



Quality Theatre In Education

ABN: 31 012 483 301

## *“A History of Australia – Part I”*

### **teachers Notes**

#### Introduction

This play is jam-packed with both factual material and entertainment, concerning a period of Australia’s history which is most commonly covered in both Primary and Secondary curriculums, (Indigenous Pre-History/European Discovery/Convict Era/ Gold Rush). It is intended as an introduction to curriculum work, but also serves perfectly as an enjoyable revision.

“A History of Australia – Part I” is also one of TIE’s longest running and highly praised productions, so if you enjoy it as much as other schools have, you might also like to consider, “A History of Australia – Part II”, which covers the Twentieth Century.

#### Indigenous Pre-History

This topic is referred to, at the beginning of the performance. It is, of course, an extremely important period, but as such, we believe it is inappropriate for our non-indigenous performers to deal with it in greater detail, especially since the show is often performed for an indigenous audience. We do, however, strongly support schools’ efforts to include an ever-increasing degree of indigenous content in classroom teaching.

#### European Explorers

The show gives students a background to the European settlement of Australia. Firstly, a comic routine examines the question, “Is the earth flat or round”? This is followed by a rhyming description of some of the early explorers; Willem Jansz, who visited the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1606; Dirk Hartog, who visited Shark Bay (WA) in

1616, Abel Tasman, who charted part of Tasmania in the early 1640s; and, of course, the famous expedition of James Cook to the East Coast in 1770.

A comic singalong & sketch show how the First Fleet (1788) was initially planning to create a settlement at Botany Bay, but because there was no fresh water and the soil seemed infertile, they moved on to Sydney Cove in Port Jackson.

## Convicts

The performance then takes a closer look at convict settlement. Audience participation is a must in the convict wedding, which is designed to show how convicts were encouraged to get married. It was thought that married life would tame the violence of male convicts, and many were given land grants if they tied the knot.

Food was, however, very scarce in the early days, and theft was severely punished. A comic trial of one such villain is performed in the show, but look out for the surprise verdict!

## Inland Exploration

The flavour of the inland expeditions is created, when numerous attempts are made to cross the Blue Mountains, but the performance finally deliver success, when Wentworth, Blaxland, and Lawson find a way to the extensive grazing land of the West. Whilst early attempts rode up the valleys of the range, only to be confronted by daunting and insurmountable cliffs, this clever trio travelled along the ridges until they found a way down on the opposite side.

## Gold Rush

The discovery of gold deposits, eventually in every state, bankrolled the development of many of Australia's major cities, and also stimulated the first great waves of immigration since the British convict settlements. The first discovery near Bathurst (NSW) was made in 1851, but fresh strikes in Victoria, at Bendigo, Ballarat, and other centres, followed rapidly.

The performance gives a practical demonstration of gold-panning technique, and then describes the famous incident at the Eureka Stockade (Ballarat), where Peter Lalor led an armed protest against the license fees imposed upon gold diggers.

## Quiz

A quick quiz asks key questions about the main events in the show.

## Conclusion

A social history, this performance is suitable to be performed on its own or as a first instalment, to be followed by “*A History of Australia – Part II*”. The show you are about to see endeavours to present the aspects of our past which bind us together as Australians, and thereby give students a sense of their national identity, on which to build during their future studies.

## Best References for Primary Students

*Webster’s Australian Encyclopedia (CD ROM version recommended)*  
*A Short History of Australia – Manning Clark*

*Enjoy the show!*