

TEACHER NOTES

Teacher Notes by Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM

WALKER BOOKS

INTRODUCTION

OUR COUNTRY: WHERE HISTORY HAPPENED
CREATORS: MARK GREENWOOD AND FRANÉ LESSAC
ISBN 9781760653576 HARDBACK
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'History is out there.'

In every corner of Australia, history happened. The pages of this book are a journey through tens of thousands of years. Our history is recorded in ancient rock art, in the flag flown at the Eureka Stockade, by Burke and Wills' Dig tree. All around our coastline history unfolded in shipwrecks and ship arrivals. Sometimes tragic, often regrettable, always formative, history is commemorated from Tasmania and throughout the mainland at the sites of prisons and massacres. From the birthplace of a new federated nation at the beginning of the twentieth century in Sydney's Centennial Park to Eddie Mabo's struggle for acknowledgement of land rights in the 1990s, history happened all around Our Country.

Sixteen Australian historical events are described in this text, replicated on the front endpaper, with another fourteen events appearing on the back endpaper. Although arranged chronologically, this is not intended to be a comprehensive history but rather an assemblage of key events, figures and places which have made this country's history come alive.

This is the second title in the OUR COUNTRY series, celebrating and contextualising the richness of Australia's history, and where it happened.

Mark Greenwood and Frané Lessac have collaborated on this and the previous title in the series, *Our Country: Ancient Wonders*, to create a rich and inspiring collection of stories for young readers to explore.

THESE NOTES ARE FOR

Upper primary and lower secondary

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ALSO BY MARK GREENWOOD & FRANÉ LESSAC

where stories painted on rock
have survived for thousands
of years.

From the steamy wetlands of Arnhem Land to the remote corners of the Kimberley and Tasmania, our country is adorned with engravings (petroglyphs) and paintings or drawings (pictographs). There are over 100,000 important rock art sites around Australia that pass on historical, cultural and spiritual knowledge. One of the greatest concentrations of rock art is in the Northern Territory, where over 5000 locations have been recorded in the Kakadu National Park alone.

The story of our country is told on stone.

Image © Frané Lessac, *Where History Happened*, Walker Books Australia 2023.



Q & A with MARK GREENWOOD & FRANÉ LESSAC

1. You have collaborated on a number of picture books about Australian history. Can you describe that process?

From Mark Greenwood: One of the most fascinating and memorable stages in bringing Australian history to life is going to the setting I'm writing about, where historical events occurred. These journeys of discovery help the author and illustrator balance creative interpretation with historical authenticity. Frané and I have had many incredible adventures travelling together, researching projects. We have been blessed to have visited many of the historical sites featured in the book. I admire Frané's naïve style and intuitively know how she will paint a particular scene. We constantly talk about ideas, right from the beginning, so we can visualise an initial concept and then see it through to the finished book.

2. How did you select the stories you included, from the many which might have featured?

From Mark Greenwood: Our country is a land of many stories. In every corner of Australia, there are places where the past is still with us today. The stories linked to these places make them unique. Some commemorate joy and sorrow. Others recall struggles and tragedies. Each site is a small piece of a big story that belongs to all of us. The traces of our history are all around us if we care to seek them out.

My initial concept was a book that would take readers on journeys back in time through the Australian landscape to discover hidden histories, legendary characters and events that shaped our nation. Importantly *Our Country: Where History Happened* revolves around the 'where' historical events took place – such as Darwin, Albany, Glenrowan and Myall Creek. In initial planning, I searched for locations in each state. A few places also had connections to my previous books, like Moondyne Joe's escape-proof cell in Fremantle Prison, Jandamarra's hideout and Lasseter's Cave.

3. Was it difficult to leave other potential stories out?


From Mark Greenwood: It was a challenge to work out what to include and what to leave out. As the title suggests, each double page is 'place based'. This helped narrow down the choices. We decided to include a 'more to explore' timeline on the back endpaper to identify other historical sites, events and people not featured in the book. I hope those characters and settings will be a springboard for readers to conduct their own research. Maybe the 'more to explore' endpaper can be a spark of inspiration for *Where History Happened* part 2?

4. The stories are told in four different ways (for more on these, see the *Style and Use of Language and Visual Literacy* sections below). What are they?

From Mark Greenwood: Four 'layers of literacy' or four narrative strands run through each page of the book. The first is the main text written in lyrical prose. The second is an informational narrative with interesting facts. The third is a one-line refrain that includes the words 'our country' to summarize each spread. The fourth narrative is Frané's art and the visual literacy that blends with the words to create a vibrant celebration of Australian history that is both entertaining and informative.

5. Which of these stories was most challenging to write/illustrate?

From Mark Greenwood: In Australia, we don't have a past that is easy. Many stories don't have happy endings. Picture books can humanize complex events. Engagement leads to knowledge and understanding. I was conscious that our history must be handled carefully and respectfully.

The background of the page is a colorful illustration. On the left, there are green trees and a dirt road. In the center, a dirt road winds through a landscape with trees and people. On the right, there is a large tree and a person sitting on a bench. The overall style is artistic and illustrative.

The Myall Creek spread was complex, and the subject is not often dealt with in history books for children – but it is something I felt was essential.

I also wanted to make sure I included some critical contributions to our history by women, and wanted to ensure I acknowledged cultural diversity. The aim was to imaginatively reconstruct the lives of characters, places and powerful and important moments in time that continue to influence debate to encourage deeper study and learning.

6. Frané, what illustrative sources were useful to you in illustrating the texts?

From Frané Lessac: Travelling to some of the places depicted in the book offered me a first-hand experience of where history happened and a respectful connection to the events. Additionally, watching documentaries, pouring over books, accessing old newspapers and talking to experts, gave each illustration historical authenticity. Illustrating this book also required imagination and passion that I hope offers readers a sense of atmosphere and a deeper insight into our country's history. Imparting this visual information in both words and art inspires young and old readers to go out and discover what Australian history has to offer.

7. Mark, what sources were useful to you in your research?

From Mark Greenwood: To bring historical characters and events to life through research is like excavating an archaeological site. You need to brush away layers of time. The adventurous unveiling of facts requires patience and the right tools. But the goal of research isn't just to gather documents and collect information. These are only the raw materials, not history itself. To tell the story requires imagination, passion and enthusiasm.

In my research, I use *primary sources* – original documents – the building blocks for everything we know about the past. *Secondary sources* refer to the writings of scholars and others who have used primary documents to interpret the past.

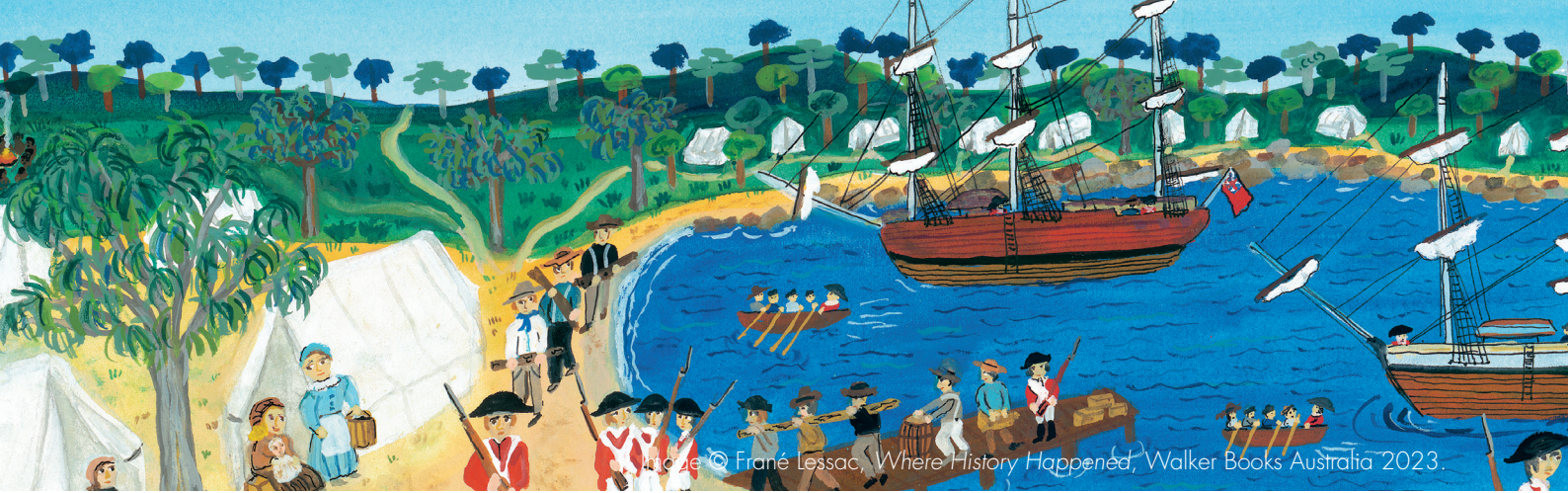
These are some of my research tools: National State and local libraries; National, State and local archives; Reference books; Biographies; Contemporary publications; Special Collections; Letters, diaries, maps, photographs; Manuscripts and university theses; Local Historical Societies archives; Works of art and photographs; Films and documentaries; Interviews and Oral Histories; Historical Sites; Museums.

The Internet connected me to organizations and institutions, research sources, publications and importantly, it enabled me to reach out to the correct Indigenous informants who provided permissions to tell specific stories like spreads featuring Jandamarra and Myall Creek and Eddie Mabo.

8. What do you enjoy about collaboration?

From Mark Greenwood: My original idea was a book that would take readers back in time to discover well-known and little-known histories waiting to be discovered. The inspiration for the cover (and internal spreads) of *Our Country: Where History Happened* can be traced to one of Frané's paintings of an endless dirt road disappearing into the distance. Frané's 'Red Road' hangs in our lounge room and sparked the idea of taking readers on a journey to places where historical events have happened. When I look at that painting, I lose track of time. It's as if our country is calling.

Visual literacy in Frané's art contributes to a reader's interpretation of time and place, adding meaning, mood and tone to the text. Picture books allow us to 'colour in' the facts to give readers a sense of atmosphere and excitement about people and events in bygone eras. This visual literacy carries a substantial part of the historical interpretation. Background details, not mentioned in the text, invite speculation and discussion, which contributes to readers' feelings for time and place.



About the AUTHOR

Mark Greenwood is a history hunter. His award-winning books include *The Legend of Lasseter's Reef* and *The Legend of Moondyne Joe*, both winners of the West Australian Premier's Book Award. Mark often teams with his wife, illustrator Frané Lessac, to produce titles such as *Our Country: Ancient Wonders*, *Midnight* – the story of a light horse, *Ned Kelly & The Green Sash* and *Simpson and His Donkey*, a CBCA Honour Book and a USBBY Outstanding International Book. *Jandamarra*, illustrated by Terry Denton, was shortlisted for the CBCA Eve Pownall Award, the NSW Premier's Literary Awards Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature and the West Australian Young Readers' Book Awards. *The Happiness Box*, illustrated by Andrew McLean, was a 2019 CBCA Honour book. For more, visit his website <https://markgreenwood.com.au>

About the ILLUSTRATOR

Frané Lessac is an author and illustrator of international renown, having fifty children's books published throughout the world. She was born in the USA and lived on the Caribbean island of Montserrat, as well as in London, before moving to Australia. Frané loves to travel and create books based on her worldwide journeys. She has contributed her distinctive paintings to many critically acclaimed children's picture books including, *A is for Australia*, *Under the Southern Cross*, *Australia Under the Sea 1, 2, 3*, and *A is for Australian Animals*. *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga*, written by Traci Sorell, was awarded the Robert F. Sibert Honor Book Honor medal, the Orbis Pictus Honor Book metal, the Boston Globe Horn Book Honor metal and the American Indian Library Association Honor Award. For more, please visit her website <https://franelessac.com>



About the WRITER OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and publishes regularly on children's literature, Australian fiction, and publishing history. She was inaugural director of and is a Life Member of the Queensland Writers Centre, and was co-founder of Jam Roll Press. Her publications include *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia (1946-2005)* (2006) co-edited with Craig Munro and *Hot Iron Corrugated Sky: 100 Years of Queensland Writing* (2002) co-edited with Stuart Glover. In 2011, she was recipient of the Dame Annabelle Rankin Award presented by the CBCA (Qld). In 2012 she was recipient of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature. In 2014 she received the Queensland Writers' Centre's Johnno Award. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.

A. Critical Literacy: Before and After Reading the Book

The **title** of this book is *Our Country: Where History Happened* which reminds readers that history is not static or passive; that Australia has a rich and vivid history containing events and figures worth remembering, whether by celebration or regret.

Examine the cover and discuss what the book might be about, and any other suggested message in the cover design. [See also D. **Visual Literacy Activities** below.]

Read other books by Mark Greenwood and Frané Lessac and discuss common themes and style in their work.

Discuss Australian History and what key events students are aware of before reading this picture book.

B. Themes & Curriculum Topics

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Activity:

Read a general history of Australia in non-fiction or website entries to give students context in identifying how these stories relate to the development of this country.

Activity:

Key topics in this history are canvassed in this book: First Nations Peoples in Australia, Early Explorers and European Convict Settlement in Australia, Cultural Diversity in Australia, Key Events, Figures and Places in Australian History (such as maritime disasters, bushrangers, wars, and political events). Research any of these topics below. [See **Bibliography**.]

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES IN AUSTRALIA

Activity:

The front cover, in featuring a First Nations storyteller, conveys a powerful message about the primacy of the culture of Australia's original inhabitants. How well represented has First Nations history been in the books you have read or studied? What are the key events, figures, or places in this history that you are aware of?

Discussion Point:

Frontier violence and resistance is covered in the entries on the First Nations warrior Jandamarra and of the Myall Creek Massacre. Research these events. [See: Greenwood, Mark *Jandamarra* Ill. by Terry Denton. Allen and Unwin, 2013.

Pederson, Howard 'Jandamarra (1870–1897)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 12, 1990
<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/jandamarra-8822/text15475>

Discussion Point:

Research other key events, figures and places in the history of frontier violence and of first contact. [See: Sedunary, Michael *The Unlikely Story of Bennelong and Philip III*. by Bern Emmerichs. Berbay Publishing, 2015.]

Discussion Point:

Legislation addressing the inequities faced by First Nations people is another topic raised in this book. What other such topics might have been included? For example:

Charles Perkins and the 1965 Freedom Ride,

[See: '1965 Freedom Ride' AIATSIS
<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/1965-freedom-ride>]

The 1967 Referendum, On 27 May, Australians voted to change the Constitution so that like all other Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would be counted as part of the population and the Commonwealth would be able to make laws for them.

[See: 'The 1967 Referendum' AIATSIS
<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/1967-referendum>
Castles, Jennifer *Say Yes: A Story of Friendship, Fairness and a Vote for Hope* Ill. by Paul Seden. Allen & Unwin, 2017.]

Vincent Lingiari and the 1966 Wave Hill Walk-Off, is featured on the back endpaper.

[See: Smiler, Rosie and Mayo, Thomas *Freedom Day: Vincent Lingiari and the Story of the Wave Hill Walk-Off* Ill. by Samantha Campbell. Hardie Grant, 2021.]

Eddie Mabo's historic fight for Land Rights legislation passed in 1992 is also included in this book, and might be researched further. What other key events, figures and places in First Nations legislative history might be researched?

[See: 'The Mabo Case' AIATSIS <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/mabo-case>]

Discussion Point:

Which events, figures and places since the Mabo legislation in 1992 have been significant? For example:

National Apology. On 13 February 2008, in Canberra, the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, issued a National Apology to the Stolen Generations [See: 'National Apology' *National Museum Australia* <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/national-apology>]

2017 Uluru Statement From the Heart.

[See: Mayo, Thomas and Douglas, Blak *Finding Our Heart: A story about the Uluru Statement for young Australians* Hardie Grant Explore, 2020.]

Discussion Point:

The timeline and the key figures involved in the campaign leading to the 2023 referendum to elect The Voice to Parliament is another topic students might research.

Discussion Point:

What other stories in this book feature First Nations people?

Discussion Point:

What other First Nations figures have played a significant role in our history?

EARLY EXPLORERS AND EUROPEAN CONVICT SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

Discussion Point:

Read and research the explorers included in this book and also others.

Dirk Hartog

[See: '1616 Dirk Hartog' *Western Australian Museum* <https://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/dirk-hartog>]

Lieutenant Cook

[See: Murdie, Ray Meet... *Captain Cook*. Ill. by Chris Nixon. *Children's Original*, 2014.]

Discussion Point:

Read and research the treatment of convicts and the development of the colony.

[See: Dickson, John *M is for Mutiny: History by Alphabet* Ill. by Bern Emmerichs. Berbay Publishing, 2017.

Sedunary, Michael *William Bligh: a stormy story of tempestuous times* Ill. by Bern Emmerichs. Berbay Publishing, 2016.

Sedunary, Michael *The Startling Story of Lachlan Macquarie: Founding Father or Failure?* Ill. by Bern Emmerichs. Berbay Publishing, 2017.]

CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN AUSTRALIA

Discussion Point:

The role of Chinese people in Australian gold rush history is conveyed in one of these entries. Research this topic using secondary and primary sources.

[See: Wilson, Mark *Eureka! Story of the Goldfields* Lothian, Hachette, 2020.]

Discussion Point:

Afghan cameleers of the nineteenth century are included in the book. Research this topic using secondary and primary sources.

[See: Stevens, Christine 'Australia's Afghan Cameleers' *Australian Geographic* July 27, 2011

<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2011/07/australias-afghan-cameleers/>

Snow, Madison 'Australia's Afghan cameleers' forgotten history revived by their living relatives' *ABC News* 2 February 2020

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-02/descendants-remember-australias-cameleers/11890622>

'Boundless Plains: the Cameleers' *Islamic Museum of Australia*

<https://www.islamicmuseum.org.au/boundless-plains-the-cameleers/>]

Discussion Point:

What other cultures were represented in this book?

KEY EVENTS, FIGURES AND PLACES IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Discussion Point:

This book canvases some of the key figures, events and places which have played an important role in Australian history. Research any of them, using non-fiction texts and websites.

For example: *The National Museum Australia* holds a great deal of information about these and other historical subjects. <https://www.nma.gov.au/about>

The Australian Dictionary of Biography <https://adb.anu.edu.au/> is also a valuable source.

'Search topics and records' *National Archives of Australia* <https://www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/search-topics-and-records>

'History of Australia' *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Australia/History>

Activity:

The author and illustrator have collaborated on several picture book texts which relate to this illustrated book. Read these books and discuss them.

They include:

- Simpson and His Donkey* (Walker Books, 2011, 2008),
- Ned Kelly and the Green Sash* (Walker Books, 2014, 2010),
- The Legend of Moondyne Joe* (Walker Books, 2011; Cygnet Books, 2004),
- The Greatest Liar on Earth* (2012)
- Midnight* (Walker Books, 2015, 2014).

Mark Greenwood has also written *Jandamarra* (Allen & Unwin, 2013) and *Boomerang and Bat: the story of the real first eleven* (Allen & Unwin, 2016), *Moonwalkers* (Penguin Random House, 2019) illustrated by Terry Denton, *The Legend of Lasseter's Reef* (Cygnet Books, 2003), and *The Happiness Box: a wartime book of hope* (Walker Books, 2022, 2018) illustrated by Andrew McLean. Greenwood's *History Mysteries* (Penguin Random House, 2017) junior historical fictions *Diamond Jack*, *Lasseter's Gold*, *The Lost Explorer* and *The Last Tiger* also canvas historical events.

Maritime Disasters:**Activity:**

Research maritime disasters in Australia's history, and read relevant non-fiction texts and websites.

Activity:

Read relevant picture books and graphic novels about maritime disasters.

[See: Crew, Gary *Quetta* Ill. by Bruce Whatley. Lothian, 2002.] [See **Bibliography**.]

Activity:

'On 1 December, 1876, the SS *Georgette* ran aground on the rugged south-west coast of Australia.' (p 20)

This maritime incident isn't as well-known as others in this book. Use this as a starting point to identify and research other lesser-known figures and events in Australian history. These could include:

- 1891 Australian Shearers Strike, Tree of Knowledge, Barcaldine, Queensland.
 - 1920 On 16 November the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Limited, later known as Qantas, was founded in Winton, Queensland by Paul McGinness and Hudson Fysh.
 - 1942 Bombing and internment of Japanese pearl divers in Broome, WA during WWII.
- [See: 'SS *Georgette*' *Wikipedia* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Georgette

Spearritt, Peter *Where History Happened: The Hidden Past of Australia's Towns and Places* National Library of Australia, 2018.

Dickson, John *The good, the bad and the silly: Stories of Our Past* Ill. by Bern Emmerichs. Berbay Publishing, 2019.

'Japanese Divers in Broome' *National Museum Australia*

<https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/japanese-divers-broome>

'The Japanese raid on Broome' *Australian War Memorial* <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/alliesinadversity/japanese/broome>

Bushrangers:**Activity:**

Research bushrangers in Australia's history, and read relevant non-fiction texts and websites.

[Useful texts on Ned Kelly include: de Grave, Marie-Ève *The Story of Ned Kelly* Ill. by Jean-Jacques de Grave Five Mile/ Regency Media, 2017.

Greenwood, Mark *Ned Kelly and The Green Sash* Ill. by Frané Lessac. Walker Books Australia, 2010.

Brian, Janeen *Meet ... Ned Kelly* Ill. by Matt Adams. Children's Original, 2014.

Greenwood, Mark *The Legend of Moondyne Joe* Ill. by Frané Lessac. Walker Books Australia, 2011.]

Wars:**Activity:**

Research war in Australia's history, and read relevant non-fiction texts and websites. [See **Bibliography**.]

Activity:

Read relevant picture books and graphic novels about war in Australian history.

For example:

- WWI:

Metzenthén, David *One Minute's Silence* (2014) Ill. by Michael Camilleri. Allen & Unwin, 2014;

Starke, Ruth *My Gallipoli* Ill. by Robert Hannaford. HarperCollins, 2018;

Bin Salleh, Rachel *Alfred's War* Ill. by Samantha Fry. Magabala Books, 2018;

Bogle, Eric *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* Ill. by Bruce Whatley. Allen & Unwin, 2015;

Saxby, Claire *Meet ... the ANZACs*. Ill. by Max Berry. Children's Original, 2015.

Greenwood, Mark *Midnight* Ill. by Frané Lessac. Walker Books Australia, 2014.

Greenwood, Mark *Simpson and His Donkey* Ill. by Frané Lessac. Walker Books Australia, 2008.

- **WWII:**
Saxby, Claire *Meet ... Weary Dunlop*. Ill. by Jeremy Lord. Children's Original, 2017;
'Bombing of Darwin' *Australian War Memorial*
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/E84294>
- **Vietnam War:**
Burton, Miranda *Underground: Marsupial Outlaws and Other Rebels of Australia's War in Vietnam* Allen & Unwin, 2021;
Schumann, John *I Was Only Nineteen* Ill. by Craig Smith. Allen & Unwin, 2019.
- **Gulf Wars:**
Wilson, Mark *The Afghanistan Pup*: Lothian Children's Books, 2014.
The war series of picture books written and illustrated by Mark Wilson.

Political Events:

Discussion Point:

Research political events in Australia's history, and read relevant non-fiction texts and websites. For example: 1974 The Dismissal of the Australian Government led by Gough Whitlam was instigated by the dissolution of both houses of Parliament.

Activity:

Read relevant picture books and graphic novels about political events.
These include: Clyne, Joe *Dear Oma: a Story about Federation* History Teachers' Association of Victoria, 2013.
Baillie, Kaye *The Friendly Games* Ill. by Fiona Burrows. MidnightSun Publishing, 2020.

Worksheet 4: Research Topics and Extended Writing also includes a number of topics relating to Key Events, Figures and Places in Australian History.

C. English language & literacy

PLOT & STRUCTURE

Activity:

The text is structured as a series of entries on historical events, figures and places in Australia's history, arranged in chronological order. Invite students to create a timeline of the events detailed in this book. [See front endpaper.]

STYLE AND USE OF LANGUAGE

Discussion Point:

The expository text is creatively written in third person and is accompanied by one sentence summaries which are also poetic in nature, for example: 'The story of our country is told in stone.' (p 4) Discuss the interplay between text and summary sentence.

Discussion Point:

Choose any of the one sentence summaries and discuss their meaning. Eg, 'Our country is home to many faiths.' (p 22)

Discussion Point:

Literary devices are used in the expository text, for example: 'Icy wind whistles through stone corridors and gloomy cells, drawing the ghosts of old inmates to the warm glow of a lantern.' (p 9) Identify any other examples of literary devices used in the expository text.

WRITING EXERCISES

Activity:

Invite students to research another event, figure or place which has been significant in Australian history and then to write an expository text of a similar style to that used in this picture book. Write a one sentence summary similar to that which appears on each double page spread in this book.

Alternatively, use the images on the back endpapers as the basis for a *Where History Happened 2* Class Book. Invite students to work in pairs or small groups to select one of the places, events or people depicted, and compose a main text in lyrical prose, a piece of informational text with interesting facts and a poetic line that refers to 'Our Country'.

Activity:

Write an Acrostic poem using the letters in the words Australian History.

Activity:

Write a diary entry as if written by any of the figures who appear in this book.

FURTHER READING IDEAS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Choose any of the topics covered in these notes as a project, and create a written and visual response to what you research. Encourage students to use primary sources as well as secondary sources for this activity.

2. The classic picture book *My Place* by Nadia Wheatley and illustrated by Donna Rawlins. Walker Books, 2008; Collins Dove, 1987 is a very relevant text to study, and has a suite of excellent resources available to accompany it: *My Place for Teachers* <https://myplace.edu.au>
3. Visit 'Treasures Gallery' *National Library of Australia* <https://www.nla.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/treasures-gallery>. Select an Australian historical treasure and research its significance.
4. Research Mark Greenwood and Frané Lessac's body of work and prepare a display of their books with a summary of their work and achievements.
5. Create a classroom display of books about Australian History and students' responses to their research.

D. Visual Literacy & Visual Arts Activities

Each element of the written and visual text in this illustrated non-fiction text is designed to contribute to its meaning. Encourage students to read both the written and the visual text closely, and to interpret them creatively.

Activity:

Examine the front cover which depicts three children by a campfire listening to an elderly First Nations man telling them stories. Two kangaroos are in the background, which depicts a rich Australian landscape.

Examine the back cover which contains a map of Australia surrounded by images drawn from the book. What do these two covers suggest to you? Design your own cover after reading the book.

Activity:

Examine the **front endpaper** which contains a visual timeline of the sixteen Australian historical incidents described in this text; another fourteen incidents appear as a further timeline on the **back endpaper**. After you've read the book, examine each of these images closely. Create a similar visual timeline of thumbnail sketches of incidents you discover in your research.

Activity:

Examine each double page spread and invite students to interpret it visually. As you look at each spread, consider some of the General Discussion Points 1–5 below regarding aspects of book design.

- **p 1** The publications details page.
- **p 2 The Title Page**
- **pp 3–4 Ubirr stories painted on rock, Kakadu, NT** - A group of tourists are visiting the rock art with a guide, cementing the idea that this book is about looking and listening to the past.
- **pp 5–6 Dirk Hartog's Plate, WA, 1616** - This image consists of three areas of focus: Dirk Hartog and another man hammering the plate to a post; a rowboat, and the ship they arrived on. What do the three images explain to the reader?
- **pp 7–8 Landing of the First Fleet, NSW, 1778** - Note how the line of trees in the background frames the image of the First Fleet's arrival. There are also many activities depicted in this image. Identify some of them. Notice the small group of Gadigal people. How does their positioning in the background at the far left relate to the text?
- **pp 9–10 Convict Prison at Port Arthur, Tasmania, 1830** - Examine the use of perspective in this image and what it suggests about the prison.
- **pp 11–12 Myall Creek Massacre, NSW, 1838** - Depicting a contemporary group of visitors to the monument is a salutary reminder that the horrors of the past shouldn't be forgotten.
- **pp 13–14 Gold Rush in Bendigo, Margaret Kennedy, Victoria, 1851** - What does this image suggest about living conditions on the goldfields?
- **pp 15–16 Eureka Stockade, Ballarat, Victoria, 1854** - This spread consists of two images; the domestic scene of women sewing the flag and the actual stockade. What does the juxtaposition of the two images suggest?
- **pp 17–18 Burke and Wills, Cooper Creek, Queensland, 1860** - The two explorers are depicted on the right. On the left we see John King - the sole survivor mentioned in the text - and some camels. How do these figures add to the poignancy of this scene?
- **pp 19–20 SS Georgette wrecked at Redgate Beach, WA, 1876** - Observe how a vitality and sense of movement is created in the painting of the waves and the angle at which the two horses appear, and the ship are painted.
- **pp 21–22 'The Ghan Express' was named after Afghan, Pakistani and Egyptian Cameleers, 1878** - The line of camels appears in the foreground and the Ghan in the background. What does this placement suggest?

- **pp 23–24 Ned Kelly’s Last Stand at Glenrowan, Victoria, 1880** - This image of the last stand taken by Ned Kelly and his gang uses the fence line and the trees in the background to visually and powerfully suggest entrapment.
- **pp 25–26 Jandamarra, joined the Bunuba resistance, WA, 1894** - The darkened cave entrance is the focus in this illustration which foregrounds Jandamarra emerging to fight another day. What does this image suggest emotionally?
- **pp 27–28 Federation Celebration, Sydney, NSW, 1901** - This image suggests there was a substantial police and army presence at the celebration. Why might that have been?
- **pp 29–30 Anzacs sailed from Albany, WA, 1914** - There is something very emotional about the diggers lined up on the decks of these ships; we know in hindsight that many never returned. The use of perspective in this image with the ships viewed from a distance is also poignant. What else did you observe in this spread?
- **pp 31–32 Japanese Bombing of Darwin in WWII, 1942** - This image conveys the chaos of the bombardment with multiple aircraft flying at an angle to the ships below them. The small group of Australian soldiers on the left denotes the unpreparedness of Australia for this attack.
- **pp 33–34 The 1992 Mabo vs Queensland (No. 2) High Court decision, named for Eddie Mabo, 1992** - Mabo is holding a drawing in his hands in this image. What does it refer to?

General Discussion Point 1:

The standard picture book **format** is generally 32 pages. *Our Country: Where History Happened* is 34 pages plus end papers. It is 257 x 268 mm and is square in format. Each double page spread is discrete to one story rather than telling a sequential narrative. Discuss picture book conventions and how they apply to this book.

General Discussion Point 2:

Frané Lessac’s medium is naïve art which is highly distinctive and internationally regarded. The illustrations for this book were created with gouache on Arches paper. Typeset in Gararond, Framboisier and Neue Kabe. Research her style of art by visiting her website, and then create an image for your class’s *Our Country* book activity below using some of her techniques.

General Discussion Point 3:

Perspective and Spatial Construction: Examine any of the spreads in this book and discuss the use of perspective and what it suggests to the reader. How is white space used? How does spatial construction influence the reader’s response to the image?

General Discussion Point 4:

How does **colour** in each of these images suggest an emotion?

General Discussion Point 5:

Sub-text is what makes any illustrated book engaging and challenging; images should complement the text and to say what the text does not. For example, the spread on Port Arthur (pp 9–10) describes the dire conditions suffered by the convicts who lived there from 1830–1877, but the illustration depicts a guided tour for tourist visitors. The Myall Creek Massacre (pp 11–12) depicts contemporary people commemorating the loss of life in the conflict. What other details did your students observe in the images, including those which were not mentioned in the text?

Activity:

Create a classroom response as a book – an *Our Country: Where History Happened* book including other historical events, figures or places which are important in our history. Encourage students to discover and include events relevant to the city, town, community, region or state in which they live. Invite students to write and illustrate a double page spread. Then collate the spreads into a picture book.

Activity:

Invite students to create a diorama of an event or scene described in this book.

Activity:

Create a comic strip interpretation of an event described in this book. [See **Worksheet 3.**]

E. Geography

Activity:

Invite students to mark on a map of Australia the actual location of each of the incidents described in this book.

Activity:

Trace on a map the journeys made by Dirk Hartog or Burke and Wills, both of whom appear in this book.

WORKSHEET 1 – COLLAGE

Colour and use collage materials to complete this image by Frané Lessac of the rescue of passengers on the SS Georgette in 1876.
(You may choose to enlarge this image to A3 on a photocopier to allow students more room to work.)



WORKSHEET 2 – QUIZ**ABOUT THE QUIZ**

The following quiz can be used to test comprehension of the text and facts contained in the accompanying Teacher Notes.

It also requires some further research.

Answers to the questions are as below.

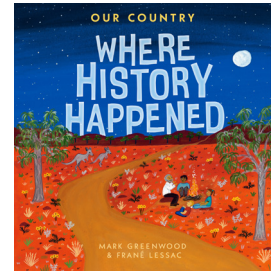
The quiz itself appears overleaf

ANSWERS:

1. Ubirr is a rock formation within the East Alligator region of Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory of Australia, and is known for its rock art.
2. A pewter dish nailed to a wooden post and inscribed with text about the ship, the skipper and the senior officers, and their landing.
3. "terra nullius" (belonging to no one).
4. Tasmania.
5. 'We will remember them' is a line from Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen' (1914) part of which has been used in Memorial Services conducted by the Australian Army since 1921: 'The Ode' *Australian Army* <https://www.army.gov.au/our-heritage/traditions/ode>. This is an ironic commentary on the commemoration of war heroes who died in conflicts such as WWI and WWII, and the fact that the deaths of First Nations peoples during Frontier conflicts have not been recognised until relatively recently.
6. While washing clothes in the creek she discovered gold which led to the Gold Rush of 1851 in Bendigo.
7. During the 1850s goldrush miners became enraged by unjust taxes and government oppression, and at the Eureka diggings, in Ballarat, 'they built a stockade and took up arms, united under the Southern Cross constellation depicted in the Eureka flag. Although the battle that took place on 3 December 1854 was lost, the struggle for justice and a fair go is remembered as a victory won.' (p 15)
8. The Dig Tree is a heritage-listed, blazed, eucalyptus tree at Nappa Merrie Station, Durham, Shire of Bulloo, Queensland, Australia. It was blazed on 21 April 1861, and added to the Queensland Heritage Register on 28 February 2003. It commemorates the deaths of explorers Burke and Wills who perished there in 1860. [See: 'Burke and Wills Dig Tree' *Wikipedia* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burke_and_Wills_Dig_Tree]
9. 'Sixteen-year-old Grace Bussell and Sam Issacs, a Noongar stockman.' (p 20)
10. Marree was 'where the first mosque in Australia was built.' (p 22)
11. 'Such is Life' are reputed to be Ned Kelly's last words. There is also a classic Australian novel called *Such is Life: Being Certain Extracts from the Diary of Tom Collins* (1903) by Joseph Furphy (Tom Collins).
12. The Bunuba resistance.
13. In October 1889, in a speech at Tenterfield, the veteran New South Wales politician Sir Henry Parkes called for federation, and a sub-committee chaired by him 'included Sir Samuel Griffith, Charles Kingston, Edmund Barton and Andrew Inglis Clark who drafted a Constitution Bill.' 'Federation of Australia' *National Library of Australia* <https://www.nla.gov.au/collections/guide-selected-collections/federation-australia#>
14. Gallipoli and the Western Front.
15. More than 200 people.
16. Bringing about land rights legislation.

OUR COUNTRY: WHERE HISTORY HAPPENED

MARK GREENWOOD
& FRANÉ LESSAC

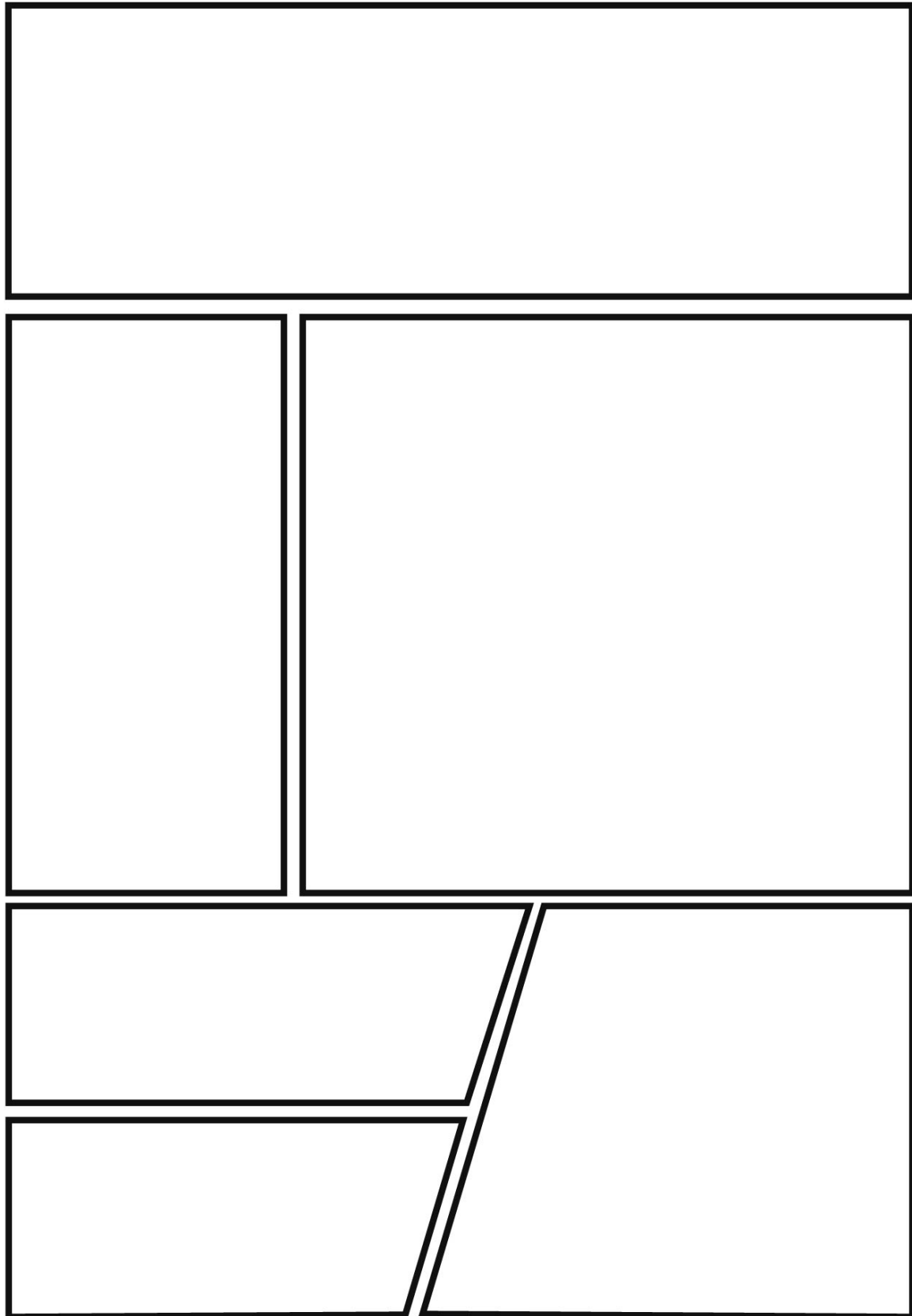


QUIZ

1. Where and what is Ubirr?
2. In 1616, Dutch skipper Dirk Hartog landed in the ship Eendracht on what is now known as Cape Inscription, on the Unknown South Land (what is now Western Australia) and left what tangible record there as the 'oldest physical record of a European landing in Australia'?
3. Lieutenant James Cook, on 29 April 1770, declared the country on behalf of the British Crown, using what name?
4. Port Arthur was a penal settlement situated in what state of Australia?
5. The Myall Creek massacre is described with the statement: 'In our country we will remember them.' What is this a subtle reference to?
6. What was Margaret Kennedy responsible for in 1851?
7. What was the Eureka Stockade?
8. What is the Dig Tree?
9. Who were the heroes of the hour when the SS *Georgette* sank off the rugged south-west coast of Australia on 1 December 1876?
10. One of the stops on 'The Afghan Ghan Express' established in 1878 and named for the Afghan cameleers, was the town of Maree. What was it famous for?
11. 'Such was life in our country' (p 24) is a literary allusion to what?
12. Jandamarra is described as a 'freedom fighter' (p 25). What group did he join?
13. Who were the key figures in the campaign which led to Federation?
14. Where were the Anzacs headed for when they left Albany, WA in 1914?
15. Darwin was subject to air raids conducted by the Japanese Imperial Navy in 19 February, 1942. How many people died?
16. Eddie Mabo is famous for what?

WORKSHEET 3 – COMIC STRIP

Create a one-page comic strip interpretation of an event described in this book, using the template below.



WORKSHEET 4 – IDEAS FOR RESEARCH TOPICS AND EXTENDED WRITING**RESEARCH TOPICS****pp 5–6 Dirk Hartog’s Plate, WA, 1616**

Topic: Dutch explorers and seamen arrived in a number of locations prior to Lieutenant Cook’s arrival. Research their various landings or sightings of Australia.

pp 9–10 Convict Prison at Port Arthur, Tasmania, 1830+

Topic: The conditions in which prisoners were incarcerated at Port Arthur were brutal. Research and write a summary of the history of this place.

pp 11–12 Myall Creek Massacre, NSW, 1838

Topic: Myall Creek was one of many such massacres. What other examples has your research unearthed? [See: ‘Genocide in Australia’ *Australian Museum* https://australian.museum/learn/first-nations/genocide-in-australia/?gclid=EAlalQobChMI1-u4h53v_wIVgNUWBR2cGQQIEAAYASAAEgJgSfD_BwE]

pp 19–20 SS Georgette wrecked at Redgate Beach, WA, 1876

Topic: For his rescue efforts, ‘Sam Issacs (Yebble) was later awarded one hundred acres of land for his efforts – the first time the Government of Western Australia had granted land back to an Indigenous person.’ (p 20) Research and write about the law relating to Aboriginal people’s ownership of land.

pp 21–22 ‘The Ghan Express’ named after Afghan, Pakistani and Egyptian Cameleers, 1878

Topic: Why did Afghani people come to Australia and what was their contribution to its history?

pp 25–26 Jandamarra, joined the Bunuba resistance, WA, 1894+

Topic: Why is Jandamarra revered by his fellow Aboriginal people?

EXTENDED WRITING**pp 7–8 Landing of the First Fleet, NSW, 1778**

Topic: Does Lieutenant Cook deserve to be remembered as a pioneer?

pp 13–14 Gold Rush in Bendigo, Margaret Kennedy, Victoria, 1851

Topic: What part did the Chinese play in this era and in Australia’s subsequent history?

pp 15–16 Eureka Stockade, Ballarat, Victoria, 1854

Topic: This is considered a landmark event in trade relations. Why?

pp 17–18 Burke and Wills, Cooper Creek, Queensland, 1860

Topic: Was the Burke and Wills expedition doomed to fail, and if so, why?

pp 23–24 Ned Kelly’s Last Stand at Glenrowan, Victoria, 1880

Topic: Was Ned Kelly a hero or a villain?

pp 27–28 Federation Celebration, Sydney, NSW, 1901

Topic: Did Federation bring Australians closer together?

pp 29–30 ANZACs sailed from Albany, WA, 1914

Topic: Why did most soldiers enlist in World War I?

pp 31–32 Japanese Bombing of Darwin in WWII, 1942

Topic: Why have the bombardment of Darwin (and of Broome) not been well documented in our history books until recently?

pp 33–34 The 1992 Mabo vs Queensland (No. 2) High Court decision, named for Eddie Mabo, 1992

Topic: ‘The truth changed the story of our country.’ (p 34)

Invite students to consider the author’s intention in using the word ‘truth’. This could also be considered in conjunction with pp7-8 Landing of the First Fleet.

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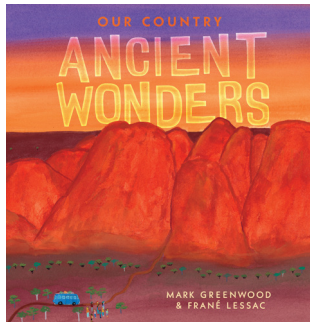
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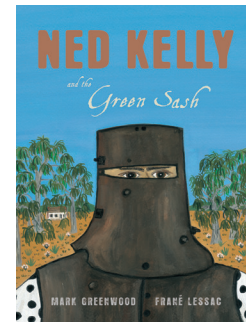
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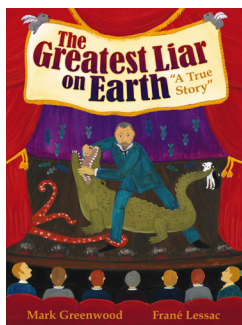
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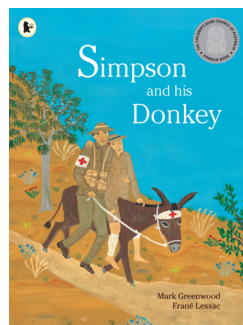
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The Legend of Moondyne Joe
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It began with the wail of air raid sirens.
Coming in low, enemy planes roared overhead.
Anti-aircraft guns offered little resistance.
Hours later, a second deadly attack
left the harbour choked with smoke,
eight ships sunk and twenty aircraft in flames.
Darwin was destroyed.
More than 200 people died.

Just before ten o'clock, on 19 February 1942, the Japanese Imperial Navy mounted the first of two air raids on Darwin. Communications were cut for hours. Without access to facts, the Australian Government initially under-reported the number of casualties and released few details of the damage done. In the coming months, other northern Australian towns suffered enemy attacks. Further south, submarines attacked Sydney and Newcastle.

