

ART ACROSS THE CURRICULUM | HISTORY FROM COLONY TO NATION: IMMIGRATION

LEVELS 5–6

OVERVIEW

This resource introduces European migration to Australia in the nineteenth century. Through analysing different artworks as primary sources, students will determine the causes of migration to Australia in the 1800s through the lens of 'push' and 'pull' factors. Where appropriate, students will also connect stories of past migration to their own family histories. Students will critically analyse whose perspective is being shown in an artwork and those perspectives which may be missing. For their final project, students create a boardgame outlining the journey of a character from departure, travel and arrival to Australia.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe different groups of people who migrated to Australia in the 1800s
- Identify push and pull factors that explain the causes and reasons for this migration
- Analyse primary sources that depict people who migrated to Australia during the nineteenth century and determine whose perspective is being shown and whose is missing
- Create a boardgame that details the migrant's experience through their journey and arrival to Australia in the 1800s

LINKS TO THE VICTORIAN HISTORY CURRICULUM

The causes and the reasons why people migrated to Australia from Europe and Asia, and the perspectives, experiences and contributions of a particular migrant group within a colony (VCHHK091):

- Identifying the causes and reasons why people migrated to Australia in the 1800s, for example, as convicts; assisted passengers; indentured labourers; people seeking a better life such as gold miners; and those dislocated by events such as the Industrial Revolution, the Irish Potato Famine and the Highland Clearances
- Connecting (where appropriate) stories of migration to students' own family histories

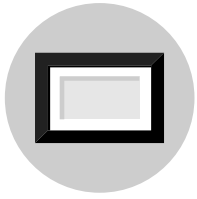
ABOUT THE ARTWORKS

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE NGV'S AUSTRALIAN COLLECTION

Immigration underpins the post-colonial history of Australia. During the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901), almost 1.75 million people came to Australia as wealthy visitors, assisted passengers, indentured labourers and convicted prisoners known as exiles. Some people were fleeing the potato famine in Ireland, the Industrial Revolution in England and the Highland clearances in Scotland – these are called **push factors**. Others left countries such as China for a better life, seeking their fortune in the gold rush or purchasing cheap land for farming – these are called **pull factors**. Whatever the reason, the choice to emigrate to Australia was a difficult one to make.

The following artworks from the NGV Collection depict this process of immigration, presenting stories of people who left their homeland, undertook difficult sea journeys and became pioneers in the new land.

WARM UP



IN THE GALLERY



IN SCHOOL

2. MARSHALL CLAXTON, *AN EMIGRANT'S THOUGHTS OF HOME, 1859*



Marshall CLAXTON

An emigrant's thoughts of home
1859
oil on cardboard
60.7 × 47.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Presented by the National
Gallery Women's Association,
1974

From 1815 and 1840, the majority of the 58,000 passengers who voluntarily came to Australia in search of a better life were male. Furthermore, around 85% of the 160,000 convicts transported to the Australian colonies between 1788 and 1868 were also male.

As a result, from 1815 the Colonial Government subsidised migration for single women aged between 18–30 years to balance the population and to encourage the development of families. We know this from primary sources such as newspapers like the *Illustrated London News* from 1844, which says:

... a Government grant was made to assist families and single men, agricultural labourers, shepherds, carpenters, smiths, wheelwrights, bricklayers, and masons, being of good character, to emigrate to Australia ... Amongst these were to be included a certain portion of single women and girls, between eighteen and thirty years of age, who had been in domestic and farm service.¹

In Marshall Claxton's *An emigrant's thoughts of home, 1859*, the central figure is leaving home for a new country. She is standing on a ship, looking outwards over the water. Art historian Pamela Gerrish Nunn describes her as 'clearly belong[ing] to the Victorian moralists' category of 'poor but honest'.²

2.1 MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

This warmup is to help students begin thinking about the causes and reasons people came to Australia during the 1800s and gives them a chance to practise some visual analysis of art before visiting the Gallery or continuing their analysis of art in the classroom.

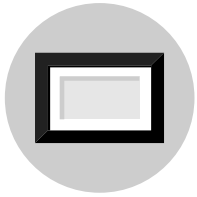
In groups, brainstorm the following:

- Why would people migrate to Australia during the nineteenth century from across the globe?
- What would people bring with them for the journey?
- How would they travel from their country to Australia?
- What dangers might exist for them?
- What challenges would these new migrants' face once arriving?
- Compare your responses with the other groups.

Now look closely at *An emigrant's thoughts of home* by Marshall Claxton. Focus on the woman's facial expression and body language. Think about her possible background and reasons for her journey to Australia, based on the previous discussion. What feelings or emotions might she be experiencing? Using four to five sentences, write her thoughts down.

ACTIVITY

3. COMING SOUTH: SOURCE ANALYSIS



IN THE GALLERY



IN SCHOOL

Tom ROBERTS

Coming South 1886

oil on canvas

63.5 × 52.2 cm

National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne

Gift of Colonel Aubrey H. L.
Gibson (Rtd) in memory of
John and Anne Gibson, settlers
(1887), 1967



During their approximate four-month journey, emigrants faced many challenges and varied conditions on board the sailing ships to Australia. These included:

- potential for shipwreck,
- lack of fresh food and water
- risk of disease
- sweltering tropical heat and bitter cold
- overcrowding

With high rates of debilitating diseases and deaths, the ships were nicknamed “coffin ships”. For a time, surgeons were paid more if emigrants arrived alive, encouraging better health standards.

In *Coming South*, 1886, Tom Roberts depicts how different classes of emigrants occupied their days to overcome the boredom of the long journey. In 1885, Roberts was on a return journey to Australia after four years in Europe. He made sketches of the crowded deck of the ship and used them as the basis for *Coming South*. All saloon passengers paid extra for the luxury of space, comfort and privacy. To relieve the monotony of shipboard life, the passengers spent their daytime in conversation, sketching, writing letters and diaries, playing cards and games and even shooting seagulls. Their evenings were spent enjoying formal meals in splendid dining rooms, and amusing themselves with music and dancing.

Thomas ROBERTSON

Hobson's Bay (1860)

oil on canvas

105.5 × 184.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne

The Joseph Brown Collection.

Presented through the NGV

Foundation by Dr Joseph

Brown AO OBE, Honorary Life

Benefactor, 2004



The length of the journey for these passengers would have been reduced by the dual sources of power, steam and sail, which can be seen in the background of *Coming South*. These can also be seen in Thomas Robertson's *Hobson's Bay*, 1860, which features an impressive array of sailing ships. The vessel in the foreground with its topsails and mainsail reefed up is an example of an innovative hybrid which sailed under both sail and steam.

3.1 CLASS DISCUSSION

Access a digital or hard copy of Tom Robert's artwork *Coming South* to annotate. A digital version is best because you can zoom in and see all the small details. Use a highlighter and pens, or digital tools, to add circles, arrows, and descriptive labels which analyse the details within the work.

As a class, identify and discuss the following things:

- What's the title of the painting? Is there anything interesting or important about this?
- When was the painting made?
- Why do you think this painting was made? Who was it made for (audience)?
- Is it a primary or a secondary source? Give reasons for your answer.

3.2 GROUP ANNOTATION

Your teacher will now divide you into groups and assign you each a different person depicted in *Coming South* for you to investigate. Use the following as a guide to help you when annotating the artwork:

- What's your person's estimated age – are they older or younger?
- Are they male or female?
- What's their social status – do they look poor or wealthy? How can you tell?
- What expressions or emotions can you identify?
- What clothes are they wearing?
- Where are they?

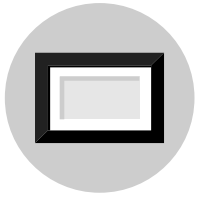
3.3 PERSPECTIVES

Present your findings to the class. Once everyone has shared their ideas about their allocated individual from the painting with the group, use the following prompts to help guide your classroom discussion about immigration in the nineteenth century as presented by the artist Tom Roberts.

- What can we conclude about migration to Australia during this time, based on our analysis of this artwork?
- Whose perspective(s) is being shown in this artwork? Whose perspective(s) is missing? Consider the cultural backgrounds of the people depicted.
- What questions do you have about this artwork after analysing it? Where could you find the answers to these questions?

ACTIVITY

4. HIDDEN MEANINGS



IN THE GALLERY



IN SCHOOL

Ernest LEVINY

Standing cup and cover

(c. 1859)

silver, gold

(a-c) 48.4 × 15.9 × 15.1 cm

(overall)

National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne

Felton Bequest, 1970



After the gold discoveries of 1851, thousands of migrants made their way to Australia hoping to find their fortune during 'the first decade of gold'. Many arrived uncertain of their future and without anywhere to stay. In Melbourne, the land around St Kilda Road and Elizabeth Street was overcrowded with many living in tents.

One of these migrants was silversmith and goldsmith Ernest Leviny. Originally from Hungary, Leviny moved to Paris and then to London where he started a jewellery business.³ In 1852, Leviny travelled to Castlemaine to seek his fortune with the plan to stay for three years. However, the machinery he brought with him didn't work properly and his four labourers immediately deserted him. So he started a jewellery and watchmaker business in Castlemaine in 1854 and never left.⁴

Standing cup and cover, c. 1859, is one of Leviny's masterpieces. The silver cup is a metaphor for the flourishing colony of Victoria. Many symbols are used to depict both the flora and fauna of the landscape, as well as important industries represented by individual figures. A figure of the goddess Victory, representing Queen Victoria, with a gold nugget at her feet overlooks the four images of colonial life around the base (Figure 1):

- 'Commerce' with a winged staff and a chart (Figure 4)
- 'the Farmer' with scythe and sickle (Figure 6)
- 'the Miner' wearing a battered hat and displaying a gold nugget in his pan (Figure 3)
- the Indigenous Australian throwing a spear represents the original state of the colony (Figure 5)
- Kangaroos and emus decorate the lid of the central lobed bowl and griffins form the handles – a strange mixture of European and Australian motifs (Figure 2)
- An inscription on the outside of the lobed bowl says that the piece was "presented 31st Dec., 1863 to Chas. Abraham Saint by his Friends and Fellow Citizens in recognition of many services rendered as Editor of the Mount Alexander Mail to the Town & District of Castlemaine."

Figure 1 – Queen Victoria



Ernest LEVINY
Standing cup and cover
 (c. 1859) (detail)
 silver, gold
 (a-c) 48.4 × 15.9 × 15.1 cm (overall)
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Felton Bequest, 1970

Figure 2 – Kangaroos, emus and griffins



Ernest LEVINY
Standing cup and cover
 (c. 1859) (detail)
 silver, gold
 (a-c) 48.4 × 15.9 × 15.1 cm (overall)
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Felton Bequest, 1970

Figure 3 – Miner



Ernest LEVINY
Standing cup and cover
(c. 1859) (detail)
silver, gold
(a-c) 48.4 × 15.9 × 15.1 cm (overall)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1970

Figure 4 – Commerce



Ernest LEVINY
Standing cup and cover
(c. 1859) (detail)
silver, gold
(a-c) 48.4 × 15.9 × 15.1 cm (overall)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1970

Figure 5 – Indigenous person holding spear



Ernest LEVINY
Standing cup and cover
(c. 1859) (detail)
silver, gold
(a-c) 48.4 × 15.9 × 15.1 cm (overall)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1970

Figure 6 – Farmer



Ernest LEVINY
Standing cup and cover
(c. 1859) (detail)
silver, gold
(a-c) 48.4 × 15.9 × 15.1 cm (overall)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1970

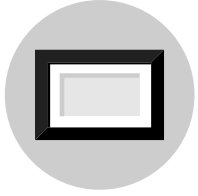
4.1 HIDDEN MEANINGS IN LEVINY'S SILVER CUP

Leviny used symbols and hidden meanings in his design for this cup, to tell the story of the wealth and success of the Colony of Victoria during the goldrush.

- What animals can you identify on the cup?
- What individuals can you identify on the cup? What jobs do you think they might have? Consider how they're dressed and the tools they're holding?
- Who do you think Leviny felt was the most important person depicted on this object? Justify your response.
- Why do you think Leviny depicted the Indigenous Australian person throwing a spear? How might it reflect settlers' attitudes towards the First Australians?
- If you were going to design your own object to represent Australia today, what animals and people might you include? What story would you tell? Consider how our country has changed in the last 150 years, and whose perspectives we might show today that were missing in Leviny's time.

ACTIVITY

5. COMING TO AUSTRALIA



IN THE GALLERY



IN SCHOOL

The following activities can be used in conjunction with any of the artworks in the resource.

5.1 PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

Consider everything you've learned so far about migration during the 19th century. Divide a piece of paper in half, with the headings 'push factors' and 'pull factors' – one on each side. Reflect on the reasons that people emigrated to Australia during the 1800s. List as many factors as possible under each of the headings. Remember:

- A 'push factor' is often an event that make people want to move away from a place, such as conflict or religious persecution.
- 'Pull factors' are reasons that people want to move to a specific place, such as a new job or family.

5.2 CONTEMPORARY MIGRATION

In groups, discuss people that you know who migrated to Australia, either recently or in the past. They can be family members or friends. Only share if you feel comfortable.

Organise your information into the following structure:

- First name of the individual
- Country that they left
- Country that they arrived in – include the airport or seaport they arrived at, if known, and then name of the suburb they settled in
- Reasons for migrating
- Identify whether each of these reasons is a 'push' factor or a 'pull' factor.

PROJECT



IN SCHOOL

6. MIGRATION BOARD GAME

Design a game for six players that involves the entire journey of people migrating to Australia in the 1800s. You could create this using a board-game website, or construct one using art materials. Think about the structure of the board game, it could be based on existing ones like *Snakes and Ladders*, or the *Game of Life*.

Draw on the primary and secondary sources from this resource to inform your chosen board-game character. You can also do your own research to enhance your storyline. Consider who your character might be; someone fleeing the potato famine? A person wanting to make their fortune on the goldfields? It's entirely up to you!

Brainstorm a list of possible things your migrant might encounter along the way, identify them as positive (advantages in the game) or negative (disadvantages in the game) and then sequence them from departure to settlement. Use the following sequence of events as a guide or add your own ideas.

LEAVING HOME



- Why is your character emigrating?
 - What belongings would they pack?
 - Saying goodbye and leaving your home – what would this involve?
- E.g. You are the last person to gain a place on the ship *Pinafore* sailing to Port Phillip Bay, skip the next person's turn.

THE SEA JOURNEY



- Describe daily life on board for 4 months
 - Discuss the dangers of travelling on a ship
 - Who else does your character encounter on the boat? Are they a friend or foe?
 - How could they pass the time?
 - How did you know you were close to land?
- E.g. A huge storm comes and blows your boat off course, delaying your journey by three days. Move back three spaces.

THE NEW LAND



- Comment on arrival at Port Phillip
 - What are their first impressions of arrival in Australia? How is it different from life back home?
 - Where does your character live?
 - What did they do once arriving in Australia?
- E.g. Once landing at Port Phillip Bay, you meet an elderly woman in need of a lady's maid and are hired on the spot. Congratulations, roll the dice again.

NOTES

1. 'Emigration to Sydney', Illustrated London News, 13 April 1844, p. 227.
2. Pamela Gerish Nunn, 'NGV Art Journal 32: Look homeward Angel: Marshall Claxton's emigrant', 2014, NGV, Victorian Government, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/look-homeward-angel-marshall-claxtons-emigrant/>, accessed 31 July 2020
3. Buda Castlemaine, 'Ernest Leviny', 2020, *Buda Historic Home and Garden*, <https://budacastlemaine.org/explore-buda/the-levinys/ernest-leviny/>, accessed 31 July 2020
4. Laretta Zilles, 'Ernest Leviny 1895', 2011, *Culture Victoria*, Creative Victoria, <https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/a-diverse-state/the-leviny-sisters/ernest-leviny-1895/>, accessed 31 July 2020

FURTHER RESOURCES

National Gallery of Victoria, 'Colony to Nation', 2020, NGV, Victorian Government, https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/school_resource/colony-to-nation

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