

Day in the life of a nation
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SETTLE down, you lot. Get out your notebooks. It's time for a citizenship test.

Right then, first question. What were some of the challenges Australia's first white settlers faced? Come on, hands up! Carruthers?

Of course there was no internet 200 hundred years ago. Smith? There were no plasma televisions either. Anyone else?

Early white settlers arrived at the end of the world with little more than a few farming tools, some seeds and ships full of convicts. They faced sickness and starvation, uprisings by the prisoners and violent clashes with the Aborigines.

Next question. Who was the first governor of NSW? What's that, Clarke? Macquarie? Good guess, boy, but wrong. Anyone else? Dixon! No, it wasn't Parkes. You're about 100 years too early. And he wasn't a governor. Tonight's homework, everyone, will be to look up Parkes and the Tenterfield Oration.

Everyone write this down. The first governor of NSW was Arthur Phillip.

Next: what was the Rum Rebellion? Yes, Baker? No, it doesn't come in a six-pack and you don't mix it with Coke. Get out, Baker. Our magnificent past is not a laughing matter. The Rum Rebellion took place in 1808 when officers of the NSW Corps arrested the governor and released John Macarthur, who was facing a charge of sedition.

NSW was under a military junta for almost two years. Yes, Gibson, cool is one way to describe it, I suppose.

Question four. What was the Eureka Stockade? Ah, the sounds of silence and a sea of blank faces. The Eureka Stockade was an uprising by miners on the Ballarat goldfields in 1854. They burnt their licences because they became fed up with things. I know how they felt.

Next: name one pre-1950 prime minister. Yes, Grant? Mark Latham was never prime minister. McDonald? No, not "Weary" Dunlop. He was a prisoner of war during World War II.

I want everyone to learn the list of Australian prime ministers by the end of the week. Stop groaning! And yes, Johnson, Google it if you have to.

Last question. What's Australia Day? Yes, Woods, it's a holiday, but why do we celebrate it? No, Kennedy, it's got nothing to do with barbecues.

Isn't there one person here who can tell me? Ah! A hand at the back of the class. Yes, Hassan.

Exactly right, lad. It marks the day Arthur Phillip took formal possession of the colony of NSW in 1788. It celebrates our land and our people.

Excellent, Hassan. And would you like to share with the class where you got all this from? It was in an email from your uncle in Oman . . . I see. He's planning to settle here, is he? Well, give him our best.

Everyone - class dismissed.

The Pocketbook of Aussie Patriotism, a compact guide to Australian history compiled by Brendan **Gullifer**, will be published next month by Black Inc. Books.

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