TEACHER NOTES FOR *M is for Mutiny! History by Alphabet*
Written by John Dickson and artwork by Bern Emmerichs

Synopsis:

In the late 18th century, ragtag groups of Europeans started to arrive in Australia. Most were convicts, some were soldiers, a few had just run out of choices. They blundered onto an ancient land that had been peopled for 65,000 years. They wanted to make it just like home. They cleared the land, they fenced it, they paved it and they put buildings on it. All the while, the country's first peoples watched on, bewildered by these clumsy immigrants and their mysterious ways…

M is for Mutiny! History by Alphabet is a taste of the intriguing history of Australia and the many entry points for children to explore further. Why did Sir Joseph Banks hate bananas? Did anyone like William Bligh? Where is Yemmerrawanne?

Themes:

- Australian history: the arrogance of European settlement

- When cultures collide: effects of colonialism on First Nations peoples

- Crime and punishment: the disposable class

- Leadership: ambition, ruthlessness, foolhardiness

- The roles of women: how compassion conquered cruelty

- Flora and fauna: how heavy-handed invaders jeopardised native species

- History: whose 'truth' is it?

Author motivation

This book is a 'taster' – an attempt to alert young readers to the storytelling treasures to be unearthed in Australia's settlement history, to embark on a journey that roams across a much wider landscape than is often revealed, to make room for a greater truth. It is often said that history is written by the victors. But history shapes us all – winners and losers alike. Hopefully, this book will ignite a curiosity that invites an

understanding of how Australia arrived in the 21st century, what we owe to the past and how we can avoid repeating the errors made there.

Author/Illustrator background

John Dickson - author
John Dickson is a writer and illustrator by trade, a poet and painter by inclination and the lead singer of the Rolling Stones in his own mind.

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 many important collections in Australia and around the world.

The selection of artwork in this book have been created using large hand-painted porcelain tiles 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 and suggestions for further research to help young students deepen their involvement in this story and to form their own views about various aspects of it.

- Whose history is it? Compare European view with Indigenous view of Australian settlement.

- Archeologists can now prove that First Nations peoples arrived here from Africa 65,000 years ago. How did they get here? What do artefacts tell us of their lives?

- How important was the science of navigation in locating Terra Australis and subsequently determining its boundaries? How often did it fail?

- Was Australia just a dumping ground for an unwanted 'criminal' class, or were there other reasons for coming here?

- How well did British authorities treat settlers?

- Why did the British insist on cultural superiority over First Nations peoples and how did this manifest?

- What specific aspects of Aboriginal culture allowed the British to declare Terra Nullius – land belonging to no-one? How long did it take for the dominant culture to realise that this was a fiction?

- What effects did European settlement have on flora and fauna? How quickly did it occur? Why?

- Why didn't First Peoples' behaviour have a similar effect on species survival?

- What was the role of women in shaping the new colony?

- What allowed 'prisoners' to undertake small businesses? Were they successful?

- Australia continues to be a migrant country. How many families in the class come from elsewhere? Why?