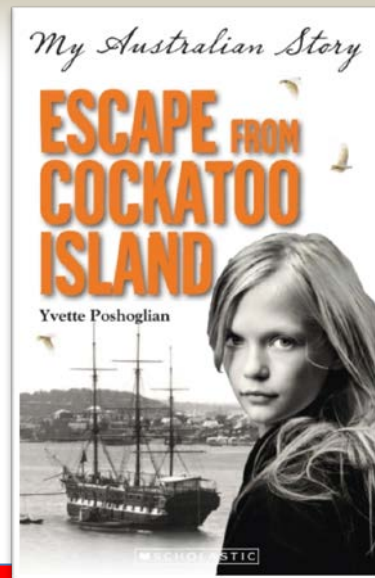


My Australian Story: Escape from Cockatoo Island

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I am in the middle of Sydney Harbour, stuck on this place the masters call Cockatoo Island... I am here because I am an orphan, but I cannot help feeling like I have been sent here for doing something wrong.

Synopsis

This is the fictional diary of 11-year-old orphan Olivia Markham, who feels she is a virtual prisoner in the Biloela Industrial School on Cockatoo Island in 1879. As Olivia surveys her new home, she is aware of its history as a gaol and although it is now a school, the conditions don't seem to have changed much. Olivia dreams of getting off the island and making a new life for herself in the city. Through her courage, intelligence and kindness, her dreams finally come true.

Activities

- Locate Cockatoo Island on a map of Sydney Harbour. Research its history on the internet at <http://www.cockatooisland.gov.au/>
- Divide the class into small groups and get each group to select an envelope. Inside the envelope is a secret instruction. The group is to research the topic and make a presentation to the whole class on one of the following:

What People Wore

- What kinds of clothes and shoes did children and adults wear in Sydney in 1879? Create a slide show that contrasts wealthy citizens with those living in poor conditions. What do we learn about the appearance of the characters in *Escape from Cockatoo Island*?

Food and Drink

- Look at some old recipes and tell the class about one dish that you would enjoy and one that you would hate.

Health and Misadventure

- What do we learn about health and misadventure in *Escape from Cockatoo Island*? What diseases and treatments are mentioned in the novel? What other diseases were common?
- What are some of the main health problems and misadventures that might be experienced by an 11-year-old Australian today?

Sydney in 1879

- Using old photographs and illustrations, create a slide show of the scenes that Olivia enjoys when she goes to Sydney with Miss Godfrey.

Bullying

- What forms of bullying do we read about in the book?
 - What do you know about bullying today?
 - What might be the reasons that some people bully others?
- Ask your students whether they learnt anything about words and their meanings or whether they noticed any unfamiliar words in *Escape from Cockatoo Island* [Biloela, verra, didna]. Using Bronwyn Bancroft's Possum and Wattle for inspiration or the list of Eora words on the State Library of NSW's Indigenous Collections site, make a list of ten other Indigenous words and their meanings to go with 'Biloela'

http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections/history_nation/indigenous/vocabularies/documenting/index.html