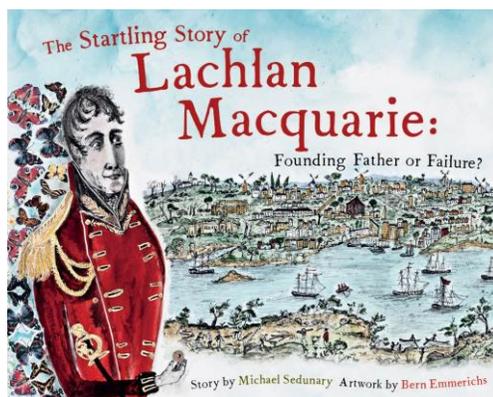


TEACHER NOTES FOR *The Startling story Lachlan Macquarie: founding father or failure?* Written by Michael Sedunary and artwork by Bern Emmerichs



SYNOPSIS:

The story of Lachlan Macquarie is an important story in the history of modern Australia that has been largely lost to the current generation of school children. Whilst we've all seen many things named after Macquarie, few realise the important role he played in the Australia we know today.

Lachlan Macquarie's gravestone bears the inscription, 'Father of Australia'. That's quite a claim, but is this a title Macquarie really deserves? He is rightly celebrated for his inspired infrastructure building and his enlightened treatment of convicts and emancipists, but his treatment of the Indigenous population was far from enlightened. And then there was the Bigge report to the British Parliament that was scathing in its criticism of Macquarie's governorship, on the grounds that he was far too 'democratic'. So how are we to think of this towering figure of Australian history: founding father or failure?

Michael Sedunary's narrative is both informative and interactive; he poses questions and points out modern parallels. Bern Emmerichs' extraordinary illustrations capture the lively naïveté of the painting and drawings of that time with the sophisticated, clever techniques of illustration today. The illustrations all painted on large ceramic tiles that are individually fired between each layer of colour.

THEMES

- Power and authority
- Power and popularity.
- Political lobbying
- The 'party spirit' – class division and the protection of privilege.
- Rehabilitation and the 'convict stain'

- Progressive and conservative or reactionary thinking.
- Autocracy – advantages and disadvantages
- Infrastructure building
- Offshore detention and the use of brutality as a deterrent.
- Exploration and expansion.
- Race relations. The policy of assimilation.
- The value of historical titles and labels.

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 *William Bligh: a stormy story of tempestuous times* 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 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.

1

Are power and authority the same thing? Can you have one without the other? How might a person in power lose his or her authority? Can you think of any examples?

2

How important is popularity for a person in government? Did Macquarie do the right thing by introducing horseracing and gambling to Sydney? Is it the role of government to provide things like festivals and parades for the people? Are they just a distraction from more important issues?

3

John Macarthur is an important figure in the history of Australian sheep farming. Was he entitled to use his wealth and his position to influence people in power in England and turn them against Macquarie?

4

Why did the Exclusives resent the rise of the Emancipists so much? Is it too much to expect people to share wealth and privilege?

5

Macquarie was frustrated by what he called the Party Spirit, i.e. a society divided into sections promoting their own interests. Would he be satisfied that 21st Century Australia has moved well beyond that?

6

Do you agree with Macquarie that Emancipists should be given every chance to make their way in society or do you agree with the Exclusives that 'the convict stain' can never be removed?

7

In researching your family history, would you be happier to find you were descended from an Emancipist or an Exclusive?

8

Can we sympathise with Marsden's refusal to work with Emancipists? Would they have somehow contaminated his role as Chaplain?

9

Macquarie's progressive views about Emancipists were quite revolutionary. What do you think was motivating him? What motivated the conservatives (e.g. Marsden, Macarthur, Bigge) who opposed him?

10

Why did Macquarie object to being called a democrat? What do you think he meant when he referred to democracy's 'infernal, destructive principles'?

11

What is an autocrat? What advantages does autocracy have over democracy? What are its disadvantages?

12

Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie designed and built a city of which they were immensely proud. Why do you think the government in Great Britain objected so strongly to it?

13

Do you think the lack of speedy communication between Great Britain and Australia worked for Macquarie or against him?

14

Conservative critics of Macquarie, including John Thomas Bigge, felt that he was too soft on emancipated convicts, treating them as asylum seekers in search of 'a happy home'. These critics wanted a return to a regime of terror, severe discipline and sufferings. Do you agree with Macquarie, or was he just a 'bleeding heart'?

15

Do Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth deserve their important place in Australian history? If you were a convict in New South Wales at the time, would you have volunteered to work on William Cox's chain gang?

16

Are people right to criticize Macquarie for naming so many places after himself?

17

What do you think of the notice in the Sydney Gazette announcing the death of Bennelong?

18

What do you think of Macquarie's policy of 'civilising' and assimilating Indigenous people?

19

Was Macquarie a racist or was he just 'a man of his time'?

20

Do you think that Macquarie deserves to be called the 'father of Australia'? (Perhaps you could have a class debate on this topic.)

21

Lachlan Macquarie, founding father or failure?