

Describing People

Overview: Use historical (convict) and modern methods of describing and identifying people to explore the Big Question.

Big Question: Are descriptions of people reliable?

Key Element Outcomes:

MAJOR

- Communicating: Being Literate; Being Arts Literate

MINOR

- Thinking: Inquiry
- Communicating: Being Numerate; Being Information Literate
- Social Responsibility: Understanding the past and creating preferred futures

Standards: 2–3

Background: When convicts were transported to Australia, photography had not yet become a common method for creating an image of someone. The Government needed a way to identify convicts—for example, if convicts absconded, descriptions of them were published in the *Hobart Town Gazette* so that people could identify them and catch them (sometimes receiving a reward). Today the police would publish a photograph of a wanted person.

For identification of convicts, the Government recorded descriptions of the convicts when they arrived in the colony. These descriptions were recorded in books known as Description Lists. An example of the Description List for Ann Daley, a convict transported on the *Australasia*, is provided on page 3.

Lesson Ideas:

- Class Discussion on Describing People
 1. Would the description of Ann Daley in the Description List have made it easy to identify her? Why or why not?
 2. What other ways could the Government have used to describe or create a likeness of Ann and other convicts?
 3. Rate all of the different ways (answers from question 2) from 1 (least useful) to 5 (most useful).
 4. Why do you think the Government chose to record the descriptions in the way they did? What were the advantages and disadvantages?
- Height Activity
 1. Ann was 5' 1" tall (this was recorded on a different convict record). Students to work out how tall was Ann in centimetres? Was she short, medium or tall? (You may wish to provide students with a link to the Metric/Imperial Converter website—see Resources for address).
 2. Students to use the book *A Drift of 'Derwent Ducks'* to:
 1. find out what the average height was for the female convicts transported with Ann on the *Australasia*; and

2. compare the height of Irish female convicts with Australian women today.

What is the difference and why?

(This information is provided in *A Drift of 'Derwent Ducks'* – look up 'height' in the index.)

- Description Activity

1. Students to search to find or randomly choose from the CD *A Drift of 'Derwent Ducks': Chapter 7 The Facts* the description of a female convict.
(The CD contains one pdf file for each of the 200 convicts.)
2. Students to create a likeness of the convict by, for example, painting, sketching, sculpting or using computer graphics.
3. Students to use the Convict Description List worksheet provided on page 4 to describe their classmates and teacher.
(You may wish to discuss with the students the terms used to describe the different features of convicts from a selection of the files on the CD—for example, a nose could be described as short, medium, long, thick, turned up at end, pointed, etc.)
4. Class to discuss the similarities and differences between their descriptions of the teacher.
5. Lead into a discussion of the reliability of using words to describe a person and what methods are used by the police today to describe criminals.
6. Students work through the Identikit learning object in the Teachers' Resource Centre (see resources for address).

Resources:

- Description List example: Ann Daley per *Australasia* (provided on page 3)
- Convict Description Lists – original volumes and copies on microfilm are held at the Archives Office of Tasmania, Murray St, Hobart
- Convict Description List Worksheet (provided on page 4)
- *A Drift of 'Derwent Ducks': Lives of the 200 Irish female convicts transported on the Australasia from Dublin to Hobart in 1849* – book and CD
- Metric/Imperial Converter website – <http://www.initium.demon.co.uk/converts/metimp.htm>
- Identikit (in Teachers' Resource Centre) – <http://resources.education.tas.gov.au/item/edres/5ddc6dc5-4465-9039-e1bb-4db1cd03186f/1/ViewIMS.jsp>
- Tasmania Police: FACE – <http://www.police.tas.gov.au/on-the-beat/forensics/face>

NAME, *Daisy Brown*

No.

Trade
Height (without Shoes)
Age *22*
Complexion *Fair*
Head *Round*
Hair *Black*
Whiskers
Visage *Oval*
Forehead *Low*
Eyebrows *Black*
Eyes *Blue*
Nose *Plain*
Mouth *do*
Chin *Pointed*
Native Place
Marks *None*

Describing People

Convict Description List

WORKSHEET

NAME

Trade

Height (without shoes)

Age

Complexion

Head

Hair

Whiskers

Visage

Forehead

Eyebrows

Eyes

Nose

Mouth

Chin

Native Place

Marks

Student's Name: