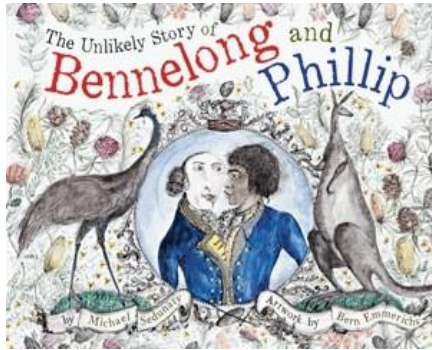


TEACHER NOTES FOR *The Unlikely Story of Bennelong and Phillip*
Written by Michael Sedunary and artwork by Bern Emmerichs



Synopsis:

The Unlikely Story of Bennelong and Phillip is the second book in a series of books from Berbay Publishing exploring first settlement history in Australia.

This extraordinary story about the friendship between Captain Arthur Phillip and the Aboriginal, Bennelong, is one of Australia's most important and intriguing stories, yet remains largely unknown.

The background of first settlement in Australia (when the first fleet arrived) heightens the polarity between the two worlds of these two people – traditional Aboriginal culture and values versus European culture and values.

The book has been beautifully written by Michael Sedunary and is complemented by the extraordinary artwork of celebrated Australian ceramic artist, Bern Emmerichs.

THEMES

- Australian History: first European settlement
- Indigenous culture
- Identity and belonging
- Friendship and other allegiances
- Cultural differences and similarities
- Authority: compassion and cruelty
- History: how factual is it?

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

The author was inspired by an interest in the first settlement of Australia and the desire to explore this in a historical narrative for children. He is particularly interested in having young people think about the nature of history and the connections they see between past events and life as they experience it in present-day Australia.

AUTHOR /ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

Michael Sedunary - author

Michael is an experienced and successful author who shares his time between Melbourne and country Victoria. Over the past 30 years, Michael has written extensively for children on subjects ranging from Languages Other Than English to AFL football. While his overarching motivation has been educational, storytelling has always been central to whatever he writes.

Bern Emmerichs – Australian Artist

Bern Emmerichs is a highly celebrated artist in Australia. Her works are in the Australian National Gallery, the National Gallery of Victoria and collections all around the world.

Bern Emmerichs' stunning illustrations in *The Unlikely Story of Bennelong and Phillip* have been created by using large hand-painted ceramic tiles, which remarkably involved each colour on each tile being individually fired, which have then been photographed and overlaid with the author's text.

Bern Emmerichs is renowned for her work, which explores historical narratives of Australia's First Settlement.

STUDY NOTES AND ACTIVITIES

The following are offered as discussion points to help young students deepen their involvement in this story and to form their own views about various aspects of it.

- Think about the conditions aboard those incredible hulks. What adjectives come to mind as you think about this? How would the convicts have received the news that they were to be transported to Botany Bay?
- Was Lord Sydney's decision to move convicts offshore a good one? Is this a good way for governments to solve problems they are having with certain groups of people?
- Why would the first Australians have seen the new arrivals as aliens, devils, or ghosts?
- Why is it so difficult to have a simple, straightforward view about Phillip's attitude to aboriginal people? (Best answered after you have finished the story.)
- What clues are there in the text that this is not just an account of known facts about Bennelong and Phillip. How important is imagination in reading and writing history?
- When Bennelong escaped from Government House, Governor Phillip 'was left to ponder what he had done wrong.' What (if anything) *had* he done wrong?
- If Phillip was Bennelong's friend, shouldn't he have done something to stop the spearing on Manly Beach? Could he have if he wanted to?
- What is an ambassador? Is this too grand a term for Bennelong as he goes about life in his hut at Tubowgalle?
- Imagine Governor Phillip pacing up and down in his study, deciding what to do after the stealing of the vegetables. What would have been going through his head?

- How big a decision was it for Bennelong to accept Phillip's invitation to sail to England? Why were Bennelong's friends and family so upset by it?
- Do you think Phillip would have kept in touch with Bennelong in London? Why did he take him there in the first place?
- The book refers to Bennelong's letter as sad in some ways. Read the letter and see if you agree.
- In 2014, the bicentenary of Arthur Phillip's death, Prince Philip helped unveil a memorial in Westminster Abbey to the first governor of New South Wales. In the ceremony Phillip was referred to as 'far sighted' and 'humane'. Is there anything in this book to support that description of him?
- Write an account of a recent event that everyone in your class took part in (e.g a sports day, an excursion). Compare the accounts that different people have written. Which account is the true one?
- Imagine and act out a conversation between two Londoners on seeing Bennelong and Yemmerrewanne in the streets, at the theatre or at Parliament House. Now act out a conversation between the two Eora men as they notice the Londoners talking about them.
- After the death of McEntire, William Dawes, risking serious punishment, refused a direct order from Governor Phillip to take part in the expedition to hunt down Pemulwuy. Write a letter as William Dawes, explaining your decision and asking for the Governor's understanding.