

# The Lady Nelson

The salty air was bitter against our tongues, the heat melting around our bodies like a blanket. The sun, shimmering off the water, like leaping dolphins. We feel free.

Commands are instructed in violent tones of voice, as ropes are pulled and the ferocious engine roars. The old, rusty metal bell, dings sharply in our ear drums. We smell the faint breath of history, as we sail like Flinders and Bass on the majestic seas of the channel.

We huddle together on the deck of the boat, as we sail towards the curve of the island. Flashes of orange campfires, flicker in our minds, as aboriginal history is told to us aboard our vessel. We are told the story of a young aboriginal girl with no family, her tribe killed by white people. She was dumped in a vile, rotten orphanage, until the Governor and his wife adopted her, thinking she would be good to display back in England. However, there came a time when they lost interest in the small child, dumping her, once again, into the same orphanage she had come from. Years later, at the age of 17, she was tragically found dead in the ocean, after drowning.

We felt great sympathy for the convicts who had been sent to the other side of the world, just for being poor. We reflected on the types of conditions they had been banished to in Van Diemen's Land. Abandoned by a country, just for being poor, often dying on the long journey out, and being subjected to harsh conditions once they arrived. They were given hardly any food, nor water to survive on. They were cruel people who had no empathy. People who would rather hurt, for money or greed. Ripped from their families. Lonely. Terrified. Guilty.

Learning about the past, has helped us see the present more clearly. We can now understand, just how much laws have changed over the last 200 years. What a wonderful experience it was having this excursion with our class, teachers and parent helpers!

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