

History

Convict Life



For Middle Primary



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Preview

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- In 1789, the British government decided to send convicts to Botany Bay in New South Wales because their gaols were overflowing.
- The convicts who were sent to Australia were responsible for both petty and serious crimes such as stealing, burglary, highway robbery and the possession of firearms.
- Some were sent to Australia for 7 years, some for 14 years and some for life.

Imagine that you are a convict being sent to Australia in the late 1700s. Fill out a profile for yourself.

Name: _____

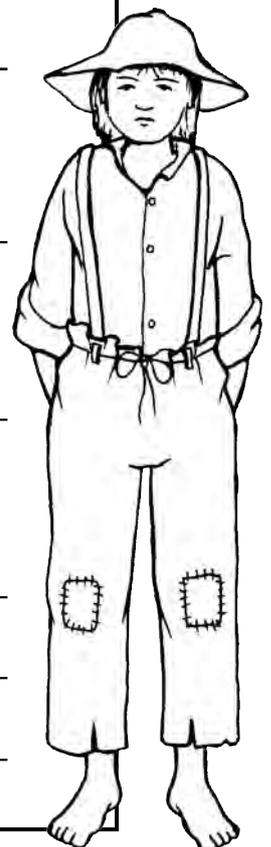
Age: _____

Offence: (Give details of the crime(s) that you have committed.)

Punishment:

Place where you are being sent:

What you think it will be like:



- The first convicts travelled to Australia in eleven ships known as the First Fleet.
- It took the ships nearly nine months to arrive in Australia.
- They set sail in May 1787 from Portsmouth, England. They stopped in Tenerife, Rio de Janeiro and the Cape of Good Hope. They arrived in Botany Bay in January 1788.

Using different coloured dots, show the First Fleet's stopovers on the map. You may use an atlas or the internet.

KEY

- *Portsmouth (England)*
- *Tenerife (Canary Islands)*
- *Rio de Janeiro (South America)*
- *Cape of Good Hope (South Africa)*
- *Botany Bay (Australia)*

Mark the First Fleet's route by joining the dots.



- The journey was horrendous. Passengers were troubled by rats, bedbugs, lice, cockroaches and fleas.
- Disease spread quickly because they lived below deck in cramped and humid conditions where there was no fresh air or opportunity to exercise.
- Those who died were thrown overboard.

Imagine that you are a convict on board the First Fleet. On the back of this sheet write about living with rats, bedbugs and fleas.

- The man in charge of the First Fleet was Governor Arthur Phillip.
- When he arrived in Botany Bay he said that it wasn't a good place to set up a colony (a place to live).
- On 26th January 1788, he moved the convicts 12 kilometres north to Sydney Cove in Port Jackson because it was sheltered, had fresh water and fertile soil.

Read the information above and answer the questions.

1. What do we celebrate today on 26th January?

2. Why do you think this date was chosen?

3. Why did the convicts need fertile soil?

Setting up a colony was harder than had first been imagined. Read the problems that they experienced below. Choose one problem and draw a picture to match it.

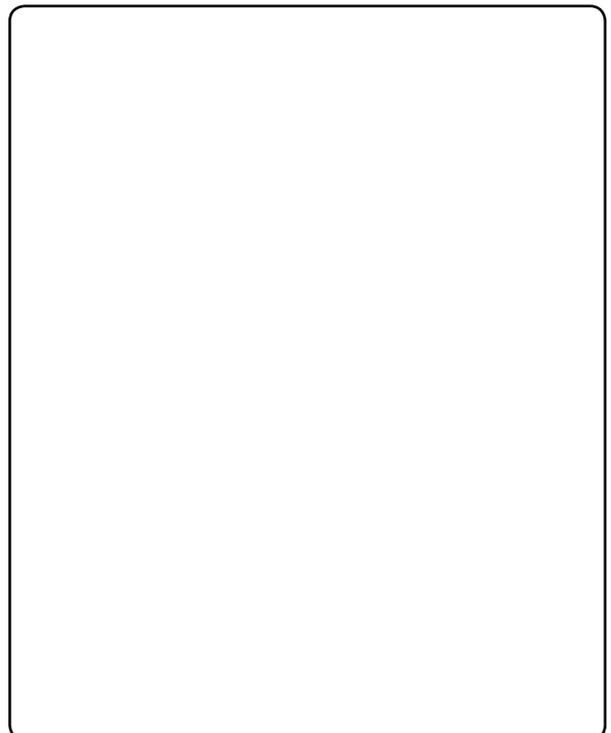
The convicts tried to build houses but had little building experience.

The convicts tried to grow food but had little farming experience.

When food ran out they tried to hunt, but lacked hunting skills.

Many convicts were too sick from the journey to build, hunt or farm.

A lot of the cattle that arrived with them wandered off into the bush.



Convicts Built Colonies

► Activity Page

- In 1790 the Second Fleet arrived.
- In 1791 the Third Fleet arrived.
- Convicts were sent to Australia on ships up until 1840.
- Colonies were set up all over Australia.
- Some colonies were made up of 'free settlers' - people who came to Australia by choice.

Place the colonies in the order that they were established.

Victoria (1835)

Western Australia (1829)

Tasmania (1803)

South Australia (1836)

Queensland (1824)

1

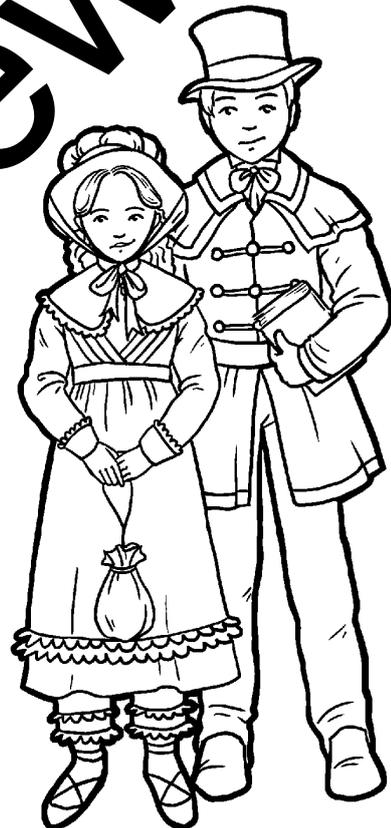
2

3

4

5

Preview



List the types of jobs/skills that would have been needed to set up the new colonies.

- If convicts were well-behaved they were set free to earn their own livings and work independently.
- How well convicts were treated depended on where they worked.
- Port Arthur in Tasmania, known to convicts as Van Diemen's Land, was known as one of the cruellest colonies.

- Read the poem written by a convict about life in Van Diemen's Land.

The first day that we landed here upon the fatal shore,
the settlers came around us, some twenty score or more.
They ranked us up like horses and they sold us out of hand,
and they yoked us up to ploughing frames
to plough Van Diemen's Land.

The hovels that we're living in are built of mud and clay,
with rotten straw for bedding, and a that we daren't say nay.
They fence us in with raging fire, and we slumber as we can,
but it keeps away the wolves and tigers upon Van Diemen's Land.

1. What animal does the poet compare himself to?

2. What work is he given to do?

3. How does he describe his accommodation?

4. Why do you think the poet 'daren't say nay' to sleeping on rotten straw?

- Imagine that you are a convict in Van Diemen's Land, use the back of this sheet to write a letter of complaint to the Governor.

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Order that colonies were established: Tasmania, Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia.

The types of jobs/skills that would have been needed to set up the new colonies: builders, farmers, doctors, priests, etc.

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1. The animal that the poet compares himself to is a horse.
2. The convict is given the job of ploughing the land.
3. He describes his accommodation as poor, basic, small and dirty, suggested by the words 'hovel', 'built of mud and clay', 'rotten straw' and 'squeeze in'.
4. The poet probably 'daren't say nay' to sleeping on rotten straw for fear of punishment.

Preview