

Mathematics Level 7

Chapter 2 — Historical Concepts and Skills: questions, chronology and sources

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Contents

Section	Page
Asking good questions about the past	2
Putting the past in order	11
Looking closely at historical sources	21
Seeing the past through people's eyes	33
Different stories about the same past	45

Asking good questions about the past

Historians find out about the past. But they do not just read about it. They **ask questions**. A question that helps us find out about the past is called a **historical question**. In this section you will learn to ask many kinds of historical questions. Your questions will help you find clues about how people lived long ago.

CURRICULUM TRACEABILITY — teacher reference, not student text

Section 2A · Chapter 2 (Historical Concepts and Skills — questions, chronology and sources)

Book: History Level 4 (upper year of the Levels 3 and 4 band)

Owns: VC2HH4S01

Draws on: VC2HH4S01.E01, .E02, .E03 and .E04 — all neutral. This CD carries no First Nations elaboration and is unaffected by TOC \$2 decision D3;

nothing

is excluded in this section. (The build TOC lists VC2HH4S01 among the unaffected sections.)

Cross-references: 1A (change in a local community), 1D and 1E (the first colony and the First Fleet). This is a Skills section: it draws its content from Chapter 1, as VCAA's own elaborations pair them (TOC D6).

Vocabulary ceiling: Yr4 (TOC decision D2). Curriculum words and subject terms are defined at first use (WORD_LEVEL_POLICY Rule 2).

Words we will use

historian — a person who finds out about the past.

historical question — a question that helps you find out about the past.

source — a thing that gives us clues about the past. A picture, a map, an object, a diary or a letter can all be sources.

evidence — the clues a source gives us. Evidence helps us answer our questions.

investigation — when you ask questions and check sources to find out about the past.

KWL chart — a chart with three parts: what you **Know**, what you **Want** to know, and what you have **Learned**.

concept — a big idea. Three big ideas in history are causes, significance and change.

cause — why something happened.

significance — why something is important.

change — what became different.

convict — a person who broke a law and was sent to a far-away place to do hard work.

marine — a soldier who sailed on the ships to guard the new colony.

Teaching sequence

Historians look at **sources** to answer their questions. The clues a source gives are called **evidence**. When you ask questions and check sources, you are doing an **investigation**.

To ask good questions, you use tools. In this section you will learn three tools: the **5 Ws + H**, a **KWL chart**, and **concept questions**.

Tool 1 — The 5 Ws + H. These six question words help you look carefully at any source.

The 5 Ws + H: six question words

Who? the people	What? the thing or event	When? the time or date
Where? the place	Why? the reason or cause	How? the way it happened

Six boxes showing the question words who, what, when, where, why, how, with a short hint under each.

Tool 2 — A KWL chart. A KWL chart has three parts. You fill in **K** and **W** before you look at sources, and **L** at the end.

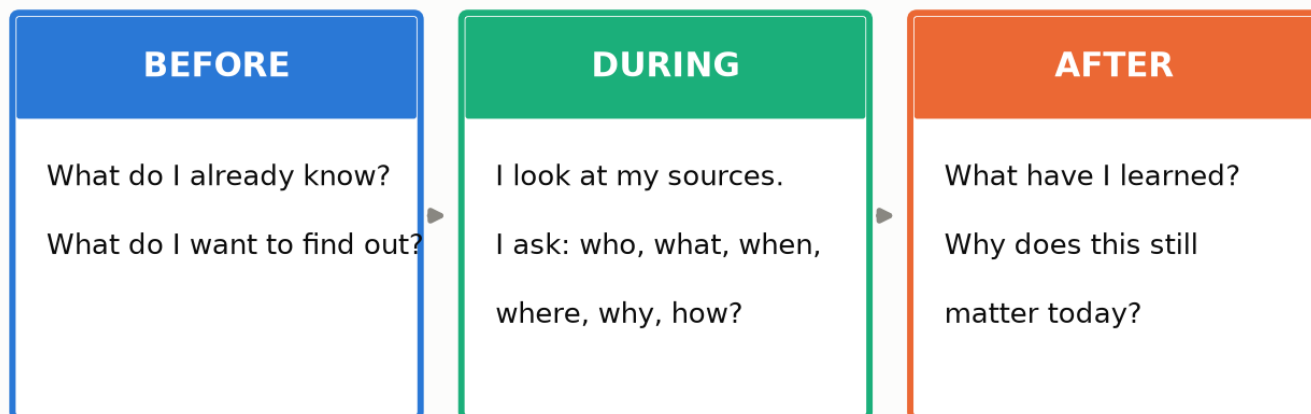
A KWL chart about the First Fleet

K - what we KNOW	W - what we WANT to know	L - what we LEARNED
The First Fleet was a group of eleven ships that sailed from Britain.	What did the people on the ships eat and do each day?	The ships reached Australia in January 1788. Life in the new camp was hard work.

A worked KWL chart about the First Fleet with three parts: know, want to know, and learned.

You keep asking questions at every step of an investigation — **before**, **during** and **after**.

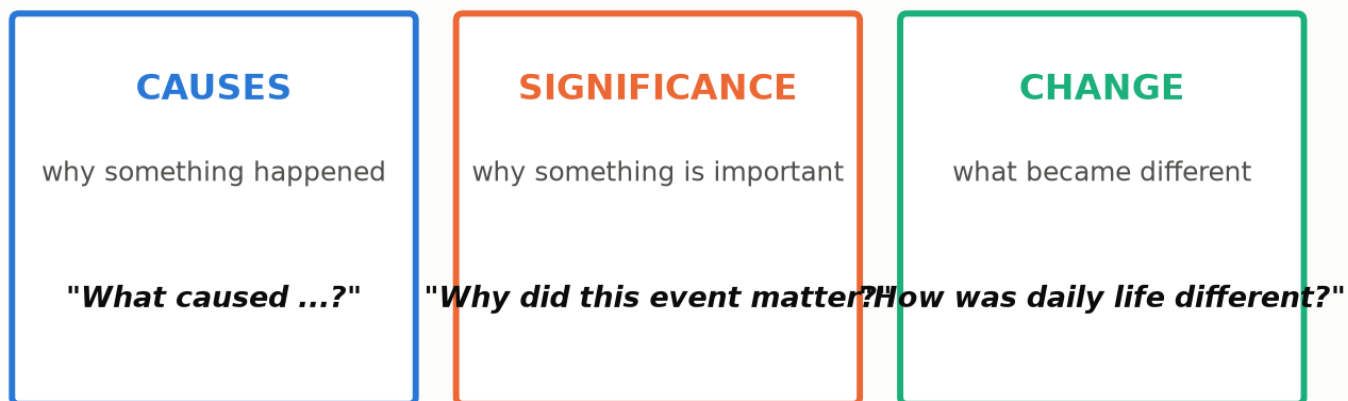
Questions at every step



Three boxes showing the questions you ask at every step of an investigation: before, during and after.

Tool 3 — Concept questions. Some questions open up big ideas. Historians call these big ideas **concepts**. Three big concepts are **causes** (why something happened), **significance** (why something is important) and **change** (what became different).

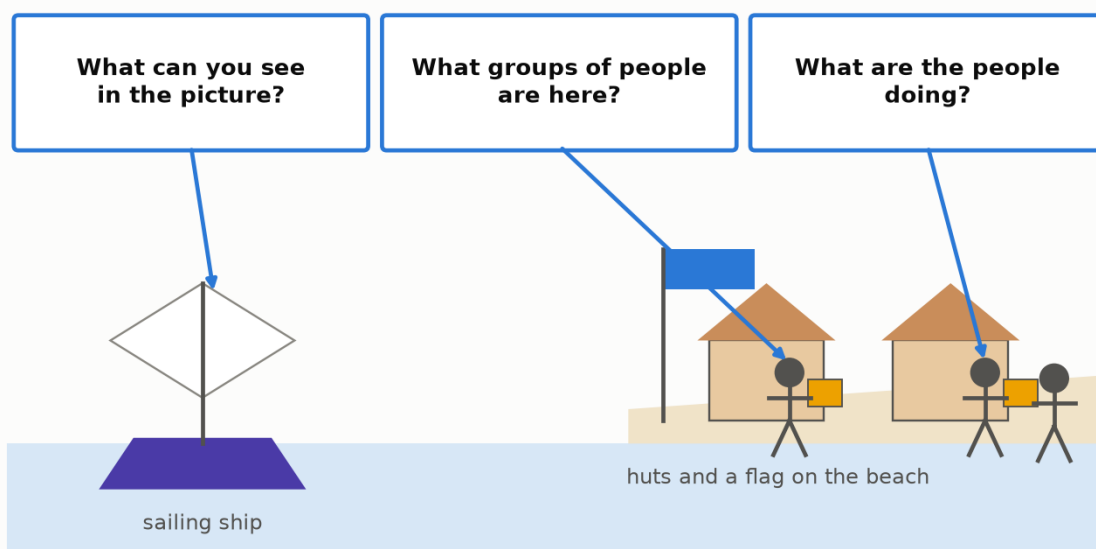
Three big ideas, three questions



Three boxes pairing each big concept, causes, significance and change, with the question that opens it.

Looking at visual sources. A **visual source** is a source you look at, like a picture, a painting, a map or a photo. Good questions for a visual source are: *What can you see in the picture? What groups of people are here? What are the people doing?*

Looking at a picture of the early colony

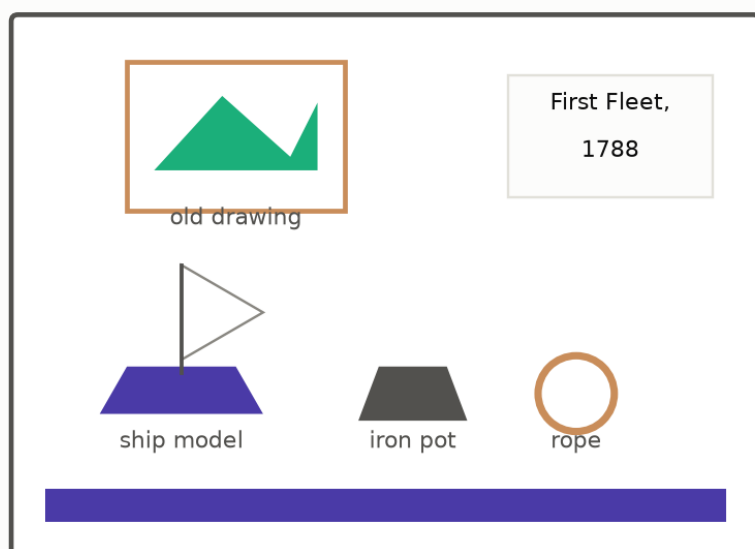


A model drawing of Sydney Cove soon after 1788. It is our own drawing, made from a real 1794 painting by Thomas Watling.

A model drawing of Sydney Cove soon after 1788, with a sailing ship, huts, a flag and people working, and three question callouts.

Museums ask questions too. A museum display, a video or a website about the past is built to answer questions — including *Why does this still matter today?*

A museum display is built to answer questions



What is this display about?

Who used these things?

Why are they kept in a museum?

Why does this still matter today?

A museum display case with a ship model, an iron pot, a roll of rope and an old drawing, with four questions beside it.

Here are some question starters and the evidence each one helps you find.

Question starters and the evidence they find

Question starter	It helps you find ...
Who was there?	the people in the past
What happened?	the event or the thing
When did it happen?	the time or the date
Where did it happen?	the place
Why did it happen?	the causes or reasons
How did it happen?	the way it happened

A table matching question starters to the evidence each one helps you find.

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — Reading a visual source. A real painting from 1794 shows Sydney Cove soon after the First Fleet arrived. The painter was Thomas Watling, a convict who became the colony's first professional artist. Our model drawing above stands in for his painting. We ask the visual-source questions and note the evidence we see.

Worked example 1: reading a picture of Sydney Cove

Our question	Evidence we can see	What it tells us about people's lives
What can you see in the picture?	A harbour with sailing ships, huts and a flag.	People built a new camp by the sea after the First Fleet arrived in 1788.
What groups of people are here?	Convicts, marines (soldiers) and officers.	Many kinds of people came to the new colony.
What are the people doing?	Carrying loads and building huts.	Daily life was hard work. People had to make everything they needed.

A table with three rows. Each row shows a question, the evidence we can see, and what it tells us about people's lives in the new colony.

Worked example 2 — A full investigation. We use the tools to find out about the First Fleet. Our real source is a book of notes written by John White, the ships' doctor, printed in 1790. *Before:* what do we know, and what do we want to know? *During:* we look at the source and ask the 5 Ws + H. *After:* we ask concept questions.

Worked example 2: using the tools on a real journal (1790)

Stage	Tool	Our question	What the source told us
Before	KWL chart	What do we want to find out about the voyage?	We wrote down what we already knew, and what we wanted to know.
During	5 Ws + H	Who sailed on the ships, and when did they arrive?	John White was the ships' doctor. The fleet reached Port Jackson in January 1788.
During	5 Ws + H	Why did Britain send the ships?	Britain needed a new place to send convicts.
After	Concept question	How was daily life different when people landed?	People went from weeks at sea to building a camp in the bush.

A table with four rows showing the stage, the tool, the question we asked, and what the source told us.

Practice tasks

With some help

- Q1.** Look at the model drawing of Sydney Cove. Write one **Who?** question about it.
- Q2.** Look at the model drawing. Write one **What are the people doing?** question.
- Q3.** Fill in a mini KWL chart about the First Fleet. Write one thing you **know** and one thing you **want** to know.
- Q4.** Look at the museum display. Write one question about the iron pot.
- Q5.** Write a concept question about the First Fleet that starts with “**What caused...?**”
- Q6.** Write a concept question about the First Fleet that starts with “**How was daily life different...?**”

On your own

- Q7.** Look at a photo or an old object from your own home or street. Use the 5 Ws + H to write three historical questions about it.
- Q8.** Your class is finding out about your local community. Write one question for **before**, one for **during** and one for **after**.
- Q9.** Pick any tool from this section. Use it to write two questions that give evidence about people’s lives on the First Fleet.
- Q10.** Look at the question starter table. Choose two starters and write a full question for each about the early colony.

Source task — do an investigation

The investigation itself is the task. Choose one source about the First Fleet or your local community — a picture, an object, a diary line or a map. Use the planner to ask your questions and find evidence about people’s lives. Fill in every step.

My history investigation planner

Step	I write my answer here
My big question	
My source (a picture, object, diary or map)	
Two questions I will ask with the 5 Ws + H	
What I found out (my evidence)	
What I still want to know	

A blank planner with five steps: my big question, my source, my 5 Ws and H questions, what I found out, and what I still want to know.

Answers and examples (many answers will be different)

Q1. Example: *Who built the huts on the beach?* **Q2.** Example: *What are the people carrying from the ships?* **Q3.** Example: K — “There were eleven ships.” W — “What did people eat on the trip?” **Q4.** Example: *Who used the iron pot, and what did they cook in it?* **Q5.** Example: *What caused Britain to send the First Fleet?* **Q6.** Example: *How was daily life different for convicts after they landed?* **Q7–Q10.** Your questions will be your own. Check each one uses a question word or a concept, and that a source could help answer it.

Source task. Any completed planner counts where the questions really seek evidence about people’s lives, not just yes-or-no facts.

TEACHER GUIDE — scoring against the band achievement standard
(not student text; written for the adult professional)

Score against the Levels 3-4 achievement standard for this CD (VC2HH4S01),
at Level 4 pitch; the standard's wording is not reproduced here.

BEGINNING — The student asks simple historical questions (5 Ws + H) about a source, with prompting, and the questions are mostly about surface facts.

GROWING — The student asks a range of questions using more than one tool (5 Ws + H, KWL, concept questions) and some questions begin to target people's experiences (e.g. "What were the people doing?", "How was daily life different?").

GOT IT — The student asks a range of questions across the before/during/after stages of an investigation, and the questions clearly seek evidence of people's experiences. The student can say which source would help answer each question.

Assessment focus: does the question actually seek evidence about people's experiences (not a yes/no trivia line)? Model the difference between "What colour is the ship?" (surface) and "What were the people doing on the ship?" (experience). Accept any question that is answerable from a source and aimed at experience. All answers above are examples.

Link forward: 2B (chronology) uses the same sources; 2C (source features) and 2D (perspectives) build on the questioning skills taught here.

SOURCES – real, named, checkable referents (TOC decision D4).
Not student text. Web sources retrieved 2026-08-24.

1. Content description and elaborations (codes only; wording not reproduced):
Victorian Curriculum F-10 Version 2.0, Humanities: History, Levels 3 and 4, VC2HH4S01 with elaborations .E01-.E04 – from the VCAA VC2 Humanities export of 29-07-2026 and the cross-check CSV VC2_AS-CD-Elab_29-07-2026.csv (retrieved 2026-07-29; re-read 2026-08-21).
2. Thomas Watling (b. 19 September 1762, Dumfries, Scotland; d. 1814?):
Scottish convict artist, transported for forgery (sentenced 14 April 1789), reached Sydney 7 October 1792; regarded as the first professional artist to arrive in New South Wales. Credited with "A direct north general view of Sydney Cove" (1794), the earliest known oil painting of Sydney, held in the Dixson Gallery, State Library of New South Wales. Worked example 1 models questions on a view of Sydney Cove; the figure in this section is an ORIGINAL model drawing, not a reproduction of the painting. No reference is made to any First Nations subject in Watling's work (CONTENT_POLICY Rule 1). Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Watling, retrieved 2026-08-24.
3. John White (c.1756-1832): Irish surgeon, surgeon on the convict transport Charlotte in the First Fleet (joined March 1787); Surgeon-General of New South Wales from 1788. Author of "A Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales" (1790), a primary account of the voyage with 65 copper-plate engravings. Worked example 2 uses his journal as the real written source. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_White_\(surgeon\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_White_(surgeon)), retrieved 2026-08-24.
4. First Fleet dates (anchored per TOC D9): arrived Botany Bay January 1788; moved to Port Jackson / Sydney Cove 26 January 1788 under Captain Arthur Phillip; eleven ships; convicts, marines and officials on board.
5. All diagrams in this section are original drawings and tables generated for this book (TOC decision D4). No real family, artwork or photograph is reproduced.

Putting the past in order

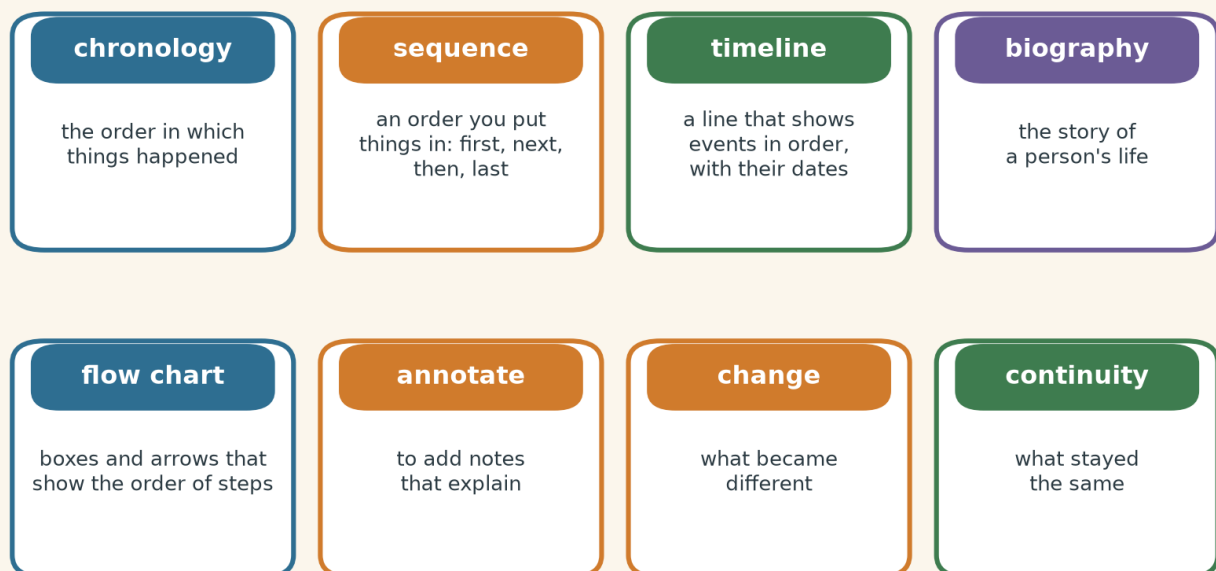
This section: VC2HH4S02 (Levels 3 and 4 · Historical Concepts and Skills, Chronology). Draws on .E01, .E02 and .E03. It reads from Chapter 1 (→ 1D for the early voyages timeline and Hartog's plate, → 1E for the First Fleet). Continuity and change continue in Chapter 3 (→ 3A).

Teaching

Putting the past in order. History is full of events, people and dates. To make sense of them, a historian puts them in order: what happened first, what came next, what happened last. A **historian** is a person who studies the past. The order in which things happened is called **chronology**. When we put events in their time order, we put them in a **sequence**. Events in this order are in **chronological order**.

Why does order matter? Because order shows us how things happened. The First Fleet could not sail before Britain decided to start a colony. And when we can see the order, we can see what became different after each event — and what kept going. What became different is a **change**. What kept going is **continuity**.

Key words — 2B: putting the past in order



We define each word the first time we use it.

The key words for this section, each in its own card with a short meaning

How to put events in order. Follow the same five steps every time. Find your events. Find each date. Put the oldest date — the smallest year — first, on the left. Add each next date after it, from left to right. Then check: read your list like a story — first, next, then, last.

How to put events in order



A list of events in this order is called chronological order.

Historians use it to see what came first — and what changed after that.

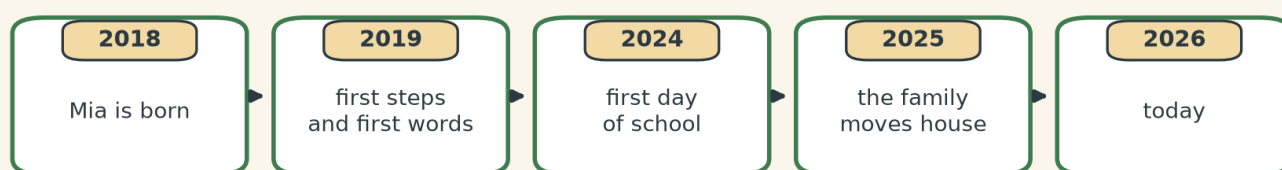
Five steps for putting events in order, shown as boxes joined by arrows

Timelines. A **timeline** is a line that shows events in order, with their dates. The oldest date sits on the left. The latest date sits on the right. You met timelines in 1D, when you put the early voyages in order.

Life stories have order too. The story of a person's life is called a **biography**. A biography is a sequence as well: a person is born, grows up, and then does the things their life holds. Look at the made-up example below. Mia cannot start school before she is born!

A life story has an order too

A made-up example: Mia's life so far. (Real people's lives work the same way.)



Each step had to happen in this order. You cannot start school before you are born!

The story of a person's life is called a biography. It is a sequence.

A made-up life strip of a child called Mia, with five steps from 2018 to 2026

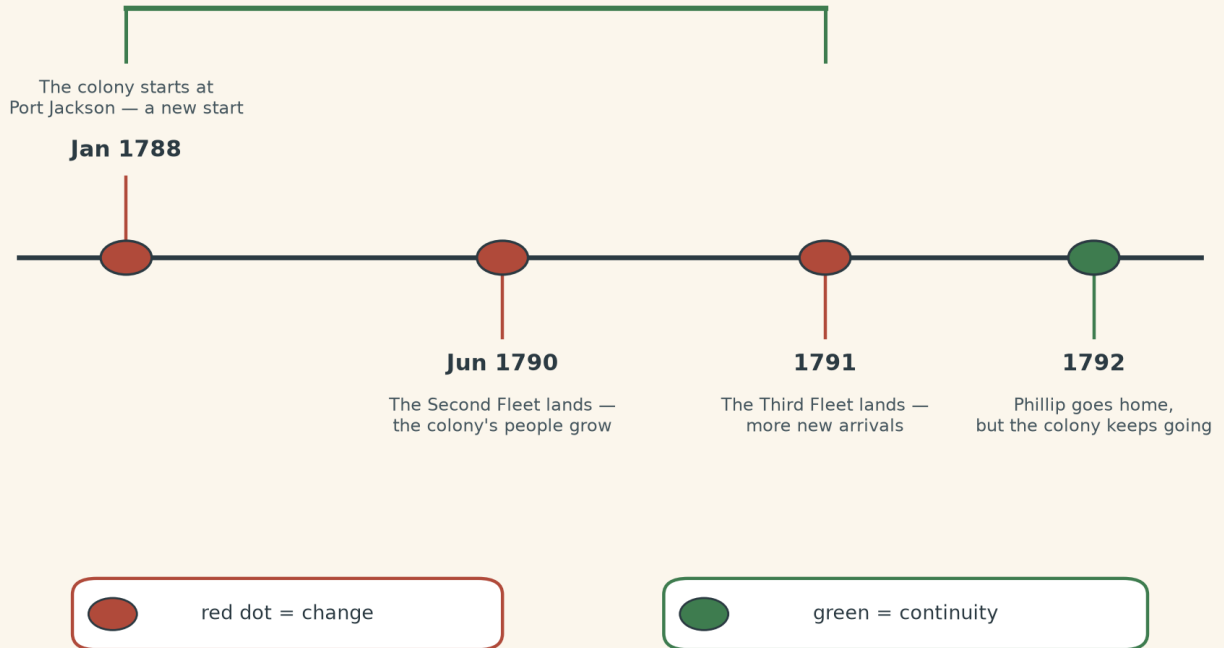
Flow charts. A **flow chart** uses boxes and arrows to show the order of steps. In history, we can use a flow chart to join the life facts of a person to the events they were part of. You will meet one in Example 2.

Annotating with colour. To **annotate** means to add notes that explain. We can annotate a timeline with colour to show change and continuity: red for change, green for continuity. Look at the model below. It uses events you met in 1E.

An annotated timeline — change and continuity, 1788 to 1792

Red marks change (what became different). Green marks continuity (what kept going).

Ships keep coming from Britain — the sea link continues (1788 to 1791)



A timeline of the early colony with red dots for change and green marks for continuity, from 1788 to 1792

Worked examples

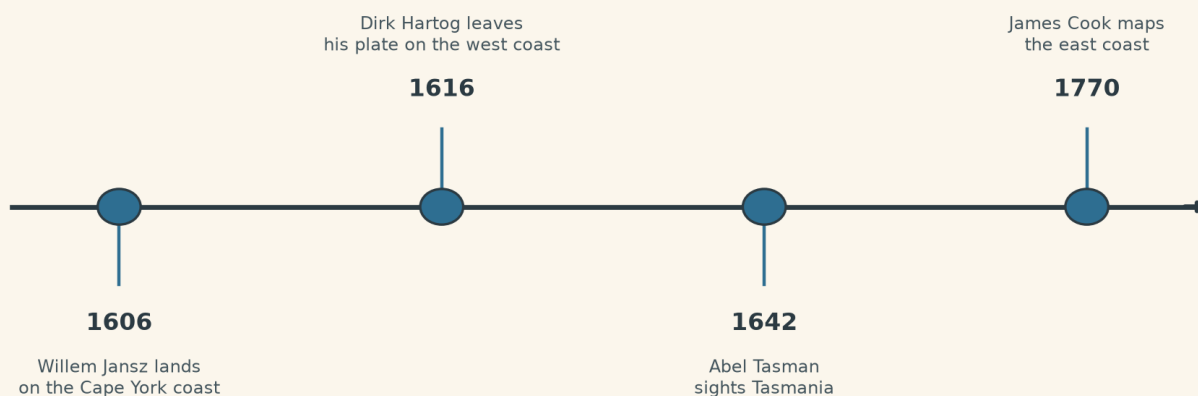
Example 1 — drawing a timeline of the first British colony (draws on .E01)

Let us draw a timeline of the big steps in the story of the first British colony. You met all these events in 1D and 1E. The story has two parts. Part 1 is finding the coast. Part 2 is starting the colony.

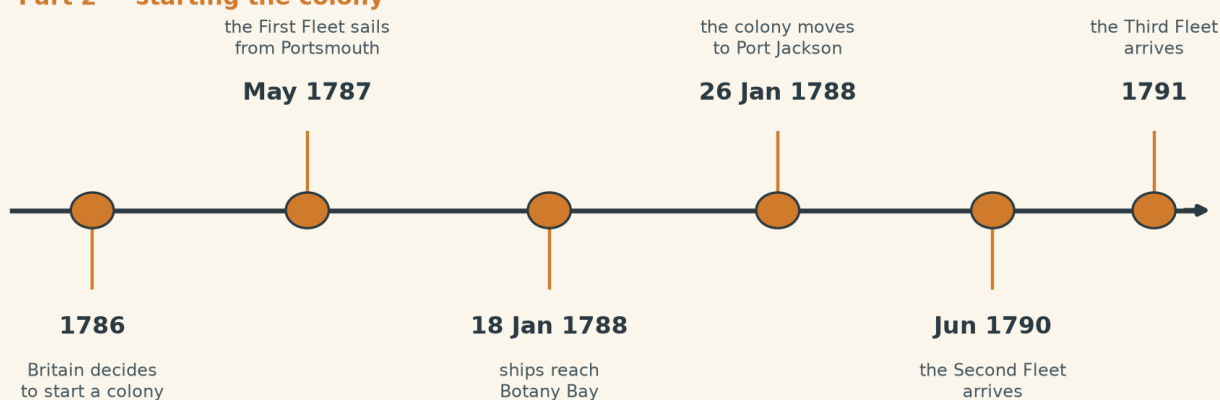
Worked example 1 — the first colony story, in order

Two timelines, one story. You met these events in 1D and 1E.

Part 1 — finding the coast



Part 2 — starting the colony



Read left to right: earliest first, latest last. That is chronological order.

A timeline in two parts showing the first colony story in order, from 1606 to 1791

Read the timeline from left to right. Now ask and answer three questions:

- **Which event came first?** Willem Jansz landed on the Cape York coast in 1606. That is the smallest year on the timeline.
- **Which event came last?** The Third Fleet arrived in 1791. That is the biggest year.
- **How much time sits between two events?** From 1606 to 1616 is 10 years: $1616 - 1606 = 10$. From Cook's map of the east coast in 1770 to the First Fleet sailing in May 1787 is 17 years: $1787 - 1770 = 17$.

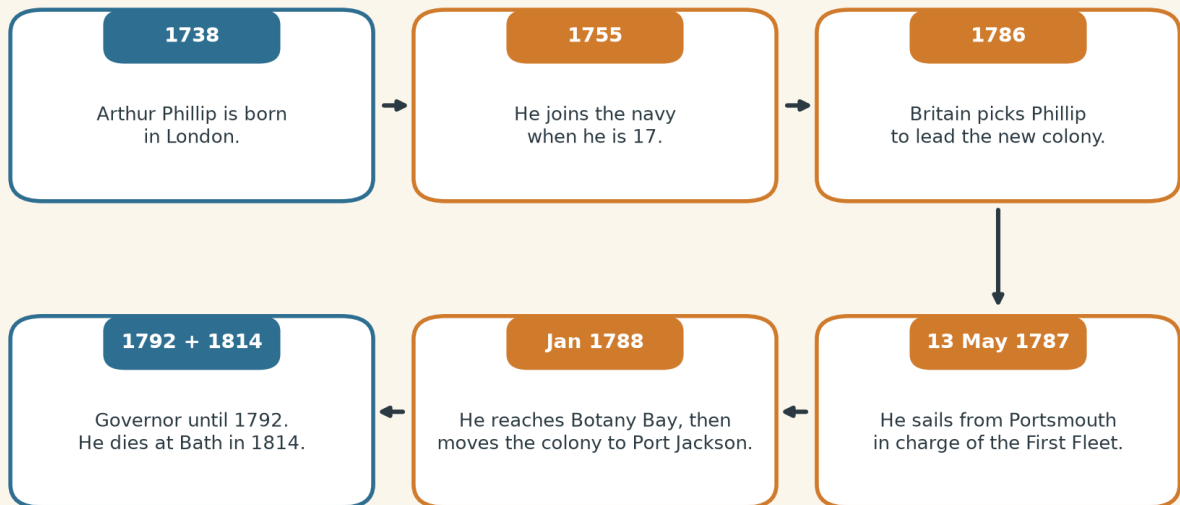
Example 2 — a flow chart of a life: Arthur Phillip (draws on .E02)

Now let us make a flow chart that joins the life facts of a significant person to the events he was part of. That person is Arthur Phillip, the first **governor** of the colony. A governor is the person in charge of a colony.

Blue boxes hold facts about his life. Orange boxes hold history events he was part of. Follow the arrows in order.

Worked example 2 — Arthur Phillip's life, joined to events

Blue = a fact about his life. Orange = a history event he was part of.



Follow the arrows: 1738, 1755, 1786, 1787, 1788, then 1792.

A flow chart joins a person's life facts to the events they were part of.

A flow chart of Arthur Phillip's life joined to history events, from 1738 to 1814

Notice how the flow chart joins one life to big events. Phillip was born in 1738, long before anyone in Britain thought of a colony in Australia. By the time Britain decided to start one, in 1786, he was a grown man with years at sea. His life story and the colony's story grew together.

Practice

With help

Q1. Match each key word to its meaning. The words are: **chronology**, **timeline**, **biography**, **annotate**. The meanings are: (a) to add notes that explain; (b) the order in which things happened; (c) a line that shows events in order, with their dates; (d) the story of a person's life. *Hint: use the key words picture above.*

Q2. Six event cards are mixed up in the picture below. Put them in chronological order. (a) List the six years from smallest to biggest. (b) Which event happened first? (c) Which event happened last?

These cards are out of order. Can you put them in order?

1770 James Cook maps the east coast	1606 Willem Jansz lands on the Cape York coast	26 Jan 1788 the colony moves to Port Jackson
1642 Abel Tasman sights Tasmania	May 1787 the First Fleet sails from Portsmouth	1616 Dirk Hartog leaves his plate

Tip: read the years first. The smallest year goes first.

Six event cards in mixed-up order, each with a year and a short note

Hint: read the years first. The smallest year goes first.

Q3. Look at the colony timeline in Example 1. (a) Which event sits first on the timeline? (b) Which event sits last? (c) How many years sit between 1616 and 1642? Show your working. *Hint: take the smaller year from the bigger one.*

Q4. James Cook mapped the east coast in 1770. The First Fleet sailed from Portsmouth in May 1787. (a) Which of these came first? (b) How many years sit between them? Show your working. *Hint: take 1770 away from 1787.*

Q5. Look at Arthur Phillip's flow chart in Example 2. (a) In which year was Phillip born, and where? (b) What happened in 1786? (c) Which colour shows life facts, and which colour shows history events?

Q6. Look at the annotated timeline in the Teaching part. (a) What do the red dots show? (b) What do the green parts show? (c) Give one example of change from the timeline. (d) Give one example of continuity. *Hint: red = change, green = continuity.*

On your own

Q7. Draw your own timeline. Use the blank template below. Put in at least five events from this section. Write each year in a small box and each event in the big box near it. Remember: oldest date on the left, latest on the right.

Your turn — a blank timeline

Write each year in a small box. Write the event in the big box near it.

Remember: earliest date on the left, latest on the right.

A blank timeline template with seven empty boxes

Q8. Fill in the blank flow chart below. You can use the life of Arthur Phillip, or the life of someone you know — ask them first! Then add one real history event that happened while that person was alive.

Your turn — a blank flow chart

Fill in one box for each step of a life — a person from this section,
or the life story of someone you know (ask them first!).

Then read your chart in arrow order. Does it tell the story from start to end?

A blank flow chart template with five empty boxes

Q9. Copy the colony timeline from Example 1 into your book. Add one change note and one continuity note of your own. Use red for change and green for continuity.

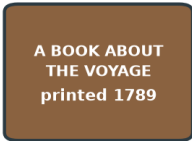
Q10. Order check. A student writes: “The Third Fleet arrived before the First Fleet.” Is this right or wrong? Use the dates to explain your answer.

Your task — where do the sources sit?

A **source** is anything that can tell us about the past — an object, a letter, a book. You will learn to read sources carefully in 2C. In this task we ask each source one question: **when was it made?**

Each source below is real, and each carries a date. The date tells you where the source sits on our timeline.

Three real sources — find their place on our timeline

 Source 1 — a metal plate nailed to a post. It carries its own date. (You met this plate in 1D.)	<i>“the finest harbour in the world”</i> — Arthur Phillip, in a letter written in May 1788 Source 2 — a letter from the first governor, written months after arrival. (Phillip praised Port Jackson.)	 Source 3 — a book by Watkin Tench, a soldier on the ship Charlotte. (Printed the year after the colony started.)
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Each source carries a date. The date tells you where it sits on our timeline.

Three real sources with dates: a metal plate, a letter, and a book

1. Source 1 is a metal plate, and it carries its own date. What date does the plate show? Which event on our timeline does it sit on?
2. Source 2 is a letter. Arthur Phillip wrote it in May 1788. Which event on our timeline happened just before he wrote it?
3. Source 3 is a book by Watkin Tench, printed in 1789. Did the book come out before or after the Third Fleet arrived in 1791?
4. Which of the three sources is the oldest? How do you know?
5. Why does a date help a historian put a source in its right place?

(Sources: Dirk Hartog’s 1616 plate — the words on it match the plate kept today at the Rijksmuseum in the Netherlands, drawn in 1D; Arthur Phillip’s letter of May 1788; Watkin Tench’s book, printed in London in 1789. All dates checked 24 August 2026.)

Answers

Q1. chronology → (b); timeline → (c); biography → (d); annotate → (a).

Q2. (a) 1606, 1616, 1642, 1770, May 1787, 26 January 1788. (b) Willem Jansz lands on the Cape York coast, 1606. (c) The colony moves to Port Jackson, 26 January 1788.

Q3. (a) Willem Jansz lands on the Cape York coast, 1606. (b) The Third Fleet arrives, 1791. (c) 26 years: $1642 - 1616 = 26$.

Q4. (a) Cook's map of the east coast, 1770. (b) 17 years: $1787 - 1770 = 17$.

Q5. (a) London, 1738. (b) Britain picked Phillip to lead the new colony. (c) Blue shows life facts; orange shows history events.

Q6. (a) Change. (b) Continuity. (c) Any red-dot event, for example: June 1790, the Second Fleet lands and the colony's people grow. (d) Any one: ships keep coming from Britain from 1788 to 1791; the colony keeps going after Phillip goes home in 1792.

Q7. Answers will vary. Check: at least five events; the years run in order from left to right; each event has a year and a short note.

Q8. Answers will vary. Check: each box has a year and a note; the boxes run in order; one real history event is added.

Q9. Answers will vary. Check: one red note about change and one green note about continuity, both matching events on the timeline.

Q10. Wrong. The First Fleet reached Botany Bay in January 1788. The Third Fleet arrived in July 1791. 1788 is earlier than 1791, so the First Fleet came first.

Your task. 1 The plate shows the date 25 October 1616; it sits on the 1616 event, when Dirk Hartog left his plate. 2 The colony moved to Port Jackson on 26 January 1788. 3 Before — 1789 comes before 1791. 4 The plate — 1616 is the oldest date of the three. 5 Answers will vary. Example: a date tells the historian where the source sits in the order of events.

Example answers

Example for Q7 — a five-event timeline, oldest on the left:

Year	Event
1606	Willem Jansz lands on the Cape York coast
1616	Dirk Hartog leaves his plate
1770	James Cook maps the east coast
May 1787	The First Fleet sails from Portsmouth
26 January 1788	The colony moves to Port Jackson

Example for Q8 — a filled flow chart (a made-up example): Grandad Sam's life, joined to a real event.

Box	Year	What happened
1	1948	Sam is born in Melbourne
2	1954	He starts school
3	1956	Real event in his lifetime: the Olympic Games are held in Melbourne
4	1970	His first job, in a shop

Box	Year	What happened
5	1988	The family moves to Geelong

Reading the boxes in arrow order tells Sam's life story from start to end — that is a biography in a sequence.

Looking closely at historical sources

This section: VC2HH4S03 (Levels 3 and 4 · Using historical sources). Draws on .E01, .E02, .E04 and .E05. It reads from Chapter 1 (→ 1A for the history of your community, → 1E for the First Fleet). The skills of perspectives and interpretations continue in 2D and 2E.

Teaching

What is a source? A **source** is anything that can tell us about the past. A coin, a painting, a map, an old newspaper, a diary, a photo, or the recorded words of an older person — these are all sources. A **historian** is a person who studies the past and writes about it. Historians use sources to find out what happened and how people lived.

This section looks at sources from Australia's first British **colony** and from your own community. A colony is a new place settled by people sent there from another country. Some people in the first colony were **convicts**. A convict is a person sent away from home because they broke the law.

Sources come in many kinds. The picture below shows seven kinds with an example of each.

Seven kinds of sources



Thing

a coin, a tool, a chain



Painting

a picture painted long ago



Map

a chart of a bay or a coast



Photo

an old street or family photo



Newspaper

news printed long ago



Written record

diaries, letters, ship logs



Oral history

the recorded words of a person who remembers

A table of seven kinds of historical sources, each with a small drawing and an example

Features and content. Every source has two sides:

- Its **features**: the facts about the source itself. What kind of source is it? When was it made? Who made it? What is it made of? Where is it kept today?

- Its **content**: what the source shows, says or tells us.

Before you use a source, get to know it. The checklist below helps you look at any source in the same careful way.

Ask every source these questions

- ☒ What kind of source is it?
- ☒ When was it made?
- ☒ Who made it?
- ☒ What is it made of?
- ☒ Where is it kept today?
- ☒ **What does it show, say or tell us? (content)**

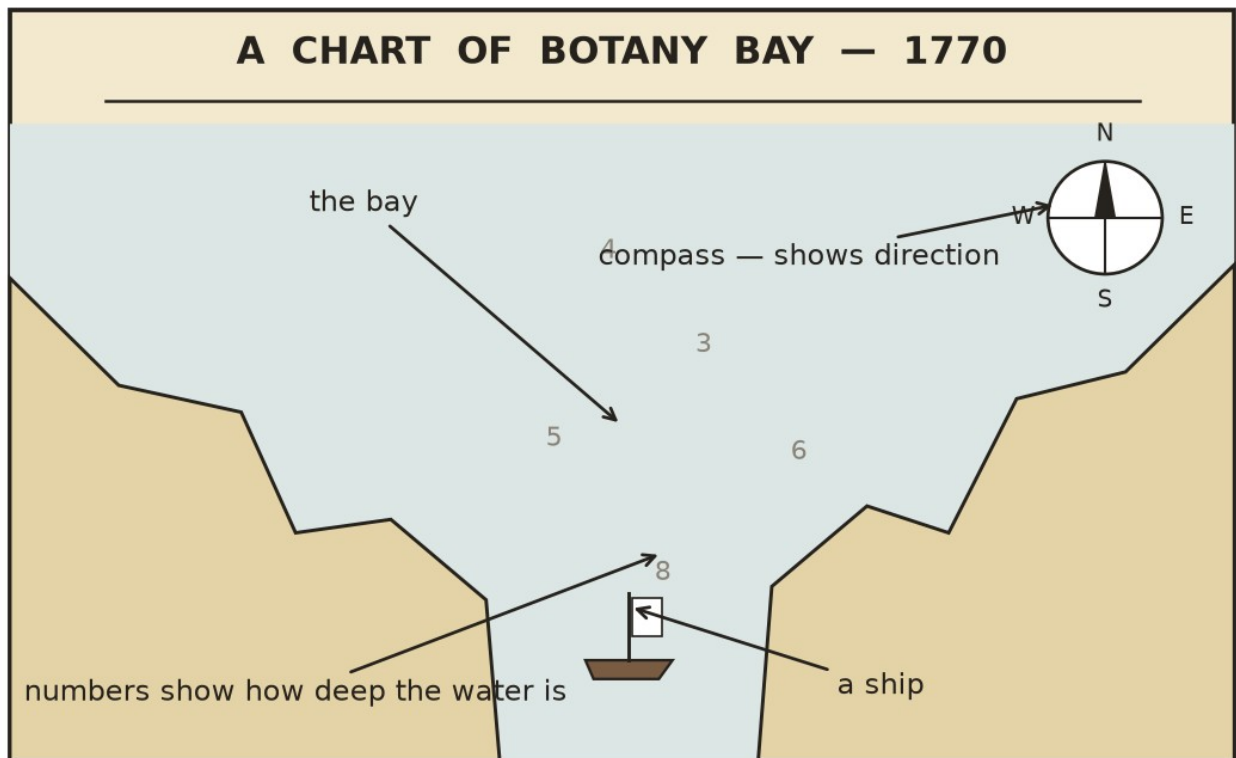
The first five questions are about its features. The last one is about its content.

A checklist of six questions to ask about any historical source

When was it made? Historians always ask *when*. When was the object made? When was the artwork painted? When was the photo taken? Sometimes the answer is on the source itself:

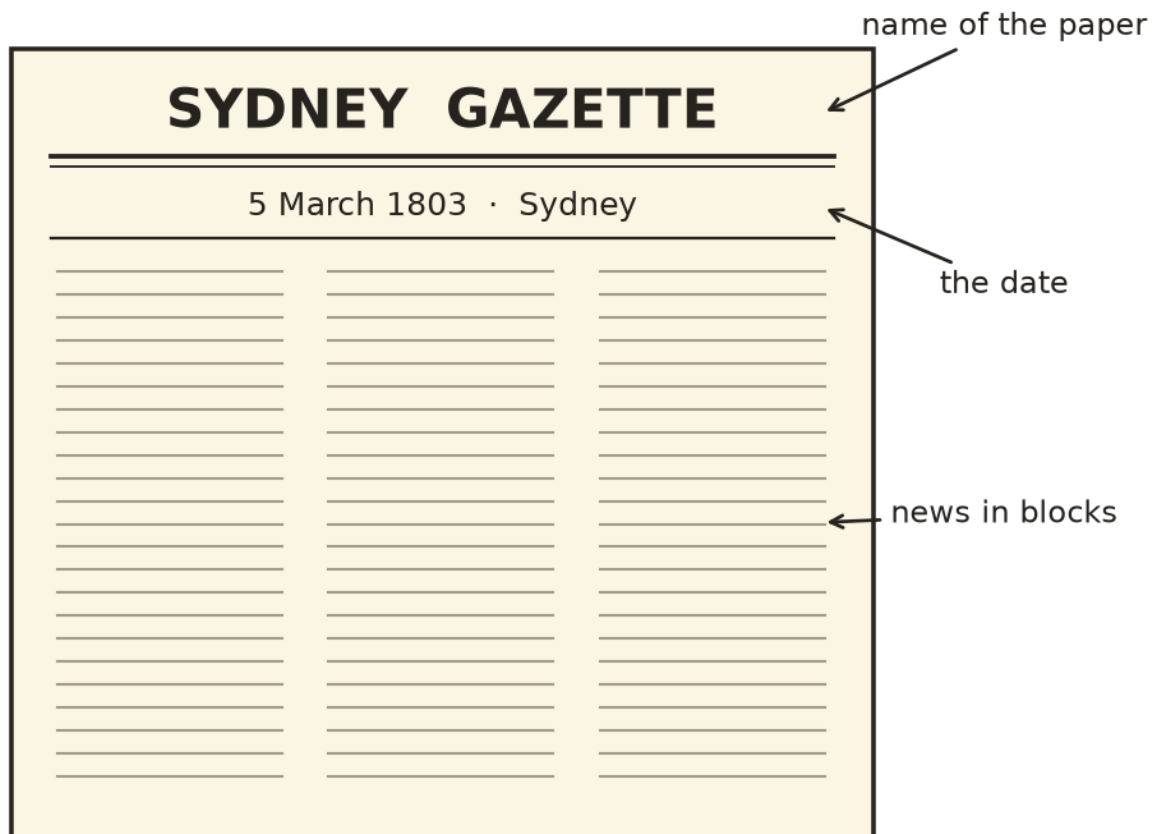
- A newspaper prints its date on the front page. The *Sydney Gazette* — the first newspaper printed in Australia — has the date 5 March 1803 on its very first page.
- A painting may have a date in a corner.
- A coin may have the year stamped on it.
- A diary has a date at the top of each page.

When there is no date, look for clues: the kind of cars in a photo, the clothes people wear, the way the words are written.



Drawn for this book, after a sea chart made by James Cook in 1770.

A drawing made from an old sea chart of Botany Bay, with labels on its parts



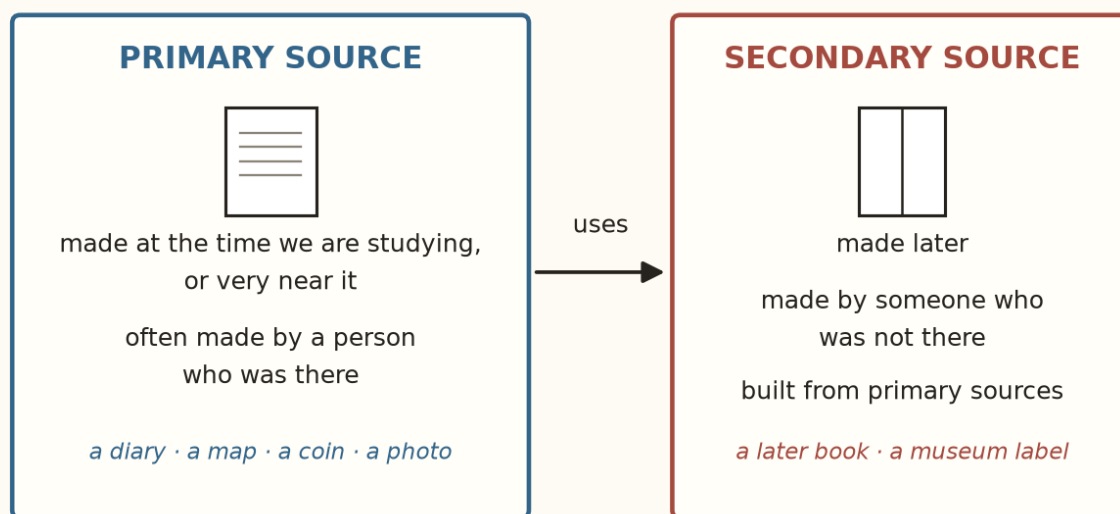
Drawn for this book. The real first page was printed by George Howe on 5 March 1803.

A drawing of the front page of an old newspaper, with labels on its parts

Primary and secondary sources. History uses two big names for sources. In this book they mean this, and every task here can be answered with these meanings:

- A **primary source** was made at, or very near, the time we are studying. Often the person who made it was there.

- A **secondary source** was made later, by someone who was not there. That person used primary sources to make it.

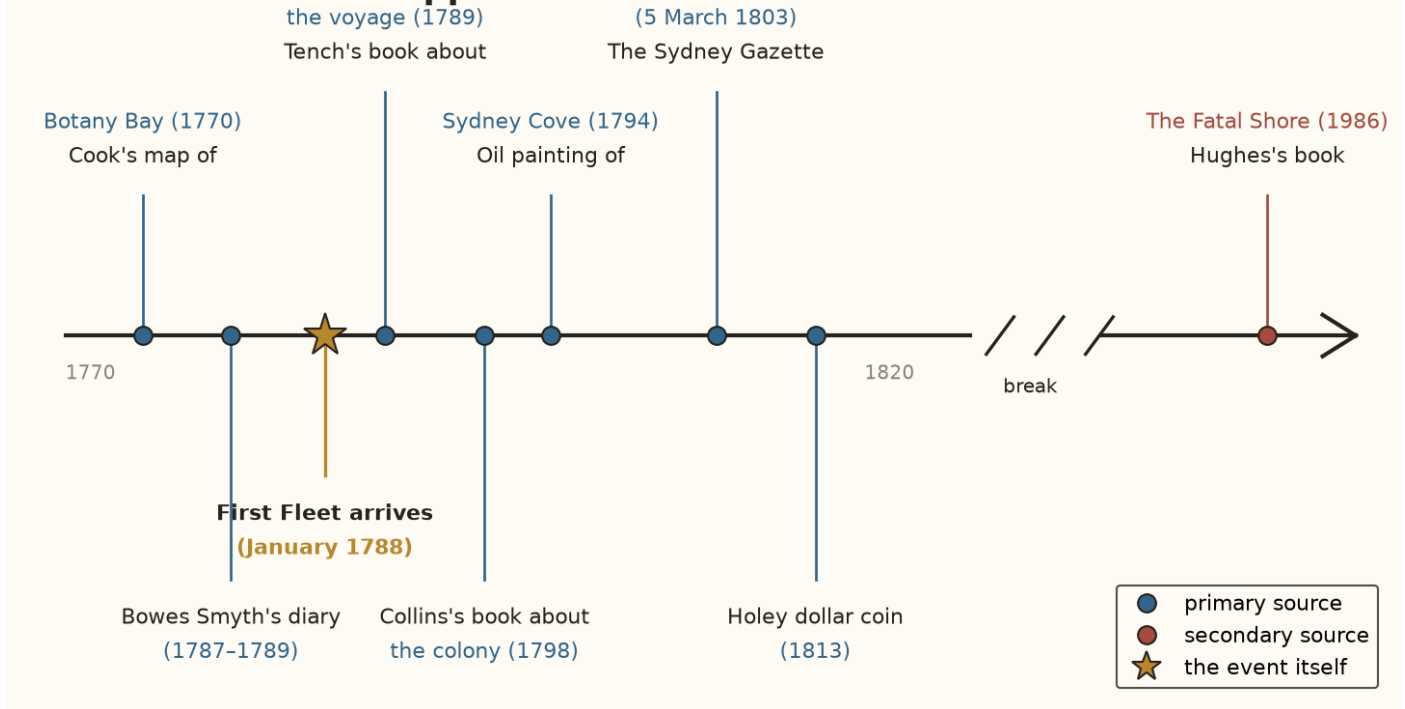


Example: the diary of a man on the First Fleet is primary. A book about the First Fleet printed in 1986 is secondary.

A diagram showing the difference between a primary source and a secondary source

Source	When made	Primary or secondary?
Diary of Arthur Bowes Smyth, ship's doctor on the <i>Lady Penrhyn</i>	1787–1789	Primary — written by a man on the voyage
Map of Botany Bay drawn by James Cook	1770	Primary — drawn by a man who sailed there
Oil painting of Sydney Cove	1794	Primary — painted at the time
<i>The Sydney Gazette</i> newspaper	5 March 1803	Primary — printed at the time
Holey dollar coin	1813	Primary — made at the time
Book <i>The Fatal Shore</i> by Robert Hughes	1986	Secondary — the writer was not alive in the 1780s
Museum label about the First Fleet	Today	Secondary — written long after

When the event happened — and when sources about it were made

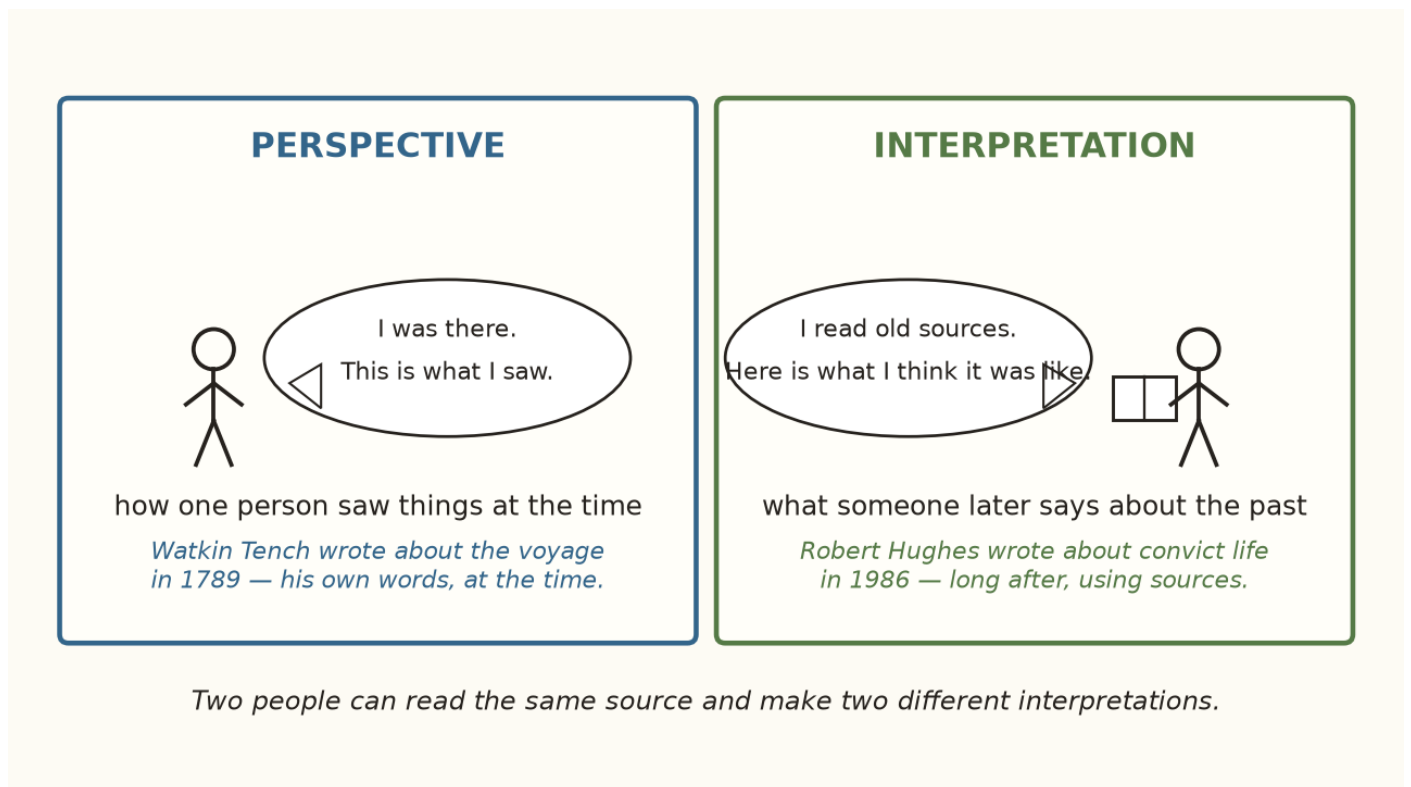


A timeline showing when the First Fleet arrived and when different sources about it were made

Perspectives and interpretations. Two more big ideas (you will use these more in 2D and 2E). In this book they mean this:

- A **perspective** is how one person saw things at the time — their own thoughts and feelings. Watkin Tench was a soldier on the First Fleet. In 1789 he printed a book about the voyage. His words show us the voyage through his eyes. That is his perspective.
- An **interpretation** is what someone later says about the past. Robert Hughes wrote about convict life in 1986, almost 200 years after the First Fleet. He built his view from sources. That is his interpretation.

Two people can read the same source and make two different interpretations.

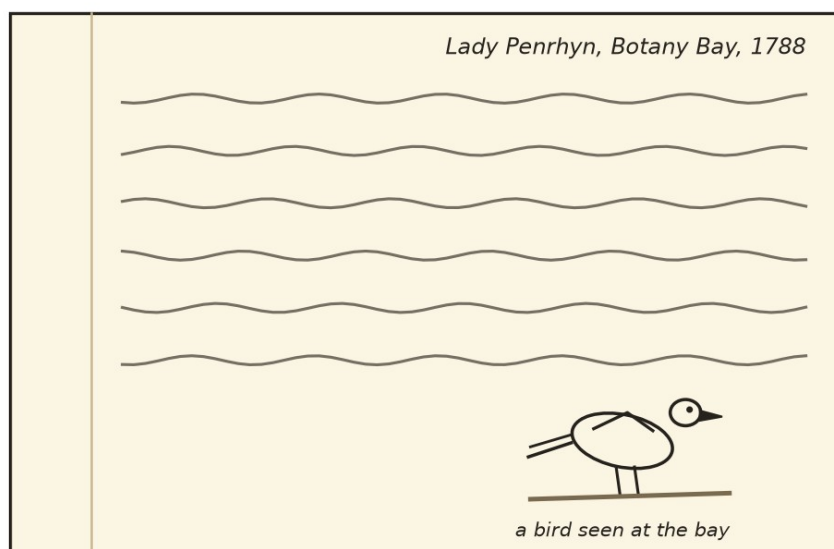


A diagram showing the difference between a perspective and an interpretation

Worked examples

Example 1 — reading the features and content of a source

This is a page from the diary of Arthur Bowes Smyth. He was the ship's doctor on the *Lady Penrhyn*, one of the ships of the First Fleet. His diary runs from 22 March 1787 to 12 August 1789, and it holds 25 drawings in ink and paint.



Drawn for this book, after the real diary of Arthur Bowes Smyth (1787–1789). The real diary is kept at the National Library of Australia.

A drawing of a diary page with writing and a bird drawn in ink, made after the real diary of Arthur Bowes Smyth

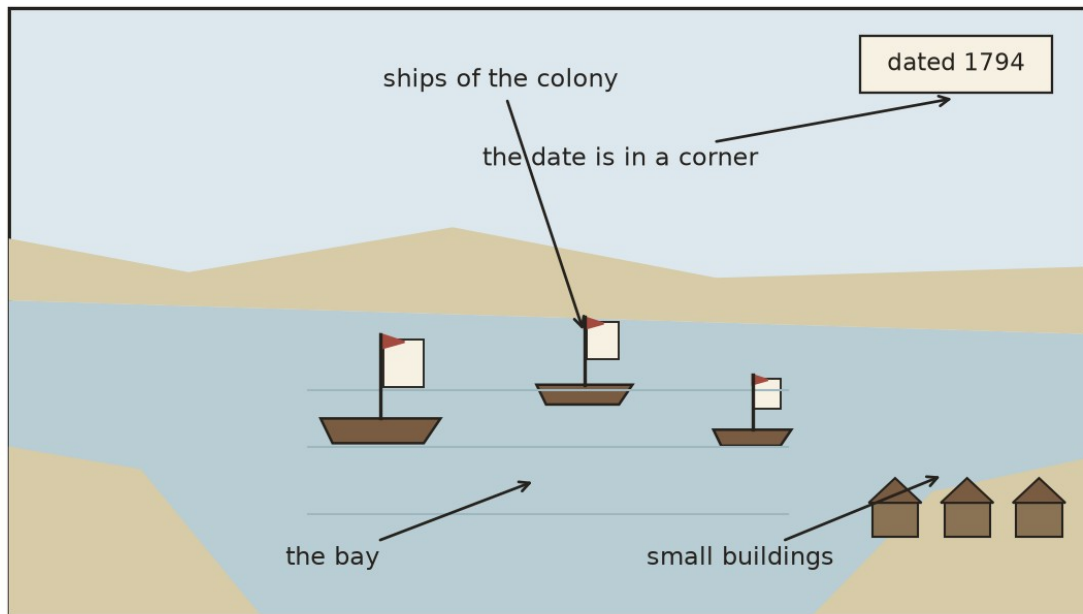
Read the source like a historian:

Step	Question	Answer	How do we know?
1	What kind of source is it?	A diary with drawings	It is pages of writing with pictures
2	When was it made?	22 March 1787 to 12 August 1789	The dates are written in the diary
3	Who made it?	Arthur Bowes Smyth, ship's doctor on the <i>Lady Penrhyn</i>	His name is in the diary
4	Where is it kept today?	The National Library of Australia	The library says so
5	What is its content?	The First Fleet's voyage — birds, plants and bays seen on the way	The words and drawings show them
6	Primary or secondary?	Primary	It was made by a man who was there, at the time

Example 2 — sorting primary and secondary sources

Four sources tell us about early Sydney. Sort each one. Ask two questions each time: *When was it made? Was its maker there?*

Source	When made	Who made it	Was the maker there?	Sort
A book about the voyage by Watkin Tench	Printed in 1789	A soldier who sailed on the ship <i>Charlotte</i>	Yes	Primary
An oil painting of Sydney Cove (shown below)	Dated 1794	Some people say a convict artist named Thomas Watling painted it, but we are not sure	Yes — painted at the time	Primary
A book about the colony by David Collins	Printed in 1798	A man who worked in the colony from its first days	Yes	Primary
The book <i>The Fatal Shore</i> by Robert Hughes	First printed in 1986	A writer who lived long after 1788	No	Secondary



Drawn for this book, after the oil painting dated 1794. The real painting is kept at the State Library of New South Wales.

A drawing made from the 1794 oil painting of Sydney Cove, with labels on its features

Notice the painting: we know *when* it was made (the date 1794 is in a corner), but we are not sure *who* made it. A missing feature does not stop the source telling us things — it just means we say what we do not know.

Practice

With help

Q1. Your class finds an old photo at the library. On the back, in pencil, it says “Main street, 12 June 1955”. (a) What kind of source is it? (b) When was the photo taken? (c) How do you know? (d) Name one feature you do *not* know from the photo. *Hint: use the six checklist questions from the picture above.*

Q2. *The Sydney Gazette* was first printed on 5 March 1803. It was printed in Sydney by George Howe. It was the first newspaper printed in Australia. (a) List three features of this source. (b) Name one kind of content you might find in a newspaper. (c) Is it a primary or a secondary source for Sydney in 1803? Why? *Hint: a feature is a fact about the source itself.*

Q3. Sort each source as primary or secondary: (a) the diary of Arthur Bowes Smyth (1787–1789); (b) a map of Botany Bay drawn by James Cook in 1770; (c) the book *The Fatal Shore* by Robert Hughes (first printed 1986); (d) a museum label about the First Fleet written this year. *Hint: ask “Was the maker there at the time?”*

Q4. The oldest known oil painting of Sydney shows Sydney Cove. The date 1794 is in a corner. Some people say the convict artist Thomas Watling painted it, but we are not sure. (a) List two features we *do* know. (b) Name one feature we are not sure about. (c) Why might it matter who painted it? *Hint: think about perspective — whose eyes do we see through?*

Q5. Your grandmother tells you about her first day of school in 1970. You record her words. (a) What kind of source is this? (b) Is it a primary or a secondary source for school life in 1970? Why? (c) Give one clue that her memory might not be perfect. *Hint: a spoken memory has a name — look at the seven kinds of sources.*

Q6. James Cook drew a map of Botany Bay in 1770. His ship, the *Endeavour*, stopped there in April 1770. (a) When was the map made? (b) Is it a primary or a secondary source for Botany Bay in 1770? Why? (c) Name two things a ship’s map needs to show. *Hint: look at the map drawing above — what parts can you see?*

On your own

Q7. In 1813 there was very little money in the colony. The **governor** — the man in charge of the colony — was Lachlan Macquarie. He had 40,000 silver coins sent from Britain. A hole was cut in each coin so the money could not leave the colony. The ring was called the holey dollar. The middle piece was called the dump. Both were made in Sydney. Write a full read of this source: kind, when made, where made, content, and primary or secondary — with a reason.

Q8. Choose any one source from this section. Write four of its features and two things it tells us (its content).

Q9. Watkin Tench wrote about the First Fleet voyage in 1789. Robert Hughes wrote about convict life in 1986. In one sentence each, say which shows a perspective and which shows an interpretation, and why.

Q10. People in 100 years will look back at your town today. Name three sources they could use, and for each one, name one feature that will help them.

Your task — a source from your community

This links to 1A. You will find one real source about your community's past and read it the way a historian does.

1. With a parent or carer, find one old source about your community. It could be a photo, a newspaper page, a map, an object, or the words of an older person, recorded while they speak. That last kind is an **oral history**.
2. Fill in the source card below.
3. Share: tell the class one thing your source taught you about your community.

Source card

Your answers

What kind of source is it?

When was it made?

Who made it?

Where is it kept today?

What does it show, say or tell us?
(content)

Primary or secondary? Why?

One question you still have

Note: always ask a parent or carer before you talk to anyone or look online.

Answers

Q1. (a) A photo. (b) 12 June 1955. (c) The date is written on the back. (d) Any one: who took it; where it is kept; what the street is made of today.

Q2. (a) Any three: it is a newspaper; first printed 5 March 1803; printed in Sydney; printed by George Howe; first newspaper printed in Australia. (b) Any one: news of the day, names of ships, people or places. (c) Primary — it was printed at the time, in the place.

Q3. (a) Primary — written by a man on the voyage. (b) Primary — drawn by a man who sailed there. (c) Secondary — the writer was not alive then. (d) Secondary — written long after.

Q4. (a) Any two: it is an oil painting; it shows Sydney Cove; the date is 1794. (b) Who painted it. (c) The painter's eyes are the perspective we see; if we know who painted it, we know whose view we are looking at.

Q5. (a) An oral history. (b) Primary — she was there in 1970, and her words are recorded. (c) It was a long time ago; one small part may not match another source.

Q6. (a) 1770. (b) Primary — drawn by a man who was there. (c) Any two: the shape of the bay, the way in, the ship's place, a compass to find direction.

Q7. Kind: an object (a coin). When made: 1813. Where made: Sydney. Content: it tells us there was little money in the colony, and that the colony wanted to keep its money. Primary — it was made at the time.

Q8. Answers will change. Check: four features (facts about the source) and two content points (things it tells us), and the source is a real one from this section.

Q9. Tench shows a perspective — he was there and wrote his own view in 1789. Hughes shows an interpretation — he wrote long after, using sources.

Q10. Answers will change. Example: a photo of your street (the date on the back); a school newsletter (the date and name on the front); a recording of your voice about your day (the voice, and the date saved).

Your task. Answers will change. The card is complete when every line is filled, the primary/secondary line has a reason, and there is one new question.

Example answers

Example for Q3 — a full way to sort a source:

Source	Maker there at the time?	When made	Sort	Reason
Diary of Arthur Bowes Smyth	Yes — he sailed on the voyage	1787–1789	Primary	Made at the time by a man who was there
Map of Botany Bay by James Cook	Yes — he sailed into the bay	1770	Primary	Drawn at the time by a man who was there
<i>The Fatal Shore</i> by Robert Hughes	No — he lived long after	1986	Secondary	Made later, from primary sources
Museum label about the First Fleet	No — written this year	Today	Secondary	Made much later, from primary sources

Example for your task — a filled source card for a real source:

Source card	Example answers
What kind of source is it?	A newspaper — <i>The Sydney Gazette</i>
When was it made?	5 March 1803 (the date is printed on the front page)

Source card	Example answers
Who made it?	George Howe, who printed it in Sydney
Where is it kept today?	Old copies are kept in libraries
What does it show, say or tell us?	It tells us what news mattered in Sydney in 1803
Primary or secondary? Why?	Primary — printed at the time, in the place it writes about
One question you still have	What else was printed on page 1 that day?

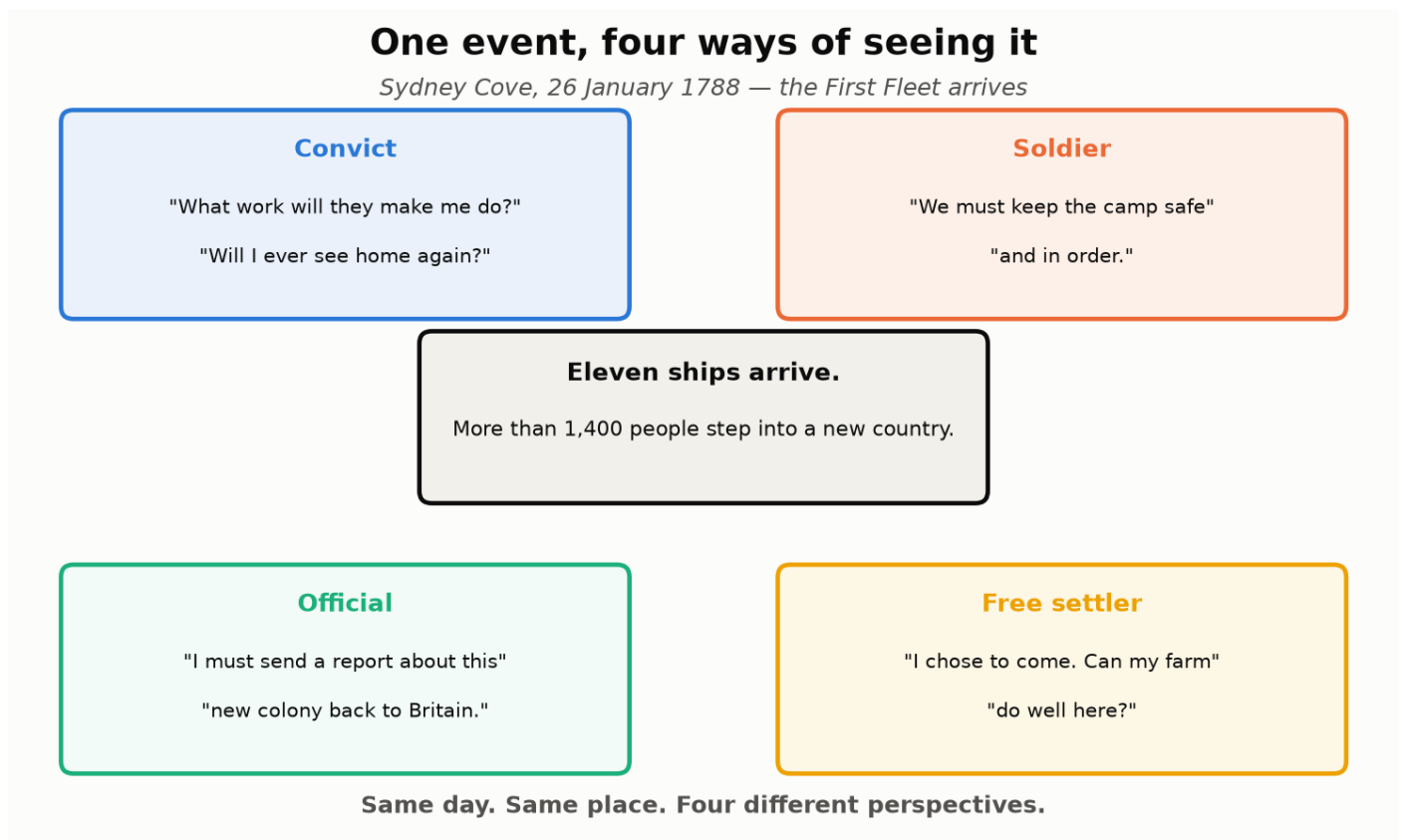
Seeing the past through people's eyes

Curriculum focus — VC2HH4S04.

Draws on: VC2HH4S04.E01, VC2HH4S04.E02, VC2HH4S04.E03, VC2HH4S04.E04. The perspectives studied in this section are those of convicts, convict guards, soldiers, officials and free settlers in the early colony, and of groups in your own community.

Theory

One event, many ways of seeing it. In January 1788, eleven ships sailed into Botany Bay after a long voyage from England. More than 1,400 people stepped into a strange, new country. They all lived through the same days — but they did not see them in the same way. A convict, a soldier, an official and a free settler each had different thoughts and feelings about the very same event.



A labelled diagram of one event in January 1788, the First Fleet's arrival at Sydney Cove, with four speech bubbles showing different ways a convict, a soldier, an official and a free settler might have seen it

Each of these ways of seeing an event is called a **perspective**.

What does *perspective* mean? The Victorian Curriculum uses the word *perspective* but does not define it. In this book, a *perspective* is the way one person or group sees an event. Your perspective is shaped by who you are, what your job or role is, what you already know, and what you hope for or fear. Two people can look at the same event, see it in different ways, and both be telling the truth as they saw it.

What shapes a perspective? Ask these questions about any person from the past:

- Who were they? A child or an adult? Rich or poor?
- What was their job or role?
- What did they already know and believe?
- What did they hope for? What did they fear?

Finding perspectives in sources. To see the past through someone else's eyes, you need **sources**. A **primary source** comes from the time and place you are studying. Diaries, letters, drawings, paintings, objects and official records are

primary sources. So is an interview in which a person remembers their own life. A **secondary source** is made later, by someone who was not there — like a school book or a website about the past. (Section 2C teaches this difference in full.)

Primary and secondary sources — a quick reminder

Primary sources

From the time and place you are studying

- a diary or a letter from the time
- a drawing or painting made there
- an object, like a tool or a ship's bell
- an official record, like a court paper
- an interview with a person who was there

Secondary sources

Made later, by someone who was not there

- a school book about the past
- a website made today about 1788
- an article written long after
- a film made about the past

Section 2C teaches this difference in full. In this section, primary sources are your evidence.

A two-column reminder chart of primary and secondary sources with examples for each column

What is evidence? *Evidence* is the part of a source that helps you answer a question. A **historian** — a person who studies the past to find out what happened — does not just guess. A historian finds evidence in sources and uses it carefully. When you describe a perspective, you do the same thing: you point to the words or the picture in the source and say, “*This shows...*”

Slow down your thinking with a routine. Teachers call these *visible thinking strategies*: steps that make your thinking clear so you can check it. Here is one routine you can use on any diary entry, letter, picture or interview.

A visible thinking routine

Use these four steps on any diary, letter, picture or interview

1 LOOK

What is actually there?
Read or look with care.

2 THINK

What does it tell you
about the person?

3 ASK

Whose voice is missing?
What questions does it raise?

4 DESCRIBE

Say what the perspective was,
using evidence.

Slowing down your thinking helps you see the past through someone else's eyes.

A four-step visible thinking routine: Look, Think, Ask and Describe, with one guiding question for each step

1. **LOOK.** Read or look carefully. What is actually there?
2. **THINK.** What does this tell you about the person? What do they notice, and what do they leave out?
3. **ASK.** What questions does the source raise? Whose voice cannot be heard?
4. **DESCRIBE.** Tell what the person's perspective was, using evidence from the source.

Your teacher may use a different routine with different names. That is fine — every good routine slows you down so you look before you decide.

Words that keep you honest. You can never know for certain how someone felt long ago. You can only say what the evidence supports. Use careful words:

Instead of...	Try...
He was scared.	He might have been scared.
She hated the voyage.	The source suggests she found the voyage hard.
They were happy to arrive.	They seem glad to arrive. The diary says...

Useful sentence starters: *The source shows...* · *This suggests...* · *[Name] might have felt...* · *We know this because...* · *What we cannot know is...*

The people of the early colony. Section 1E introduced the people who came with the First Fleet. Here are the four groups whose perspectives you will describe in this section. A **colony** is a new settlement run by a country far away. **Colonisation** is the word for this process. A **convict** is a person sent to a colony as a punishment for a crime. In Britain, courts could sentence people to **transportation** — being sent by ship to work in a colony for years instead of staying in prison. The **governor** was the man sent to lead the colony.

The people of the early colony

Four groups, four ways of seeing the same place

Group	Who were they?	They might have felt...	Sources that show them
Convicts	Sent to the colony as a punishment for a crime. About 750 came with the First Fleet.	Worried or sad, far from home. Some hoped for a fresh start one day.	Court records, name lists, the words of others, stories remembered much later.
Soldiers and guards	Came to guard the convicts and keep order in the camp.	Watchful. They want to do the job well.	Books and diaries by soldiers, like Tench's book.
Officials	Sent to run the colony — men like Governor Phillip and David Collins.	Busy and careful. They hoped the colony would last.	Letters and reports sent back to Britain; Collins's book of 1798.
Free settlers	People who chose to come, not sent as a punishment. Few came in the first years.	Hopeful. They want to build a new life and a farm.	Letters, farm and shop records from later years.

These are the groups whose perspectives you will describe in this section.

A table of four groups in the early colony — convicts, soldiers and guards, officials, and free settlers — listing who they were, what they might have felt, and the kinds of sources that show their perspectives

Some facts to hold on to. The First Fleet's eleven ships left Portsmouth, England, on 13 May 1787. They carried about 750 convicts, about 250 soldiers to guard them, officials, and a few free settlers — people who chose to come. The

ships reached Botany Bay in January 1788. The land there was not good for a colony, so Captain Arthur Phillip, the governor, looked for a better place. He found Port Jackson, and on 26 January 1788 the fleet moved to Sydney Cove.

Whose voice is missing? Most of the sources that survive from 1788 were written by officials and soldiers — the people who could write and whose papers were kept. Few convicts could write, so their own words are rare. When you describe a convict's perspective, you often have to look harder: at court records, at lists, at drawings, or at words remembered much later. Saying whose voice is missing is part of good history.

Perspectives in your community. The same skill works close to home. Think about a change in your local area (Section 1A): a new school building, a shop that closed, a park that was rebuilt. Different groups saw that change in different ways. You can gather their perspectives yourself by **interviewing** people — asking them questions and listening to their stories. An interview is a source about that person's own life. Plan it well: choose your person, write your questions, record the answers, and say thank you.

Interview planner — voices in your community

Interviews are sources about a person's own life

The person I will ask:

The change in my local area I am asking about:

My three questions:

1.

2.

3.

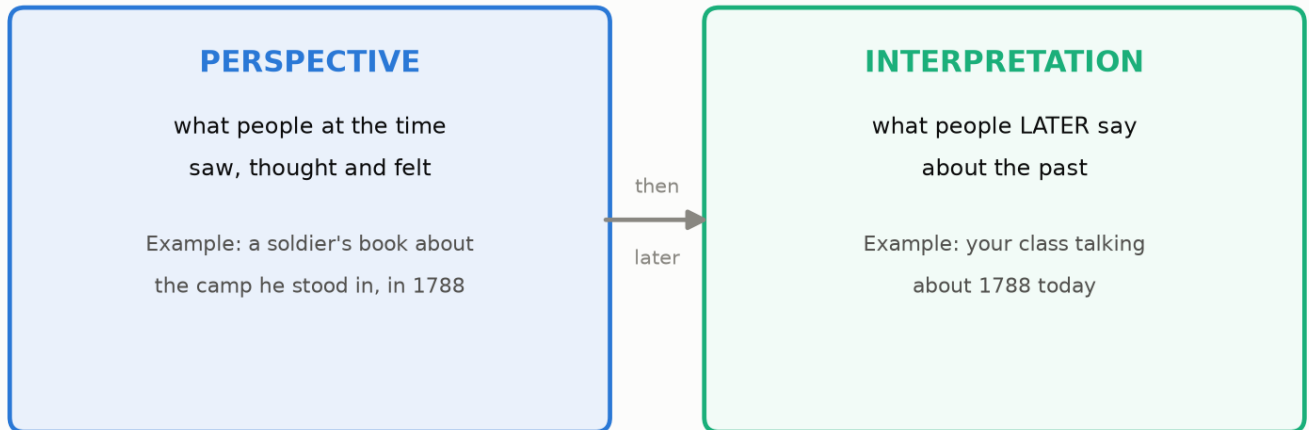
How I will record the answers (write, or audio with permission):

Listen carefully · ask kind questions · say thank you

An interview planning sheet with spaces to name the person, the local change, three questions, and how the answers will be recorded

Perspective and interpretation — not the same word. A *perspective* belongs to the people who were there: what they saw, thought and felt at the time. When people later — today — talk or write about what the past meant, that is an **interpretation**. Section 2E looks at why interpretations of the same event can differ.

Two words that are easy to mix up



In this section you describe perspectives — using evidence from primary sources.

Section 2E looks at interpretations, and why they can differ.

A two-panel diagram separating perspective, what people at the time saw and felt, from interpretation, what people later say about the past

Worked examples

Example 1 — a soldier's book: Watkin Tench

Watkin Tench was a soldier with the First Fleet. He sailed on the ship *Charlotte*. After the colony was set up, he wrote a book about it: *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay*, published in London in 1789. He later wrote a second book, in 1793, about the first years of the colony.

Use the four-step routine on Tench's book.

Step	What you do	For Tench's book
LOOK	What does the source actually say?	Tench tells how the fleet reached Botany Bay in January 1788, how Captain Phillip found the better harbour of Port Jackson, and how on 26 January 1788 the ships moved to Sydney Cove. He writes about the camp of tents and the work of setting up the colony.
THINK	What does this tell you about the person?	Tench notices the moves, the orders, the guards and the work. That is the eye of a soldier whose job was to keep the camp safe and in order.
ASK	What is missing? Whose voice cannot be heard?	Most convicts could not write, so their words are not in his book. The story of the arrival is told from the guards' side, not the prisoners' side.
DESCRIBE	Say what the perspective was, with evidence.	See the model text below.

Model description — a soldier's perspective

Watkin Tench, A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay, London, 1789

Watkin Tench saw the First Fleet's arrival as a soldier's job to be done well. His book tells how the ships moved from Botany Bay to Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788. It focuses on the camp, the work and the guards. This suggests that order and safety mattered most to him. He might also have felt proud, because he wrote the story so others could read about it. What his book cannot tell us is how the convicts felt that day.

 Highlighted sentences = evidence from the source

Evidence: ships moved to Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788; the camp, the work, the guards

Careful words: suggests · might · cannot tell us

~~Describe what the evidence shows — and say what the source cannot show.~~

A model paragraph describing Watkin Tench's perspective, with the evidence sentences picked out and labelled

Model description: “Watkin Tench saw the First Fleet's arrival as a soldier's job to be done well. His book, published in 1789, tells how the ships moved from Botany Bay to Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788. It focuses on the camp, the work and the guards. This suggests that order and safety mattered most to him. He might also have felt proud, because he wrote the story so others could read about it. What his book cannot tell us is how the convicts felt that day.”

Notice the careful words — *suggests, might, cannot tell us*. That is what keeps a perspective description honest.

Example 2 — a convict's painting: Thomas Watling

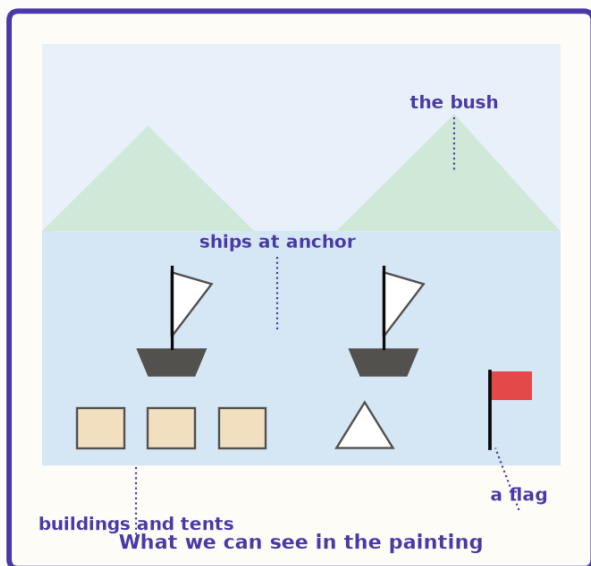
Thomas Watling came to the colony as a convict, sentenced to fourteen years. He arrived in October 1792. Watling could draw, and he became the colony's first trained artist. He made sketches of the settlement, and in 1794 he finished a painting called *A direct north general view of Sydney Cove*. It is the first known oil painting of Sydney. It is kept at the Dixon Gallery, State Library of New South Wales.

Use the four-step routine on the painting.

Step	What you do	For Watling's painting
LOOK	What is actually in the picture?	The picture shows Sydney Cove: the water, ships at anchor, small buildings and tents, a flag, and the bush on the hills.
THINK	What does this tell you about the person?	Watling shows the colony as a busy, growing place. He paints it with care, as someone who has looked hard at it and wants others to see it too.
ASK	What is missing? What can a picture not say?	A painting has no sounds, smells or words. It cannot tell us how anyone felt. It shows the colony from one side of the cove, through one pair of eyes.
DESCRIBE	Say what the perspective was, with evidence.	See the model text below.

Reading a painting — a convict artist's perspective

Thomas Watling, *A direct north general view of Sydney Cove*, 1794 (Dixon Gallery, State Library of New South Wales)



Model description

Thomas Watling was a convict, but his painting shows the colony as a busy, orderly place, with ships, buildings and a flag by the water. This suggests he wanted to show the settlement as something worth looking at. He might have felt proud of what had been built in so few years. A painting cannot tell us feelings, so this is what the picture suggests, not what Watling ever said.

LOOK at what is there. THINK about the person who made it. ASK what it cannot tell you.

Then DESCRIBE the perspective, with careful words.

A labelled frame showing how to read the Watling painting of Sydney Cove, with zones marked for the water, ships, buildings, flag and bush, and a model description

Model description: "Thomas Watling was a convict, but his painting shows the colony as a busy, orderly place, with ships, buildings and a flag by the water. This suggests he wanted to show the settlement as something worth looking

at. He might have felt proud of what had been built in so few years. A painting cannot tell us feelings, so this is what the picture suggests, not what Watling ever said.”

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Sort the sources. Which of these are primary sources? Put a tick next to each primary source. Remember: a primary source comes from the time and place being studied, or from a person who was there.

- (a) a diary written on a First Fleet ship in 1788
- (b) a painting of Sydney Cove finished in 1794
- (c) a school magazine article about the First Fleet, written in 2026
- (d) an interview in which a woman remembers her first day at school in 1952
- (e) a letter written by a ship’s doctor in 1787
- (f) a website about life in the early colony, made last year

Q2. Who might say this? Match each sentence to the group it fits best: *convict, soldier, official, free settler*.

- (a) “I stand watch over the camp at night.”
- (b) “I wonder what work they will make me do here.”
- (c) “I must send a report about this colony back to Britain.”
- (d) “I chose to come here. I hope my farm will feed my family.”

Q3. A doctor’s diary. Arthur Bowes Smyth was the doctor on the First Fleet ship *Lady Penrhyn*. He kept a diary of the voyage, from March 1787 to August 1789. He wrote about the weather, the sick people he cared for, and the new plants and animals he saw. He also made 25 drawings, including the first known European drawing of an emu. His diary is kept at the National Library of Australia.

- (a) List two things Bowes Smyth noticed and wrote about.
- (b) What do these choices tell you about what mattered to him?
- (c) Is his diary a primary source or a secondary source? Why?

Q4. Finish the sentences. Use the word bank to complete each sentence about Tench's book (Example 1). Word bank: *shows · suggests · might have felt · because · evidence*.

- (a) Tench's book _____ what the camp was like at Sydney Cove.
- (b) He writes most about guards and work. This _____ that order mattered to him.
- (c) He _____ proud of the colony, _____ his book tells the story with care.
- (d) We need _____ from sources, not guesses.

Q5. Two men, one arrival. Tench the soldier wrote about tents, guards and work. Bowes Smyth the doctor wrote about weather, sick people, and new plants and animals. Both men arrived in January 1788.

- (a) Write one thing each man noticed.
- (b) Why did they notice different things? Think about their jobs.

Q6. Plan an interview. Choose one change in your local area (see Section 1A). Use the interview planner above to plan an interview with someone who remembers it. Fill in:

- (a) the person you will ask;
- (b) the change you are asking about;
- (c) three questions;
- (d) how you will record the answers.

On your own

Q7. Choose one group from the colony groups table: convicts, soldiers, officials or free settlers. Write 3–4 sentences describing how a person in that group might have seen the first days at Sydney Cove in January 1788. Use at least one piece of evidence from this section.

Q8. Be a source detective. Use the detective questions — *Who made it? When? What does it show? Whose perspective does it show? What can it not tell us?* — on Watling’s painting of Sydney Cove (Example 2). Write one sentence for each question.

Be a source detective

Ask these five questions of any source from the past



- 1 Who made it?
- 2 When was it made?
- 3 What does it show?
- 4 Whose perspective does it show?
- 5 What can it not tell us?

A good detective never guesses. They use what the source can show.

A source detective card with five questions to ask of any historical source: who made it, when, what it shows, whose perspective it shows, and what it cannot tell us

Q9. Missing voices. (a) Why are convicts’ own words from 1788 harder to find than the words of officials and soldiers? (b) Name two sources from this section that still help us see what convict life was like.

Q10. Think of a change in your local area. (a) Name one person you could ask about it. (b) Write two questions you would ask them. (c) Explain how their answers would give you their perspective on the change.

Inquiry task

Q11. Perspective detective. Carry out a short investigation of your own.

1. Choose one person or group from the early colony: Watkin Tench, Arthur Bowes Smyth, David Collins, Governor Arthur Phillip, Thomas Watling, Henry Kable, or convicts, soldiers, officials or free settlers as a group.
2. Choose one primary source from this section to use as your evidence:
 - Tench's book, *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay* (London, 1789)
 - Bowes Smyth's diary of the *Lady Penrhyn* voyage (1787–1789), National Library of Australia
 - Collins's book, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales* (London, 1798)
 - Watling's painting, *A direct north general view of Sydney Cove* (1794), Dixson Gallery, State Library of New South Wales
 - the story of Henry Kable's court case (1788): Kable was a convict on the ship *Friendship*; when his goods went missing on the voyage, the colony's court said the ship's captain had to pay him £15
3. Use the four-step routine: LOOK, THINK, ASK, DESCRIBE.
4. Write 4–6 sentences describing your person's perspective. Use evidence, and use careful words like *suggests* and *might*.
5. Finish with one question your source cannot answer.

Perspective detective — your investigation

Follow the five steps to describe a perspective from the past



People to choose from: Tench · Bowes Smyth · Collins · Phillip · Watling · Kable

Groups to choose from: convicts · soldiers and guards · officials · free settlers

Share your description with your class when you finish.

A five-step flow diagram for the perspective detective inquiry task: choose a person, choose a source, use the routine, write the description, name the missing question

Answers

Q1. Primary sources: (a) the 1788 diary, (b) the 1794 painting, (d) the interview with the woman who was there, and (e) the 1787 letter. Secondary sources: (c) the 2026 magazine article and (f) the website made last year — both were made long after by people who were not there. (d) counts as primary because the woman remembers her own life.

Q2. (a) soldier — standing watch; (b) convict — no choice about the work; (c) official — sending reports; (d) free settler — chose to come, hopes the farm will do well.

Q3. (a) Any two of: the weather, sick people, new plants and animals, drawings (such as the emu). (b) They show he cared for people's health and was curious about the new country — the eye of a doctor. (c) Primary — he was there and wrote it during the voyage.

Q4. (a) shows; (b) suggests; (c) might have felt, because; (d) evidence.

Q5. (a) Tench noticed the camp, the guards and the work. Bowes Smyth noticed the weather, the sick, and the new plants and animals. (b) Their jobs shaped what they looked for: a soldier watches people and order; a doctor watches health and the world around him.

Q6. Answers will vary. Check that the student has named a real person who could remember the change, a clear local change, three questions about it, and a way to record answers (writing, or audio with permission).

Q7. Award 1 mark for choosing a group, 1 mark for each sentence that fits that group's likely thoughts or feelings, and 1 mark for using a piece of evidence from the section. Careful words (*might, seems, suggests*) should be used.

Q8. Who made it: Thomas Watling, a convict and the colony's first trained artist. When: 1794. What does it show: Sydney Cove — water, ships, buildings and tents, a flag, the bush. Whose perspective: a convict artist's view of the settlement. What it cannot tell us: sounds, smells, words or feelings.

Q9. (a) Few convicts could write, and officials' papers were the ones kept. (b) Any two of: Watling's painting, the story of Kable's court case, Bowes Smyth's diary (he listed and cared for the convicts on his ship).

Q10. Answers will vary. (c) should say something like: the answers are that person's own memories and feelings, so they show how that person saw the change — that is their perspective.

Q11. Award marks for: a named person or group; a real source from the list; all four routine steps used; a 4–6 sentence description with evidence and careful words; and a real question the source cannot answer (for example, Tench's book cannot tell us what convicts said; Watling's painting cannot tell us how anyone felt).

Different stories about the same past

Curriculum focus — VC2HH4S05.

Draws on: VC2HH4S05.E01, VC2HH4S05.E02. Both are recorded as not taught in this book (see the teacher note below); their codes are kept for linking only. This section teaches the content description itself, through different interpretations of events this book already studies. It reads from Chapter 1 (→ 1D for why Britain started a colony, → 1E for the First Fleet) and from 2C and 2D. The skill of building interpretations continues in 3D.

CURRICULUM TRACEABILITY – teacher reference, not student text
Section 2E · Chapter 2 (Historical Concepts and Skills – questions, chronology and sources)

Book: History Level 4 (upper year of the Levels 3 and 4 band)

Owns: VC2HH4S05 (sub-strand: Using historical sources)

Achievement standard language taught here: see the Levels 3-4 standard (VC2HH4S05); wording not reproduced.

Elaborations – EXCLUDED per TOC decision D3 / §2A; ids retained as linkage keys only, neither elaboration taught or gestured at:

– VC2HH4S05.E01 – excluded (D3)

– VC2HH4S05.E02 – excluded (D3)

Per CONTENT_POLICY Rule 1, the CD's neutral remainder is taught instead, through neutral contested interpretations of this band's own content, per the binding TOC chapter-block note:

1. why Britain colonised Australia in 1788 – penal necessity vs imperial expansion, sea power and trade;
2. what convict life was like – harsh punishment vs opportunity relative to poverty in Britain;
3. why the colony's site moved from Botany Bay to Port Jackson in January 1788.

Debate 1 is anchored on VCAA's own example historical question for this band (VC2 Humanities question-types guidance); the question's wording is not reproduced – the student text paraphrases it.

Cross-references: 1D (reasons for the colony, the move to Port Jackson), 1E (First Fleet people and daily life), 2B (sequencing), 2C (primary and secondary sources), 2D (perspectives), 3B (causes and consequences), 3D (developing interpretations). Forward link: Levels 5-6 VC2HH6K06 / VC2HH6K12 (different interpretations of a significant development).

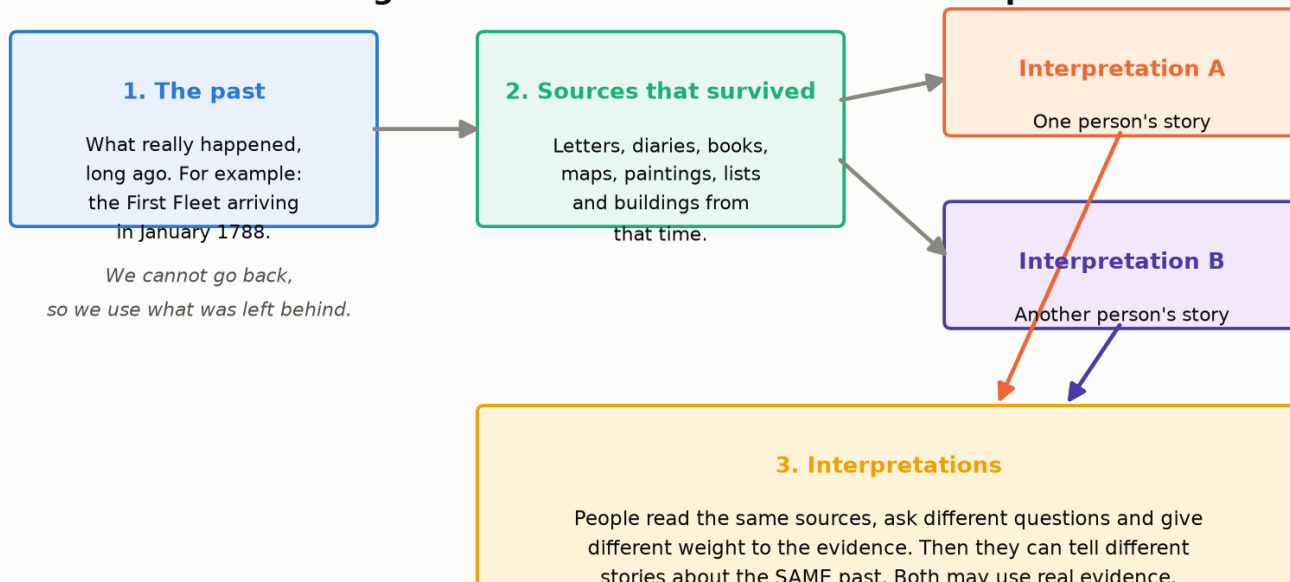
Vocabulary ceiling: Yr4 (TOC decision D2). Curriculum words and subject terms are defined at first use (WORD_LEVEL_POLICY Rule 2). CONTESTED_TERMS applied: each position steelmanned with its strongest real evidence, the same tests applied to both sides, and marking on quality of reasoning rather than the conclusion reached.

Theory

The past does not come with a story attached. The past just happened. What we call “history” is the story people build about what happened — and sometimes they build more than one story about the very same past. This section is about those different stories, why they differ, and how to disagree about them in a fair way.

The past leaves things behind. The past is everything that has ever happened, and it is gone. We can only know it through the things that survived: letters, diaries, court records, maps, paintings, tools, buildings. These surviving things are called **sources** (Section 2C teaches them in full). A source made at the time, by someone who was there, is a **primary source**. A source made later, by someone looking back, is a **secondary source**.

How we get different stories about the same past



A flow diagram showing the past on one side, the sources that survived from it in the middle, and two different interpretations built from those sources on the other side

What is an interpretation? The Victorian Curriculum uses the word *interpretation* but does not give it a meaning. In this book, an *interpretation* is **an account of the past that someone builds later, using sources**. That is how VCAA uses the word too: in its guidance for History, VCAA says that history is about interpreting the past from the evidence that has come down to us, and it calls the books that historians write interpretations of the past, because they are made after the events they tell about. (A **historian** is a person who studies the past and writes about it.)

Evidence is the part of a source that helps answer a question. When you give your evidence, you point to the real words, dates or things in the source, and say “*This shows...*” (Section 2D).

Because interpretations are built by people, they can differ. VCAA’s own guidance says that accounts of the past can change too — when **new evidence turns up**, or when people **ask new questions** about the past.

When two or more interpretations disagree, and the evidence has not settled it, we say the question is *contested*. Some questions about the past stay contested for a long time. That is not a problem with history. It is how history works.

Perspective and interpretation are not the same thing. Section 2D taught *perspectives*: how the people who were there saw things at the time. Interpretations are built later. Here is the difference, side by side:

Perspective and interpretation are not the same thing

Question	A perspective (from Section 2D)	An interpretation (this section)
What	How	As
things	people	people
are	—	—
the	—	—
same	—	—
thing?	—	—

A table comparing perspectives and interpretations across five questions: what each one is, whose view it gives, when it is made, what it is built from, and an example of each

One thing can do both jobs. Watkin Tench sailed with the First Fleet, and his book of 1789 is a primary source — it was made by someone who was there. But the book is also Tench's own interpretation: his way of telling the story, with the parts he chose to put in and the parts he left out.

Why do interpretations differ? Ask these four questions about any two interpretations of the same event:

1. Do they ask **different questions**? (“Why did Britain start a colony?” and “What was daily life like in the colony?” get different answers.)
2. Do they use **different sources**?
3. Were they made **at different times**? A writer in 1790 and a writer in 1994 knew different things.
4. Do they **leave different things out**?

Now let us use these ideas on three real questions from this book's own chapters. All three are contested. All three are answered with real sources.

Contested question 1 — Why did Britain start a colony in Australia in 1788? A **colony** is a new place run by a country far away (Section 1D). Section 1D also taught the reasons Britain had. VCAA's own guidance even uses this as an example question for this band: *why did the British start colonies in Australia?* Historians give two big answers.

One question, two answers: why did Britain start a colony in 1788?

The question historians ask: Why did the British start colonies in Australia? (This is VCAA's own example question.)

Interpretation A: Britain needed somewhere for its prisoners	Interpretation B: Britain wanted sea power and trade
• Prisons were full. After the American War of Independence, Britain could no longer send convicts to America (from 1783). Some prisoners lived on old ships called hulks. • The King's own words. The instructions to Governor Phillip (25 April 1787) said about 600 male and 180 female convicts were to be taken out of the prisons and sent to Botany Bay. • The plan said so. In 1786 the British government decided to send convicts to Botany Bay. The First Fleet carried more than 700 of them.	• Ships need rope and sails. In 1783 James Matra, who had sailed with Captain Cook, wrote that the colony could grow flax and cut timber for British ships. • Trade could grow. The same instructions planned for ships to bring back tea from China on the way home, saving the government money. • A historian agrees. Alan Frost, in his 1994 book <i>Convicts and Empire</i>, argued that British sea power and empire were big reasons for the colony.

What both sides agree on

Britain chose Botany Bay in 1786, sent the First Fleet in 1787, and Phillip himself wrote: 'I would not wish convicts to lay the foundations of an Empire.' They disagree about which reason mattered most.

Two panels, one for each interpretation of why Britain started a colony in 1788, each listing its strongest real evidence, with a strip below showing what both sides agree on

Interpretation A says: Britain needed somewhere for its prisoners. A **convict** is a person sent to a colony as punishment for a crime. After the American War of Independence ended in 1783, Britain could no longer send convicts across the sea to America. Its prisons were full. Some prisoners even lived on old ships called **hulks**. In 1786 the British government decided to send convicts to Botany Bay. The written instructions to Governor Arthur Phillip, dated 25 April 1787, said that about 600 male convicts and 180 female convicts were to be taken out of the prisons. The First Fleet carried about 750 of them (Section 1E).

Interpretation B says: Britain wanted sea power and trade. In 1783, James Matra — a man who had sailed with Captain Cook — wrote a plan for a colony in New South Wales. He said the colony could grow **flax** (a plant used to make rope and cloth) and cut timber for British ships. The same 1787 instructions told the ships to come home by way of China and bring back tea for sale, to save the government money. And the historian Alan Frost, in his 1994 book *Convicts and Empire*, argued that British sea power and empire were big reasons for the colony. (An **empire** is a group of countries controlled by one strong country.)

What both sides agree on: Britain chose Botany Bay in 1786, sent the First Fleet in 1787, and started the colony in 1788. Even Phillip himself wrote: *“I would not wish convicts to lay the foundations of an Empire.”* The two sides disagree about **which reason mattered most**. Each side has real evidence — so read both sides at their strongest before you decide.

Contested question 2 — What was life like for convicts in the early colony? Section 1E taught daily life in the colony, and Section 2D taught how to see it through people’s own eyes. Here are two interpretations of the same life.

The tug of war: what was life like for convicts in the early colony?

The evidence pulls both ways

This side says: punishment was cruel

- February 1788: the colony's first criminal court gave a convict 150 lashes for striking a marine (Tench, 1789).
- May 1790: a convict who stole potatoes was given 300 lashes, six months in chains, and no flour for six months (Tench, 1793).
- Tench wrote that he was sad to see the colony's punishments stretch so far (Tench, 1793).

This side says: a chance for a fresh start

- Tench wrote that convicts were not often punished, and their food ration was the same as the marines' (Tench, 1793).
- James Ruse grew his own food by 1791, and Governor Phillip gave him his own farm — the first land grant to a freed convict.
- Some convicts learned skills, grew food, and started farms they could never have owned in Britain.

Both sides use real sources from the time. The question is which evidence tells us most about most convicts' lives.

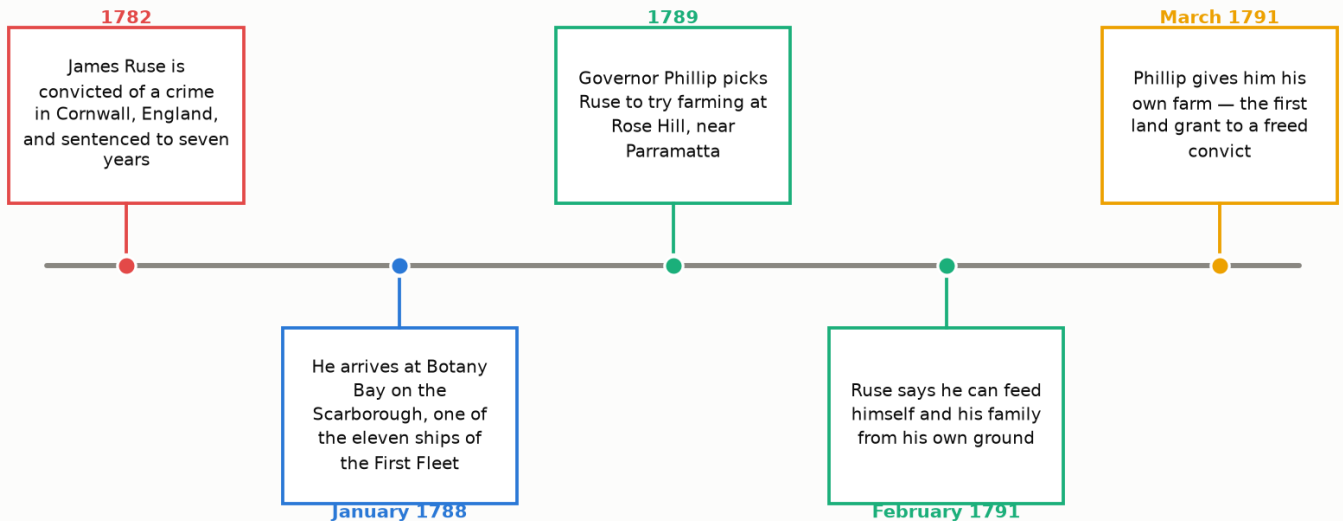
A tug of war diagram with a rope in the middle; one side lists real evidence that convict life was full of cruel punishment, and the other lists real evidence that some convicts got a fresh start

This side says: punishment was cruel. In February 1788, the colony’s first criminal court gave a convict 150 **lashes** — hits with a whip — for striking a **marine**, one of the soldiers who sailed with the fleet (Tench, 1789). In May 1790, a convict who stole potatoes was given 300 lashes, six months in chains, and no flour for six months (Tench, 1793). Tench himself wrote that he was sad to see the colony’s punishments stretch so far.

This side says: some convicts got a fresh start. Tench also wrote that convicts were not often punished, and that their food **ration** — the fixed share of food each person was given — was the same as the marines’ (Tench, 1793). And some convicts did better than they ever could in Britain. Look at James Ruse.

James Ruse: from convict to farmer

One convict's story, from real records — used here as evidence in the question about convict life



Ruse's story is one piece of evidence. Historians still disagree about how typical his fresh start was.

A timeline of James Ruse's story, from when a court found him guilty in Cornwall in 1782, to his arrival with the First Fleet in January 1788, to the farm he grew and the land he was given at Rose Hill by March 1791

Ruse came out on the ship *Scarborough*. In 1789, Governor Phillip picked him to try farming at Rose Hill, near Parramatta. By February 1791, Ruse said he could grow enough food for himself and his family. In March 1791, Phillip gave him his own farm — the first land **grant** (an official gift of land from the government) to a freed convict.

But be careful. Ruse's fresh start is real. It does not prove that every convict had one. That is exactly why the question stays contested: the evidence pulls both ways, and historians still weigh it today.

Contested question 3 — Why did the fleet leave Botany Bay? Section 1D told the story: the fleet arrived at Botany Bay in January 1788, and within days it moved to Port Jackson (Sydney). But why? Two answers are given.

Answer 1: Botany Bay was the wrong place. Read the governor's own words. On 15 May 1788, Arthur Phillip wrote a letter to Lord Sydney, a senior member of the British government.

A real source: the governor's own letter

Letter from Arthur Phillip to Lord Sydney

Sydney Cove, 15 May 1788

*"... the finest harbour in the world, in
which a thousand sail of the line may ride
in the most perfect security."*

Phillip wrote this about Port Jackson in his letter of 15 May 1788. ('Sail of the line' means big ships with sails.)

*"I fixed on the one that had the best
spring of water."*

(A 'spring of water' is a place where fresh water comes up out of the ground. By 'the one', Phillip means the cove he chose — Sydney Cove. He also wrote that ships could anchor very close to the land there.)

About this source

Who made it?

Arthur Phillip, the colony's first governor

Sent to?

Lord Sydney, a senior member of the British government

When?

15 May 1788, from Sydney Cove

Type?

Primary source — written by someone who was there, at the time

What does it show?

Why Phillip left Botany Bay and what he liked about Port Jackson

Where can you read it?

Historical Records of Australia, Series I, Volume I (1914)

A source card with two short quotes from Arthur Phillip's letter of 15 May 1788 praising Port Jackson, and a panel of facts about who made the source, who it was for, when it was made, and where it can be read today

Tench's book agrees. Here is what each place offered, measured against what a new colony needed:

Two places, side by side

Written from the words of Captain Arthur Phillip (1788) and Marine Officer Watkin Tench (1789)

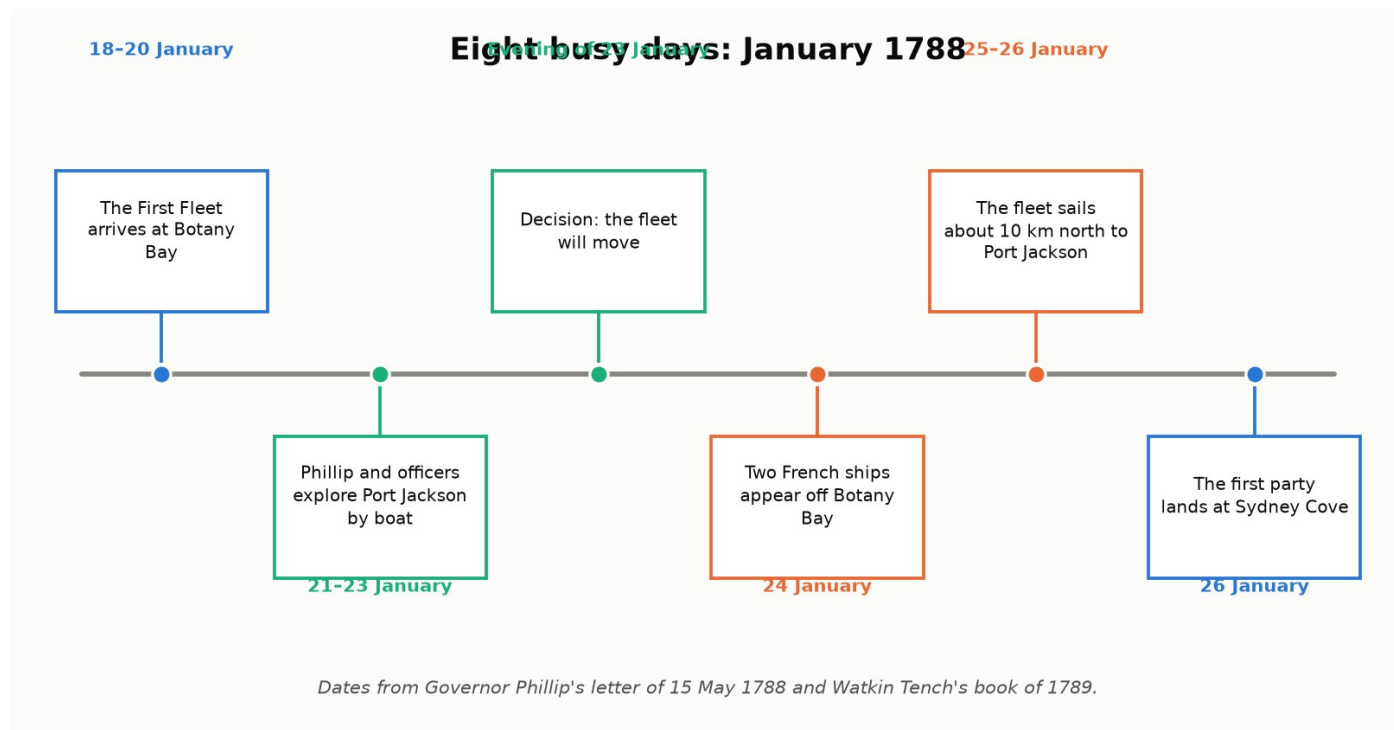
What a new colony needed	Botany Bay	Port Jackson
F r e s	O n l y	A
h S w e t	W e t	W e t
e n o u g h	W e t	W e t
W e t	W e t	W e t

The result: on 25-26 January 1788 the whole fleet moved north from Botany Bay to Port Jackson.

A table comparing Botany Bay and Port Jackson against four things a new colony needed: fresh water, a safe place for ships, an easy landing for goods, and ground for building, with the source named for each point

Answer 2: the French ships pushed them out. On 24 January 1788, two French ships appeared off Botany Bay. (They were the *Boussole* and the *Astrolabe*, under the French officer La Perouse.) Some people have said the British moved quickly to Port Jackson so the French could not take the good harbour first.

Which answer is right? **Dates are evidence.** Put the days in order and watch what happens:



A timeline of eight busy days in January 1788: the fleet arrives at Botany Bay on 18 to 20 January, Phillip explores Port Jackson on 21 to 23 January, the decision to move is made on the evening of 23 January, two French ships appear on 24 January, the fleet moves on 25 to 26 January, and the first party lands at Sydney Cove on 26 January

The decision to move was made on the **evening of 23 January** — a whole day **before** anyone saw the French ships. So the French ships cannot be the reason for the move. The reason was water, shelter and safe ground: Botany Bay had too little of all three, and Port Jackson had all three in plenty. The French arrival may have made the British hurry — but a thing that happens later cannot be the cause of a choice made earlier. Putting events in order can settle a disagreement like this one. (Sequencing is the skill of Section 2B; causes are the skill of Section 3B.)

Fair play when you disagree about the past. Disagreeing is not a bad thing in history. It is how history gets better. But the disagreement has to be fair. These are the rules this book uses:

Fair-play rules for disagreeing about the past

Historians disagree all the time. These rules keep the disagreement honest — in history class and out of it

1

Make each side as strong as you can

Give every interpretation its best evidence before you judge it. Never make a side look weak by leaving out its good reasons.

2

Use the same tests on both sides

Ask every interpretation the same questions: Is the source real? Who made it? When? What does it leave out?

3

Let the evidence decide

A good interpretation points to sources you can check. If new evidence turns up, interpretations can change — that is how history works.

4

Judge the reasoning, not just the answer

Say WHY an interpretation is strong or weak — which evidence it uses well, and which it leaves out — rather than just saying you disagree.

A list of four fair-play rules for disagreeing about the past: make each side as strong as you can, use the same tests on both sides, let the evidence decide, and judge the reasons, not just the answer

In this book, you get credit for your **reasons**, not for which side you pick. Two students can pick opposite sides and both do well — if both define their words, use real evidence, and say what their evidence leaves out.

Worked examples

Example 1 — with help: one source, two readings

A single source can hold evidence for two different interpretations. Read these two points from the **instructions to Governor Phillip, dated 25 April 1787**. This is a primary source: it was written in 1787, the year before the fleet sailed, and it told Phillip what to do.

- **Point 1.** About 600 male convicts and 180 female convicts were to be taken out of the prisons and sent to Botany Bay.
- **Point 2.** The transport ships were to come home by way of China and bring back tea for sale, to save the government money.

Now match each point to the interpretation it supports.

Step	Working	Comment
1	Point 1 is about moving convicts out of the prisons.	Ask: which idea does this point make stronger?
2	So Point 1 supports Interpretation A — Britain needed somewhere for its prisoners.	The source's own words do the work.
3	Point 2 is about ships, China and saving money.	Trade and sea power, not prisoners.
4	So Point 2 supports Interpretation B — Britain wanted sea power and	Same source, different clue.

Step	Working	Comment
5	trade. Both points sit in the same source.	One source can support two interpretations at once. That is why both sides of this contested question quote the same instructions.

Model sentence: “The instructions of 25 April 1787 support both sides. Their words about taking convicts out of the prisons support Interpretation A, and their words about the tea ships support Interpretation B.”

Example 2 — with help: reading dates like a historian

“Some people say the fleet left Botany Bay because the French ships arrived.” Use dates to test this idea. Here are the events, mixed up:

- (i) Two French ships appear off Botany Bay.
- (ii) The First Fleet arrives at Botany Bay.
- (iii) Phillip and his officers explore Port Jackson by boat.
- (iv) The decision is made: the fleet will move.
- (v) The fleet moves to Port Jackson; the first party lands at Sydney Cove.

Step	Working	Comment
1	(ii) 18–20 January · (iii) 21–23 January · (iv) evening of 23 January · (i) 24 January · (v) 25–26 January	Put every event on a line of time (Section 2B).
2	The decision is (iv), the evening of 23 January. The French ships are (i), 24 January.	Find the two events the claim joins together.
3	The decision came before the French ships were seen.	A cause must come before its effect.
4	So the French ships cannot be the reason for the move.	The dates do the testing for you.
5	The real reason: Botany Bay had little fresh water, poor shelter and shallow water; Port Jackson had all three. The French arrival may have made the move hurry along.	Say what the evidence does support, and use careful words for the rest.

Model sentence: “The fleet’s move was decided on the evening of 23 January 1788, and the French ships were not seen until 24 January. So the French ships cannot have been the reason for the move. Water and shelter were the reason; the French ships may have added hurry.”

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Perspective or interpretation? Sort each one. Remember: a *perspective* belongs to someone who was there, at the time; an *interpretation* is an account built later.

- (a) A convict in 1788 feels afraid of the strange new country.
- (b) A historian writes a book in 1994 saying sea power was the big reason for the colony.
- (c) A soldier's wife writes home in 1788 about the camp she lives in.
- (d) Your school book gives an account of the First Fleet, written long after 1788.
- (e) Tench, who was there, writes in 1789 about the camp and the work he saw each day.
- (f) A film about the First Fleet, made in 2020.

Q2. Which side does it support? Match each piece of evidence to Interpretation A (*Britain needed somewhere for its prisoners*) or Interpretation B (*Britain wanted sea power and trade*).

- (a) After 1783, Britain could no longer send convicts to America.
- (b) In 1783, James Matra wrote that the colony could grow flax and cut timber for British ships.
- (c) The instructions of 25 April 1787 said about 600 male convicts and 180 female convicts were to be taken out of the prisons.
- (d) The same instructions told the ships to come home by way of China with tea.
- (e) Some prisoners lived on old ships called hulks.
- (f) Alan Frost argued in 1994 that British sea power and empire were big reasons for the colony.

Q3. Finish the sentences. Use the word bank. Word bank: *interpretation* · *sources* · *differ* · *contested* · *evidence*.

- (a) An _____ is an account of the past that someone builds later.
- (b) Historians build their accounts from _____ that survived.
- (c) Two interpretations can _____ because they use different sources.
- (d) When people still disagree after all the evidence is heard, the question is _____.
- (e) A good interpretation points to real _____ you can check.

Q4. Botany Bay or Port Jackson? Sort each fact.

-
- (a) Ships could anchor close to the land.
-
- (b) The soil was sandy and poor.
-
- (c) There was a good spring of fresh water.
-
- (d) The bay was open to big winds and waves.
-
- (e) Phillip called it “the finest harbour in the world”.

Q5. Eight busy days. Here are five events from January 1788, mixed up:

-
- (i) Two French ships appear off Botany Bay.
-
- (ii) The First Fleet arrives at Botany Bay.
-
- (iii) Phillip and his officers explore Port Jackson.
-
- (iv) The decision is made to move the fleet.
-
- (v) The fleet moves; the first party lands at Sydney Cove.
-
- (a) Put them in order. Write the letter and the date for each (18–20 January · 21–23 January · evening of 23 January · 24 January · 25–26 January).
-
- (b) Which came first — the decision to move, or the French ships?
-
- (c) What does that order tell you about the claim that the French ships were the reason for the move?

Q6. Sort the tug of war evidence. Put each one on the right side: *cruel punishment* or *fresh start*.

-
- (a) February 1788: a convict is given 150 lashes for striking a marine.
-
- (b) Convicts’ food ration was the same as the marines’.
-
- (c) May 1790: a man who stole potatoes is given 300 lashes and six months in chains.
-
- (d) James Ruse grows enough food for his family by 1791.
-
- (e) Tench wrote that convicts were not often punished.
-
- (f) Tench wrote that he was sad to see the punishments stretch so far.

On your own

Q7. Write 3–4 sentences describing **one** interpretation of why Britain started a colony in Australia in 1788. Name the interpretation, and use at least one piece of evidence from this section.

Q8. Both sides agree on some things. Write **two** things that Interpretation A and Interpretation B both agree on. Then explain: why can the question stay contested even when both sides agree on those facts?

Q9. “Convict life was nothing but cruel punishment.” Do you agree? Use one piece of evidence **for** the sentence and one piece of evidence **against** it, then give your own view with your reasons. Use careful words like *suggests* and *might*.

Q10. A writer in 1790 and a writer in 1994 both write about the move from Botany Bay to Port Jackson. Give **two** reasons why their interpretations might differ.

Inquiry task

Q11. Why did the fleet leave Botany Bay? Carry out a short investigation of your own, using the source card of Phillip’s letter (Figure 4) and the January 1788 timeline (Figure 6).

1. Write the question you are trying to answer.
 2. List three pieces of evidence, each with its date and its source.
 3. Say which reason you think mattered most, and why.
 4. Say what the French ships may have changed — and what they cannot have caused, with the date that proves it.
 5. Write your answer in 4–6 sentences. Use evidence, and use careful words. Finish with one question your sources cannot answer.
-

Answers

Q1. Perspectives: (a), (c), (e) — people who were there, seeing it at the time (Tench’s book counts: he was there). Interpretations: (b), (d), (f) — accounts built later by people looking back.

Q2. (a) A · (b) B · (c) A · (d) B · (e) A · (f) B.

Q3. (a) interpretation; (b) sources; (c) differ; (d) contested; (e) evidence.

Q4. Port Jackson: (a), (c), (e). Botany Bay: (b), (d).

Q5. (a) (ii) 18–20 January → (iii) 21–23 January → (iv) evening of 23 January → (i) 24 January → (v) 25–26 January. (b) The decision to move came first. (c) The decision came a day before the French ships were seen, so the French ships cannot be the reason for the move. They may have made the move hurry along.

Q6. Cruel punishment: (a), (c), (f). Fresh start: (b), (d), (e).

Q7. Award 1 mark for naming one interpretation clearly, 1 mark for each fitting sentence, and 1 mark for using a real piece of evidence from this section (for example, the prisons and hulks for A; Matra’s flax, the tea ships or Frost for B). The student must not need to pick the “stronger” side — either interpretation can earn full credit.

Q8. Any two of: Britain chose Botany Bay in 1786; the First Fleet sailed in 1787; the colony started in 1788; convicts were on the fleet. The question stays contested because the two sides disagree about **which reason mattered most**, not about the facts themselves.

Q9. Award 1 mark for one fitting piece of evidence for (for example, the 150 lashes of February 1788 or the 300 lashes of May 1790), 1 mark for one fitting piece of evidence against (for example, the equal food ration, Tench’s words about punishment not being common, or Ruse’s farm), 1 mark for a view of the student’s own, and 1 mark for reasons that use the evidence and careful words. Both “agree” and “disagree” can earn full credit. A model answer might say: the punishments were real and cruel, but they might not describe most convicts’ whole life, since Tench also wrote that punishment was not common and some convicts like Ruse built a new life.

Q10. Any two of: the 1994 writer can read sources the 1790 writer had not seen yet (new evidence turns up over time); the two writers ask different questions; the 1790 writer lived through the events and saw them one way, while the 1994 writer looks back with different knowledge; they leave different things out.

Q11. Award for: a clear question; three pieces of evidence, each with a date and a source; a reasoned choice of the reason that mattered most; the point that the French ships appeared on 24 January, after the decision on the evening of 23 January, so they cannot have caused the move; a 4–6 sentence answer with careful words; and one real question the sources cannot answer (for example, how the convicts felt about the move — few convicts could write).

Fully-worked solutions

Q5 — the full sequence, step by step.

1. Start with what must come first: the fleet has to arrive before anything else happens there. → **(ii) 18–20 January: the First Fleet arrives at Botany Bay.**
2. Phillip cannot explore Port Jackson until he is there. → **(iii) 21–23 January: Phillip and his officers explore Port Jackson by boat.**
3. The exploring tells him Botany Bay is the wrong place. → **(iv) evening of 23 January: the decision is made — the fleet will move.**
4. Only now do the French enter the story. → **(i) 24 January: two French ships appear off Botany Bay.**
5. Last, the move itself. → **(v) 25–26 January: the fleet sails to Port Jackson; the first party lands at Sydney Cove on 26 January.**
6. Check the claim: it says (i) caused (iv). But (iv) comes before (i) on the line of time, so (i) cannot have caused (iv). The claim fails the date test.

Q7 — model paragraph (Interpretation A).

“One interpretation is that Britain started the colony because it needed somewhere for its prisoners. After the American War of Independence ended in 1783, Britain could no longer send convicts to America, and some prisoners lived on old ships called hulks. The instructions to Governor Phillip of 25 April 1787 said that about 600 male convicts and 180 female convicts were to be taken out of the prisons. This suggests that the prisons, not trade, were the reason that mattered most.”

A matching model paragraph for Interpretation B would name Matra’s 1783 plan (flax and timber for ships), the tea ships sent home by way of China, and Frost’s 1994 book, and end the same way: *this suggests that sea power and trade were the reasons that mattered most.*

Q9 — model paragraph (disagreeing, with both sides given their strongest form).

“I do not agree that convict life was nothing but cruel punishment. There is strong evidence on that side: in February 1788 the first court gave a convict 150 lashes, and in May 1790 a man who stole potatoes was given 300 lashes and six months in chains. But there is strong evidence the other way too: Tench wrote that convicts were not often punished, and their food ration was the same as the marines’, and James Ruse grew his own food and was given his own farm by 1791. So cruel punishment was real, but it might not have been most convicts’ whole story. My view is that life was hard and often frightening, yet some convicts found a fresh start that Britain had never given them.”

Q11 — model answer.

“My question is: why did the fleet leave Botany Bay for Port Jackson in January 1788? My evidence is: (1) Phillip’s letter of 15 May 1788, which says Botany Bay’s water ran slowly and the bay was open to big winds, and calls Port Jackson ‘the finest harbour in the world’; (2) Tench’s book of 1789, which says Botany Bay’s soil was sandy and poor; and (3) the January 1788 timeline, which shows the decision to move was made on the evening of 23 January. I think water and shelter mattered most, because the decision was made before anything else happened that week. The French ships appeared on 24 January — after the decision — so they cannot have caused the move, though they may have made the British hurry. One question my sources cannot answer is how the convicts felt when the ships moved, because few convicts could write.”

TEACHER GUIDE — scoring against the band achievement standard
(not student text; written for the adult professional)

Score against the Levels 3-4 achievement standard for this CD (VC2HH4S05),
at Level 4 pitch; the standard's wording is not reproduced here.

BEGINNING — The student can tell the difference between a perspective and an interpretation with support, and can name one interpretation from the section.

GROWING — The student describes one interpretation with evidence, and can say one reason why two interpretations of the same event differ (different sources, different questions, different times, different omissions).

GOT IT — The student describes two interpretations of the same event, gives evidence for each, and explains why they differ. The student applies the date test (a cause comes before its effect) and uses careful language (suggests, might, cannot have been).

Marking is on quality of reasoning, not conclusion reached (CONTESTED_TERMS Rule 5). Where a task asks for the student's view, both sides can earn full credit; the credit is in the defined terms, the cited evidence and the stated limits of that evidence.

Link forward: 3D develops interpretations using terms, knowledge and evidence; Levels 5-6 VC2HH6K06/VC2HH6K12 ask students to explain why interpretations of a significant development are contested.

SOURCES — real, named, checkable referents (TOC decision D4/D9).

Not student text. Web sources retrieved 2026-08-24.

1. Content description: Victorian Curriculum F-10 Version 2.0, Humanities: History, Levels 3 and 4, VC2HH4S05 (wording not reproduced; cross-check CSV VC2_AS-CD-Elab_29-07-2026.csv). Both elaborations (.E01, .E02) excluded per TOC D3/\$2A; ids retained as linkage keys only.
2. VCAA, Victorian Curriculum 2.0 Humanities rationale: history as the discipline of interpreting the past from available evidence; primary sources from the time of, or shortly after, a historical event; secondary sources as interpretations created after the historical event; explanations of the past differing and changing as new evidence emerges and new questions are posed; the differing responses making the past contested; and the band-level example question about why the British established colonies in Australia. Paraphrased throughout; VCAA wording not reproduced.

3. Arthur Phillip to Lord Sydney, Sydney Cove, 15 May 1788. Quotations verified against Historical Records of New South Wales, Vol. I, Part II (Sydney: Government Printer, 1892), pp. 121-123, digital scan at [archive.org item historicalrecord1pt2sidnuoft](https://archive.org/item/historicalrecord1pt2sidnuoft), retrieved 2026-08-24. The letter's account of Botany Bay (shoal water, small fresh-water runs, swamps, exposed to easterly winds), of Port Jackson ("the finest harbour in the world, in which a thousand sail of the line may ride in the most perfect security"), of the cove chosen for its spring of water (named Sydney), of the Supply sailing for Port Jackson "the 25th" and the transports joining "the next evening" (26 January), and of the two French ships (Boussole and Astrolabe, La Pérouse) appearing "the 24th".
4. Governor Phillip's Instructions, 25 April 1787: about 600 male and 180 female convicts to be removed out of the gaols; destination Botany Bay; transports to return via China with tea for the East India Company. Printed in Historical Records of Australia, Series I, Volume I (1914); also Documenting a Democracy, item-sdid-68 (foundingdocs.gov.au), retrieved 2026-08-24. Phillip's memorandum "I would not wish convicts to lay the foundations of an Empire" is printed in the same HRA volume.
5. Watkin Tench, A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay (London, 1789): first criminal court, February 1788 – 150 lashes for striking a marine; Botany Bay "very open, and greatly exposed to the fury of the S.E. winds", soil "invariably sandy and unpromising"; the exploration of Port Jackson returning "on the evening of the 23rd" with the decision to move "the next morning". Full text from Project Gutenberg, [archive.org mirror item anarrativeofthee03535gut](https://archive.org/mirror/item/anarrativeofthee03535gut), retrieved 2026-08-24.
6. Watkin Tench, A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson (London, 1793): "Severity was rarely exercised on them ... Their ration of provisions ... was equal to that which the marines received"; May 1790 sentence for stealing potatoes – three hundred lashes, six months in chains, flour allowance stopped six months – "Such was the melancholy length to which we were compelled to stretch our penal system"; the land-grant terms for settlers. Full text retrieved 2026-08-24 (Project Gutenberg). Student text paraphrases these passages (their 18th-century vocabulary sits above the Yr4 word-level ceiling) while keeping every dated fact.
7. James Matra, "A Proposal for Establishing a Settlement in New South Wales" (London, 1783): colony to supply flax and timber for ships and to aid trade in the Pacific and with China. Matra sailed with Cook in 1770.
8. Alan Frost, Convicts and Empire: A Naval Question, 1776-1811 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994) – the modern historian named on the Interpretation B side (steelman per CONTESTED_TERMS Rule 5).
9. James Ruse: convicted in Cornwall in 1782 (seven years); arrived with the First Fleet on the Scarborough, January 1788; experiment farm at Rose Hill near Parramatta under Phillip; self-supporting by February 1791; 30-acre grant recorded March 1791 – the first land grant to a freed convict. Cross-checked via Wikipedia ("James Ruse") and the National Trust of Australia (NSW), Experiment Farm Cottage page, both retrieved 2026-08-24; the two give slightly different detail on dates, so student text uses the agreed facts only.

10. First Fleet dates (anchored per TOC D9): assembled at Portsmouth and sailed 13 May 1787 (eleven vessels); arrived Botany Bay 18-20 January 1788; moved to Port Jackson/Sydney Cove 25-26 January 1788.
11. All diagrams in this section are original drawings and tables generated for this book (TOC decision D4); each was produced by its own script in src/ (gen_2e_01 ... gen_2e_09) into diagrams/2e_*.png. No real artwork, map or photograph is reproduced.
12. CONTENT_POLICY Rule 1: no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander content appears in this section; the two excluded elaborations are not taught and not gestured at. The front-of-book notice is injected by the assembler.