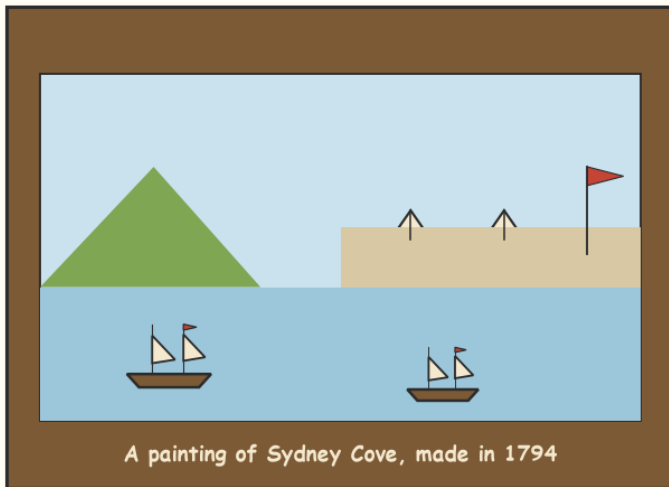
Teacher says: We know about the First Fleet from sources — things left from the past. Diaries, like the diary of Ralph Clark, written on the ships. Books, like the book Watkin Tench wrote in 1789 and the book John White wrote in 1790. And artworks, like the 1794 painting of Sydney Cove. Sources let us see the past through real people's eyes.

- A **source** is a thing from the past that helps us know about the past.
- Diaries, books and paintings are sources.

Part 11 · You try

1. Pick one group from the First Fleet. Write two or three sentences about their trip and their first year in the colony.
2. Pick two dates from the timeline. Write what happened and why it mattered.
3. It is 26 January 1788 and the flag goes up. Pick one person from Part 9. Write how they see that day.

Take a good look



This is our drawing of a real painting.
The real one is at the State Library in Sydney.

A convict might have written:

We sleep in tents.

The sun is hot.

We work all day.

The food is little.

I dream of bread.

Not a real diary — made from what we know.

What can
you see?

What are
they doing?

How do you
think they
felt?

Our copy of the 1794 painting of Sydney Cove, beside a made-up diary card and three looking questions: What can you see? What are they doing? How do you think they felt?

Teacher says: Look at the picture of the painting first — our drawing of a real one, kept at the State Library in Sydney. What can you see? What are they doing? How do you think they felt? Now listen to these diary lines. They are not one real diary: we made them from what the sources tell us, so a convict might have written them. “We sleep in tents. The sun is hot. We work all day. The food is little. I dream of bread.”

- Look at the painting.
 - What can you see?
 - What are they doing?
 - How do you think they felt?
- Starters: “I can see _____.” · “They are _____.” · “I think they felt _____ because _____.”

Part 13 · Look back

- I can tell who sailed on the First Fleet.
- I can put dates in order on a timeline.
- I can tell how two people saw the colony in different ways.
- I can use a source to find out about the past.

What to look for

- **S1/S2 (table, E01):** marines about 250; sailors worked the ships; the marines came with their families; and the convict ships’ list is complete (the Friendship carries Hudson, Kable and Holmes). Accept any sensible reading of the cards.
- **S3 (crimes, E03):** five circled things; yes ticked; feeling sentences that name a feeling word (scared, sad, far from home) — perspective language emerging.
- **S4 (hulks, E04):** dark / crowded / dirty in that order.
- **S5 (timeline, E02):** dates placed after 26 January 1788 and in order (May 1789 before June 1790), each with its event.

- **S6 (social standing, E04):** 3, 1, 2; marines slept near the convicts to guard them.
- **S7 (daily life, E05):** four jobs ticked (not driving a car); one made-or-grew thing (homes, gardens, wheat, bread).
- **You try (unscaffolded):** look for cause/consequence and continuity/change language at band level (“because”, “so”, “before/after”, “changed/stayed”), and a named group or person with a named experience.
- **Part 12 (source task):** see/think/wonder answers anchored in the image (tents, ships, flag, people working); feelings justified with “because”.

Notes. Perspective and source are the section’s two big ideas; both are defined at first use and returned to in Parts 9–12. The composite diary in Part 12 is clearly labelled as made up from the sources (D9) — never present it as a real document. The CD’s Gadigal Country place-naming is referred to only in the teacher metadata above (Rule 1, §2A treatment).

Different interpretations of early colonisation: settlement, colonisation, invasion and Terra Nullius

Code: VC2HH4K10 **Draws on:** VC2HH4K10.E01 · VC2HH4K10.E02 · VC2HH4K10.E03 · VC2HH4K10.E04
(.E04 is excluded from teaching in this book — see TOC §2A. It is kept here only as a linkage key.)

New ideas

One year, three words

In 1788, ships from Britain arrived at Port Jackson. The people on board began a colony. The British flag went up, and Governor Arthur Phillip was in charge.

Australians do not all use the same word for what happened that year. Some people say **settlement**. Some say **colonisation**. Some say **invasion**. In this section we look at what each word means, and why the word we pick matters.

Words to know

- **colony** — a place ruled by another country.
- **convict** — a person made to leave Britain because they broke the law.
- **officer** — a man in charge of soldiers.
- **treaty** — a written agreement between two sides. Both sides say yes to it before anything starts.

The four words of this section

We say what each word means before we use it. Keep these meanings in mind.

SETTLEMENT

People moving to a new place to live there.

The word does not say who was there first, or who is in charge.

COLONISATION

One country taking control of another place and starting a colony there. A colony is a place ruled by another country.

The word points to control: who makes the rules.

INVASION

An army entering a place to take control of it. The people already there have not agreed to it.

The word points to soldiers and to taking control without agreement.

TERRA NULLIUS

Two Latin words that mean 'nobody's land'. Terra Nullius was an idea in British law, used in 1788.

It treated the land as if it belonged to no one.

These words do not come with one fixed meaning. In this section, we use the meanings on these cards. Every question in this section can be answered from these meanings.

Four word cards with the meanings this section uses: settlement, colonisation, invasion and Terra Nullius

These words do not come with one fixed meaning. In this section we use the meanings on the cards. Every question here can be answered from these meanings.

What does each word tell you?

A word tells you some things and leaves other things out. That is why picking a word matters.

SETTLEMENT

It says:

- ✓ People came to a new place to live.

It does not say:

- Who was in charge of the land.
- Whether soldiers came.

COLONISATION

It says:

- ✓ Another country took control.
- ✓ A colony began, ruled from far away.

It does not say:

- How control was taken.
- Whether there was any agreement.

INVASION

It says:

- ✓ Soldiers came to take control.
- ✓ The people there had not agreed.

It does not say:

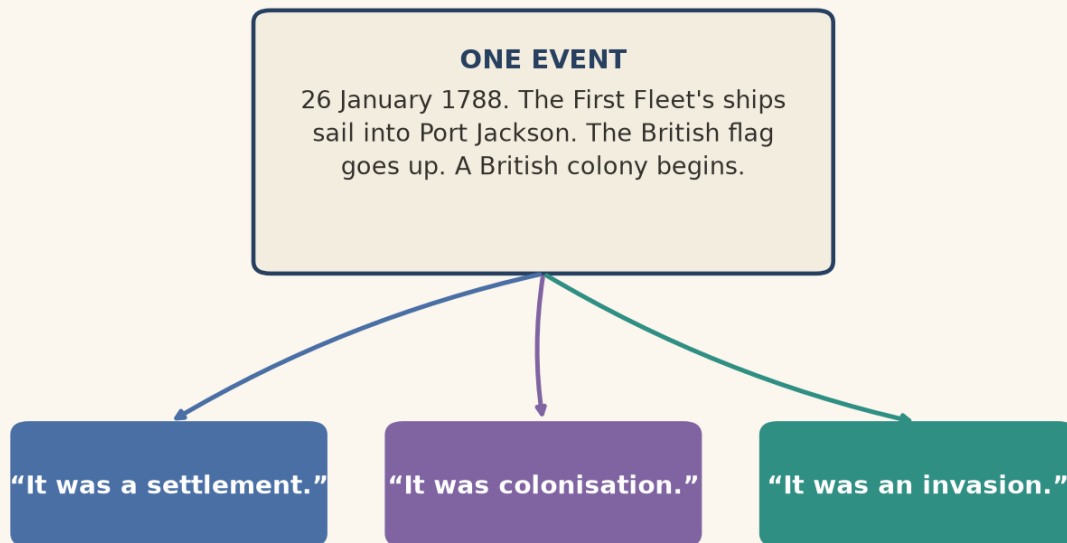
- Whether the soldiers stayed to live.

Read the three cards across. Then look at the next picture.

Three cards for settlement, colonisation and invasion, each showing what the word says and what it does not say

Each word puts a different picture in your head. Two of the words say someone took control. Only one word says the people already there did not agree.

One event, three words



The same event. Three different words. The word a person picks tells you how they see what happened.

That is what an interpretation is: the meaning we put on an event.

One event, 26 January 1788 at Port Jackson, with three sentences put on it: it was a settlement, it was a colonisation, it was an invasion

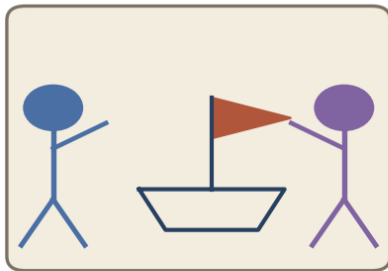
The event stays the same. The sentences are not the same. Each sentence puts a different meaning on the event. A meaning we put on an event is called an **interpretation**.

Two idea words

History uses two words a lot. Here is the difference.

PERSPECTIVE

How a person sees something, from where they stand and what their own life has been like.



Two people look at the same thing from different sides.

INTERPRETATION

A way of telling what something in the past means. People can look at the same event and give it different meanings.

This whole section is about the interpretations of 1788: the settlement, colonisation and invasion words each give the event a different meaning.

You will use both idea words again in section 3E.

Two panels: perspective, how a person sees something from where they stand; and interpretation, the meaning we put on something in the past

Terra Nullius, step by step

Read the boxes from the top down. Each box follows from the last.

TERRA NULLIUS

Two Latin words. They mean 'nobody's land'.



A BRITISH IDEA

It was an idea in British law. A way of thinking about land that Britain wanted.



USED IN 1788

The British acted as if the land belonged to no one. They did not buy the land or ask the people living there.



NO TREATY

A treaty is a written agreement between two sides, made before something starts. In 1788, no treaty was made with the people already living there.

The word Terra Nullius tells you how the British chose to see the land.

Four steps: Terra Nullius is two Latin words that mean nobody's land; it was an idea in British law; the British used it in 1788 and acted as if the land belonged to no one; so no treaty was made

Terra Nullius was not what the land was. People were already living on the land. It was how the British chose to see the land.

What is a treaty?

THE WORD

A treaty is a written agreement between two sides. Both sides say yes to it before anything starts. It says what each side may do.

Countries still make treaties today, when they want to agree on something big.

AUSTRALIA IN 1788

The British started their colony in Australia.

No treaty was made. There was no written agreement with the people who were already living on the land.

This is one reason some people say the word invasion fits: control was taken without agreement.

Treaty is a history word in this book. Now you know what it means.

Two cards: a treaty is a written agreement that both sides say yes to; in Australia in 1788 no treaty was made with the people already living on the land

Pick a word, pick a story

THE FACT WE ALL START FROM

In 1788, ships came from Britain and their people began a colony in Australia.

“The British settled here.”

puts this picture in your head: people coming to live in a new place.

“The British colonised this land.”

puts this picture in your head: another country taking control and making the rules.

“The British invaded this land.”

puts this picture in your head: soldiers taking control, with no agreement from the people already there.

All three sentences can be about the same year, 1788. Each word chooses a different way of seeing it.

Three sentences about 1788, the British settled here, the British colonised this land, the British invaded this land, each with the picture it puts in your head

Facts and words are not the same thing

WHAT WE KNOW

facts most people agree on

- ✓ Ships came from Britain in 1788.
- ✓ A British colony began at Port Jackson.
- ✓ The British flag went up.
- ✓ No treaty was made with the people already living there.

WHAT WE PICK

one word for the same facts

settlement?

colonisation?

invasion?

The facts stay the same. The word we put on them is the interpretation.

Two panels: the facts about 1788 that most people agree on, and the three words we can pick for those same facts

The facts stay the same. The word we put on them is the interpretation.

Two good answers

These are made-up answers from made-up students. They show the move to make.

MODEL ANSWER A (made up)

"I pick colonisation. The word means one country taking control of another place. In 1788 Britain took control and made the rules for the new colony. So the word fits what happened."

MODEL ANSWER B (made up)

"I pick invasion. The word means soldiers coming in to take control, with no agreement from the people already there. Soldiers came with the First Fleet, and no treaty was made. So the word fits what happened."

BOTH ANSWERS ARE GOOD. EACH ONE:

picks one word • says what the word means • gives a reason from what we know about 1788. The reason is what we look at, not which word was picked.

Two made-up model answers, one picking colonisation and one picking invasion; both are good because each one says what the word means and gives a reason

When we look at answers like these, we look at the reason — not which word was picked.

Worked examples

Example 1 — with steps

How is *settlement* different from *colonisation*? Use the word cards.

What I do

Read the settlement card.

Read the colonisation card.

Look for the extra bit in colonisation.

What I see

"People moving to a new place to live there."

"One country taking control of another place and starting a colony there."

It says one country takes control and makes the rules. Settlement does not say that.

So: settlement is about people going to live somewhere. Colonisation is about one country taking control of a place.

Example 2 — with steps

Explain *Terra Nullius* in your own words.

What I do	What I say
Say where the words come from.	Terra Nullius is two Latin words. They mean “nobody’s land”.
Say whose idea it was.	It was an idea in British law.
Say what the British did because of it.	They acted as if the land belonged to no one. They did not buy the land or ask the people living there.
Say what that meant for a treaty.	No treaty was made.

Practice questions

With steps

- Q1.** Look at the word cards. Which word means “people moving to a new place to live there”?
- Q2.** Which word means “one country taking control of another place and starting a colony there”?
- Q3.** Terra Nullius is two words from which language? What do the two words mean?
- Q4.** Look at the fact card in the source task below. Was a treaty made in 1788 with the people already living on the land?
- Q5.** Fill in the blank: “The event stays the same. The meaning we put on it is the _____.”
- Q6.** Tick each word that could be about the same year, 1788: settlement ☐ colonisation ☐ invasion ☐

On your own

- Q7.** Say what *colonisation* means in your own words. Then say one thing *settlement* does not say.
- Q8.** Why do some people say the word *invasion* fits 1788? Use what the word means and what we know about 1788.
- Q9.** Two people pick different words for 1788, and both give a good reason. Why can both answers be good?
-

Source task

Q10. Teacher reads the card aloud. You follow along and look at the words.

Fact card: 26 January 1788

Teacher reads the card. You follow along and look at the words.

WHAT WE KNOW

1. The First Fleet's ships sailed into Port Jackson.
2. The people on board were convicts, soldiers and officers from Britain, and some families.
3. The British flag went up. Governor Arthur Phillip was in charge.
4. People were already living on the land.
5. No treaty was made.

YOUR TASK

Pick one word from this section for 1788. Say your reason in one sentence, using what the word means.

Fact card for 26 January 1788: five facts, the First Fleet's ships sailed into Port Jackson, the people on board were convicts, soldiers and officers from Britain and some families, the British flag went up and Governor Arthur Phillip was in charge, people were already living on the land, no treaty was made; the task is to pick one word for 1788 and give a reason

Pick one word from this section for 1788. Say your reason in one sentence, using what the word means.

Answers

Q1. Settlement. **Q2.** Colonisation. **Q3.** Latin. The words mean “nobody’s land”. **Q4.** No. No treaty was made. **Q5.** Interpretation. **Q6.** All three. All three words can be about 1788. **Q7.** Colonisation means one country taking control of another place and starting a colony there. Settlement does not say one country takes control. **Q8.** The word invasion means soldiers taking control where the people already there have not agreed. Soldiers came with the First Fleet in 1788, and no treaty was made, so some people say the word fits. **Q9.** The facts stay the same; the word is the interpretation. We look at the reason, not which word was picked. **Q10.** Any word is OK if the reason uses what the word means. Example: colonisation, because Britain took control and began a colony at Port Jackson.

Model answers

Q7. Colonisation is when one country takes control of another place and starts a colony there. Settlement does not say that one country takes control. It only says people move to a new place to live.

Q8. Invasion means an army entering a place to take control of it, when the people already there have not agreed. In 1788, soldiers came with the First Fleet, the British took control, and no treaty was made with the people already living on the land. So some people say the word invasion fits.

Q9. The facts about 1788 stay the same. The word we put on the facts is the interpretation. Two people can pick different words and both give a good reason, because the reason is what we look at — not which word was picked.

Q10. Model answer: “I pick settlement, because the word means people moving to a new place to live there, and the people on the ships came to live here.” A different word is OK too, if your reason uses what the word means.

Teacher notes

- **Scope.** This section teaches only the documented remainder of VC2HH4K10 (TOC §2A): what settlement, colonisation and invasion each imply; that the choice of word carries an interpretation; Terra Nullius as the British legal idea it was; that no treaty was made; that some Australians use different words for the same 1788 events. Elaboration .E04 (Mabo) is excluded entirely — do not teach it.
- **D9.** Attribute no view to any First Nations person or community. The agents in student-facing text are always “some people / some Australians”. Keep to the documented facts on the fact card; do not add detail.
- **Reading load.** Read the word cards and the fact card aloud; students follow along. The section pairs with 3E, where perspective and interpretation return.
- **Marking.** For Q7–Q10, look at the reason (the word’s meaning tied to a fact), not which word was picked. The model-answers figure shows the standard.