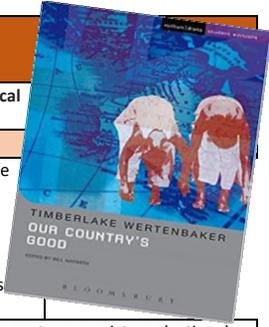


Knowledge Organiser – Our Country’s Good



Our Country’s Good is the telling of the first ‘Penal Colony’ sent to Australia from Britain. Our Country’s Good tells the extraordinary true story of a group of convicts and a young officer who rehearse and perform a play – Australia’s first theatrical production. With opposition from the officers and a leading lady who may be hanged, the odds are stacked against them.

Characters		Context		
Captain Arthur Phillips	In the play, he is the Governor in Chief of New South Wales and has come out of retirement to do this job. He aims to make the prisoners believe that they are not slaves and have a hope for the future. Throughout the play he encourages Ralph Clark to continue with the play and is seen as a fair and wise person	Timberlake Wertenbaker	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wertenbaker was born in New York City. Much of her childhood was spent in the Basque Country. She is of United Kingdom Nationality. 2. Described as “the doyenne of political theatre of the 1980s and 1990s” 3. Inclined to right politically charged plays with metaphors which represent the current context 4. Disturbed by the unsettlement of 80s Britain and the class divide – Our Country’s Good first published in 1988. 	
Major Robbie Ross	Major Robbie Ross fought and lost in the war against America which he believes is the reason why he was sent with the First Fleet to Australia. Throughout the play he is a bitter and negative person.		“The Playmaker”	Our Country’s Good is a revived version of “The Playmaker” a play about the true story of an amateur convict production by convicts of “The First Fleet” of George Farquhar’s 1706 play “The Recruiting Officer”. Thomas Keneally is the writer of “The Playmaker”. Timberlake Wertenbaker was very keen to revive this classic and write about the humanising power of theatre.
John Arscott	Arscott is a convict; he is hopeless and opposed to optimism. This approach is heightened when he discovers that the compass he bought from a sailor is a north arrow drawn on a piece of paper. He becomes the most invested in the play and feels that when he acts his role he feels nothing and forgets about his life as a convict.			
Captain David Collins	Collins was sent over to be the judge in the colony. He always converses from a legal standpoint and justifies all his answers. A key moment in the play is when Collins conducts a vote to determine whether or not the play goes through. He sides with Ralph Clark in this vote and helps him throughout the play.	Social context	Our Country’s Good opens with the flogging of Robert Sideway and goes on to present stark inequalities between convicts and officers, between the poor and the better-off, and between men and women.	
Second Lieutenant William Faddy	Faddy is against the idea of the play because he does not like Ralph Clark. He only appears in one scene		Political context	In 1980s Britain, Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government had reduced funding for many parts of the public sector. The theatre had suffered from government hostility to subsidising the arts and so the play’s celebration of the humanising power of theatre had a powerful resonance. In the justice system, attitudes had also hardened. The play’s suggestion of complex links between poverty and crime challenged the growing inequalities of 80s Britain
Captain Watkin Tench	Tench is a character that hates all the convicts simply because they are convicts. He does not believe that the convicts can become members of society again and always makes sarcastic side comments about them	Cultural Context		Questions of nationhood and colonial power were extremely topical in 1980s debates about literature and politics. The celebration of English theatrical culture and colonial achievement is undercut by the voice of the Aboriginal Australian. As the convicts prepare their triumphant performance, The Aborigine describes the terrible symptoms of disease he has caught from the newcomers.
Captain Jimmy Campbell	Captain Campbell is said to be drunk the entire play, he is always mumbling and never makes coherent sentences. He constantly follows Ross and agrees with everything he says while finding the convicts in the play amusing.			Power of Language
Lieutenant George Johnston	Johnston is also not a main character in the play and is known for treating woman sinners with compassion. During the vote he votes for the play	Historical context	Between 1788 and 1850 the English sent over more than 160,000 convicts to Australia in 806 ships. The first eleven ships are known as ‘The First Fleet’ and contained the convicts and marines that are now acknowledged as the founders of Australia.	
Reverend Johnson	Johnson isn’t a very prominent character in the play. He was supposed to provide moral guidance to the convicts and the officers. He is very concerned with what the play portrays religiously and focuses more on that than any other matter.		Events	
Lieutenant Will Dawes	Dawes is the colony’s astronomer and he couldn’t care less about the convicts or the officers. He agrees to the play going ahead as long as he doesn’t have to watch it.	Act 1		
Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark	Ralph is an officer that is trying desperately to get a promotion. He tries to take on every responsibility so when he hears about the play he immediately agrees to direct and organize it.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Voyage Out 2. A Lone Aborigine Australian Describes the Arrival of the First Convict Fleet in Botany Bay on January 20, 1788 3. Punishment 4. The Loneliness of Men 5. An Audition 6. The Authorities Discuss the Merits of the Theatre Harry and Duckling Go Rowing 7. The Women learn Their Lines 8. Ralph Clark Tries to Kiss His Dear Wife’s Picture 9. John Wisehammer and Mary Brenham Exchange Words 10. The First Rehearsal 	Act 2	
Midshipman Harry Brewer	Harry Brewer is also an officer but the lowest ranking one. He is haunted by the ghost of Handy Baker, a man he hanged and struggles to find his place in the colony. When he got to Australia he became involved with convict Duckling Smith. He becomes very overprotective and jealous and watches over Duckling constantly. Eventually, he dies, with Duckling crying at his side.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Visiting Hours 12. His Excellency Exhorts Ralph 13. Harry Brewer Sees the Dead 14. The Aborigine Muses on the Nature of Dreams 15. The Second Rehearsal 16. The Science of Hanging 17. The Meaning of Plays 18. Duckling Makes Vows 19. A Love Scene 20. The Question of Liz Backstage 		
An Aboriginal Australian	The Aboriginal watches the colony from the moment they set foot in Australia. He regards them with curiosity and caution. He ends up catching a common disease they bring with them as he breaks out with red bumps everywhere	<p>Assessment Demands</p> <p>20th- and 21st Century Drama Component 1: Section B Section B consists of 3 questions – ANSWER ALL PARTS OF THE QUESTION Exemplar Questions: -“Explain and justify how you would direct the performers from line 1 to line 46 of the extract in order to demonstrate...” -“As a performer, explain and justify how you would perform the role of in this extract in order to create your preferred audience response to the character” -“As a designer, outline your costume or set design ideas for this extract, explain and justify how these would help to create the appropriate mood and atmosphere at this point in the play”</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Justice, Guilt, Crime and Punishment, Love, The power of Drama, class division, sexual relationships, power, liberation, rehabilitation, unity, regret, forgiveness, violence, intimidation.</p> <p>Style of presentation</p> <p>Episodic structure, sometimes comical, ensemble playing, multi-role, cross gender casting, non-naturalistic in style however the majority of characters, especially the convicts, are rounded and most frequently played naturalistic. Sadistic Major Ross is something of a caricature and his sidekick Campbell can definitely be played cartoon style.</p>		
Black Caesar	Caesar is originally from Madagascar and wishes to join the play. After begging for a role he ends up being Worthy’s servant. Despite all this, he ends up getting stage fright and needs to be threatened by the other actors in the play.			
Ketch Freeman	He was transported to Australia for killing a sailor who broke a strike. He claims that he didn’t do it, that the blame was placed on him unfairly. He becomes the hangman of the colony after being given the choice to hang or be hanged.			
Robert Sideway	Sideway was sent to Australia for pickpocketing. He tries to fit in with the officers and act like an upper class man but continues to become frustrated and slip out of it. He speaks of knowing many things about theatre but his acting is over-dramatic and humorous in the first rehearsal. In the final scene, he mentions that he wants to start his own theatre company which is supported by the other convicts volunteering to help write and act.			
John Wisehammer	Wisehammer was arrested for stealing snuff. He claims he is innocent and struggles to fit in with Liz Morden and Ross’ anti-semanticism. He taught himself how to read and is widely knowledgeable in many areas. He writes an alternate prologue to the play (which contains the title “Our Country’s Good”) but Ralph rejects it as it would upset the officers. He wishes to stay in Australia after his release and write plays.			
Meg Long	Nicknamed “Shitty Meg,” she is a procuress of sorts for the other convicts. Her appearance in the play is when she mistakes the audition as a call for women.			
Dabby Bryant	Dabby Bryant is Mary’s best friend and constantly speaks about returning to Devon. On the ship, she sold Mary to a sailor on the ship in exchange for extra food rations for them both however she does care about Mary. Her opinion is that it’s stupid and she also dislikes her part. In the final scene she decides she will try and escape that night.			
Liz Morden	Liz Morden was known as the most troublesome convict in the colony. Governor Phillip tries to make an example out of her by showing that she can be redeemed. He does this by putting her in the play. At the end of the first act she is accused of stealing food but she does not try to defend herself because she believes it is not worth it because no one will listen. Through the play she develops self worth and starts to deny the allegations against her.			
Duckling Smith	Duckling was a thief and a prostitute and was sentenced to death at 18 years old. She is taken in by Harry Brewer as he is in love with her and allows her to sleep in his quarters. She also gets treated better than the other convicts as she has been claimed by an officer. The feeling is not mutual until Harry is on the brink of death when she confesses her love for him.			

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