

New Experiences in an Old Land

Tell your students that they are about to engage in a televised current affairs program, on prime-time television. They will be history detectives of the future and, through the latest teleportation technology, they will be able to speak with people from the late 1700s and the 1800s by bringing those people forward in time for just 45 minutes. As history detectives, students will be able to ask valuable questions on behalf of Australia.

You will need:

- Six name badges
- Six role cards (see pdf)
- six chairs at the front of the room

The format of the program is a current affairs panel show (similar to the ABC's *Q&A*, or SBS's *Insight*), with you—the teacher—playing the host and facilitating audience questions. (Alternatively, you could simplify the activity by presenting it as mini-press conference. Interviewees could come to the front, one at a time, and be interviewed by all class members for five minutes.)

Choose six students to play the characters and give a role card to each one (find on next page) The remainder of the class will be audience members (or journalists), putting forward questions to the role-playing panel members. (You could have students swap roles for a stronger level of participation.)

The six students should wear a name badge displaying their character's name. (These names could also be written on the board to assist with identification.) Students should introduce themselves to the class by reading their character card out loud. They should retain the card throughout the interview to remind themselves of the historical person they are playing.

The six roles are:

<p><i>My name is Elizabeth Goslin. I am a convict and I was transported to Australia on the Lady Juliana in 1789. My crime was stealing linen. I have served my seven-year sentence and recently gained a Conditional Pardon. I am now free, but I have to stay here in Australia; I am not allowed to return to England. I am trying to make a new life for myself. I have recently married my sweetheart, Daniel—he was a convict, too.</i></p>	<p><i>My name is Cora. I am from the Murro-ore-dial clan. My husband is from the Broken Bay area—near a place you might know as Sydney. Lately, he has been hanging around the docks that those white people built, entertaining them with his antics. He once went missing for a whole year. He came home on board one of those big ships that those white people first arrived on. Lately, he has started drinking alcohol ... I think it is making him sick.</i></p>
<p><i>My name is Mark Jeffrey. I am not the nicest convict you'll ever meet. In fact, you'd be best to leave me well alone. I wear a 'maggie' uniform, yellow and black it is. Tells you before you meet me that I am a repeat offender. I've been in a few prisons, but now I find myself at Port Arthur. I don't like the way they treat me here, and I intend to let them know about it. Right now they have me digging graves...</i></p>	<p><i>My name is Mr Jones, and I'm a convict in Sydney Town. Back home in England, I always wanted to be an actor. Well, I'm proud to announce I have my first speaking part in a new production in the Sydney colony and I'll be performing at The Theatre, down near The Rocks, no less. You should come and see me—only one shilling a ticket, or three shillings if you want to sit up the front!</i></p>
<p><i>My name is Robert O'Hara Burke. I have just been selected by the Royal Society of Victoria to traverse this great southern land, Australia. As the leader of the Victorian Exploring Expedition, I will be taking camels, horses, and 17 of the finest men in this colony of Melbourne, to find out what lies in the north of this continent. I think my sweetheart Julia will be impressed with my discoveries when I get back. I hope I find her a nice souvenir on my travels.</i></p>	<p><i>My name is Sarah Davenport. I came out to Australia with my husband and our four children in search of a better life. Difficult journey it was getting to Australia—my youngest didn't survive. After getting off the ship, we headed straight to the goldfields of Ballarat. My husband got pretty sick here, so I took over looking for gold. Well, we found some gold ... things are looking up! We're going to make a new life for ourselves out here ... just like we dreamed.</i></p>

Once the six characters have been introduced, allow the class some time to form questions. You might like to prompt them with examples, or you could provide the following questions on a handout to which they can add their own:

- What do you want from your new life in Australia?
- What was your crime? Do you regret committing it?
- What do you eat?
- What does your typical day include?
- Do you have any spare time? If so, what do you do in it?
- Is there anything you wish you had done differently in your life?
- What do you think the future holds for you?
- What is the most amazing thing you have seen in your life?
- What do you remember of your childhood?
- What does the place you live in look like?

Engage the class in a debriefing discussion after the activity. Discuss the highlights of the activity in terms of how they imagined each character's life.