

SYDNEY: STORY OF A CITY

Study Guide

CONTENTS

	Page
Film Synopsis	2
Meet Curriculum Outcomes	3
Student Activities While on Excursion	4
Discovery Walk #1: City North & The Rocks	5
Discovery Walk #2: The Architecture Walk	6
Film Quiz	8
Activities for the Classroom	9
Your Family Tree	10

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FILM SYNOPSIS

From Bondi to the Harbour Bridge, from the Opera House to the convict built Hyde Park Barracks you'll uncover the story behind Australia's first city. Starring Lucy Bell and Paul Mercurio, the film tells the story of a young English girl who arrives in the sprawling and vibrant city of Sydney in search of her Australian ancestors.

During her quest much of the history and legends of the city unfold – such as its convict origins, colonial development, the conflict with the original inhabitants and the growth of Sydney into one of the great modern and culturally diverse cities of the world.

Virginia (Lucy Bell) arrives in the sprawling and vibrant city of Sydney in search of her Australian ancestors.

Her grandfather, William Robertson, had found himself in London in 1939 and joined the RAAF at the outbreak of WW2. He fell in love with an English girl, and married her. Soon afterward he was killed in an air battle over France.

Virginia's few clues to her grandfather and his Australian family included some mementos and documents that he had taken to England nearly sixty years ago.

During Virginia's quest to find her ancestors, much of the history and legends of the city unfold. Its convict origins, its colonial development, conflict with the original inhabitants, the notion of "Nationhood" and the growth of Sydney from an insignificant penal colony into one of the great modern and culturally diverse cities of the world.

Virginia's quest is helped when she finds a reference to a Robertson in Cumberland Street in The Rocks. When she arrives at the address she discovers an archeological dig is in progress on the site where old colonial cottages once stood. Here she meets Marco (Paul Mercurio), a young archeologist, working on site.

When her quest is complete and it is time to return home, Virginia discovers that she has fallen in love, not only with Marco, but also with the city of Sydney.

Directed by Australia's Bruce Beresford and filmed by acclaimed cinematographer Geoff Burton.

An extremely popular film with schools. Ideal as a resource for HSIE Stages 2-3.

Themes:

History of Sydney; early settlement; Aboriginal history; invasion and conflict; Sydney as a modern city; tourism, geography of Sydney, Australian identity

Curriculum Links:

HSIE: Geography, History; Australian Studies

Levels: Mid-Primary to Lower Secondary

MEET CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Sydney: Story of a City has wide educational relevance to teachers and students of both Primary and Secondary schools.

Important links to the curriculum can be made through the following themes:

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

The history of Australia is traced from Aboriginal Australia to modern times, including the arrival of Arthur Phillip, transportation of convicts, exploration, the gold rush, Federation, involvement in the two world wars, immigration and multiculturalism.

ARCHITECTURE

Sydney's unique architectural style is explored along with the influence of architect's such as Sir Francis Greenway and Joern Utzon. Archival shots of the spectacular Garden Palace are featured, as well as excellent views and information on important buildings such as The Opera House, the Harbour Bridge, St James Church, The Sydney Town Hall and Government House.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Students are shown a real architectural dig, the Cumberland Street dig in The Rocks, where many important discoveries about Sydney's early life have been made. This film shows how artefacts found at the dig reveal information previously unknown to us.

GENEALOGY

The film follows a story of a girl from England who is tracing her family history in Sydney. This is not only an ideal vehicle for tracing Sydney's history in a personal way, but to open issues related to tracing one's ancestors, and the discoveries that can be made.



STUDENT ACTIVITIES WHILE ON EXCURSION

While in the city at your screening of the IMAX film *Sydney: Story of a City*, take your students on one of two **Discovery Walks** of Sydney. Visit many of the important historical sites and buildings featured in the film. Plus, visit the most picturesque parts of the city at the same time.

WALK ONE: AROUND THE QUAY AND THE ROCKS

Visit:

1. The Botanic Gardens
2. Government House
3. The Opera House
4. Customs House
5. ASN Co. Building in The Rocks
6. The Cumberland Street dig

Catch a bus from the IMAX Theatre Sydney to Circular Quay. Visit the sites in numerical order, lunching somewhere scenic on the way. Have your buses pick you up from The Rocks area.

WALK TWO: THE ARCHITECTURE WALK

Visit:

1. St Mary's Cathedral
2. Hyde Park Barracks
3. St James Church
4. The Old Sydney Mint
5. The Rum Hospital
6. State Parliament
7. Mitchell Library
8. The gates of The Garden Palace

Catch a bus from the IMAX Theatre Sydney to Hyde Park. Visit the sites in order and eat lunch somewhere scenic on the way. Have your buses pick you up from The Botanic Gardens Entrance.

Alternately follow up your IMAX experience with:

- A visit to the Museum of Sydney
- A visit to the Art Gallery of NSW
- A walk across the Harbour Bridge
- A visit to the Town hall and the Queen Victoria Building

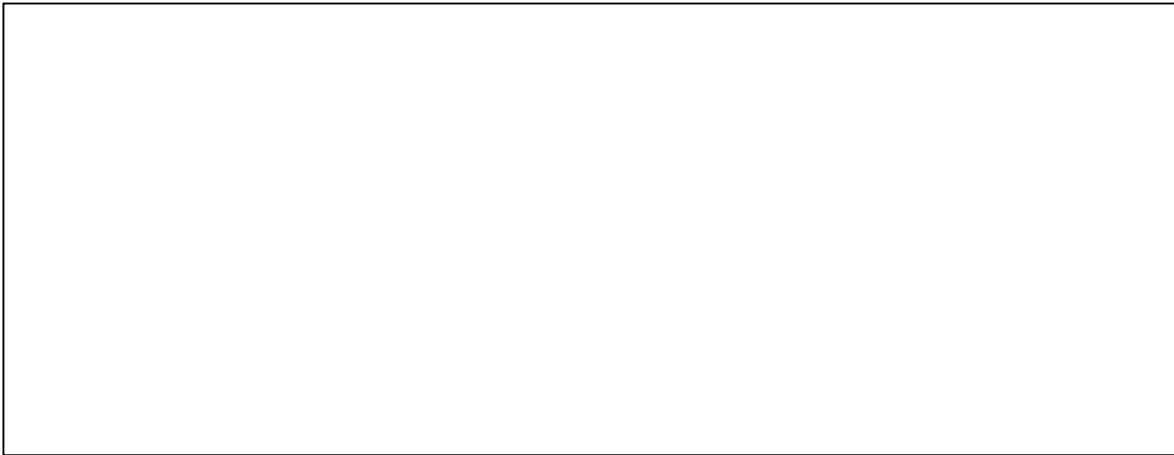
CITY AND THE ROCKS WALK

1. Mark these sites on your map when you find them.
2. In the spaces provided, sketch a small area of detail of each building.

Cumberland Street dig

In the space that would be only a couple of building blocks in the suburbs, the dig uncovered evidence of 30 buildings, built between 1795 and 1891. It delivered up thousands of bits and pieces of Sydneysiders lives, including plates, pennies, gambling chips, broken dolls and clay pipes.

(The Cumberland Street dig site can only be viewed through the protective wire fence)



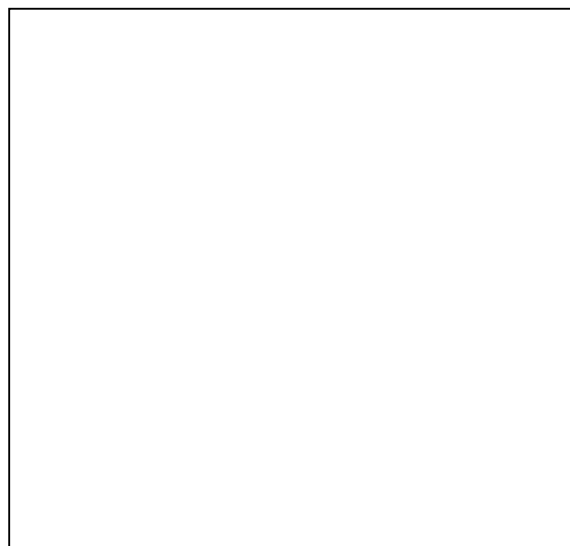
ASN Co. Building

This Flemish style building was built in 1883 for the Australian Steam Navigation Company and it is known as the ASNCo building although it has had many tenants. It was restored to its 1880s appearance in the early 1990s.



Customs House

This building operated as a customs house from the 1840s until its recent conversion to a cultural and exhibition centre. This inclusion of the prominent clock signifies the growing importance of hours and minutes, as fewer jobs were tied to the rising and setting of the sun, and more to office time.



THE ARCHITECTURE WALK

1. Mark these sites on your map when you find them.
2. In the spaces provided, sketch a small area of detail of each building.

St Mary's Cathedral

There has been more than one church on the site of St Mary's Cathedral. Governor Macquarie laid the foundation stone for the first one, and when this burnt down in 1865, Sydney's Irish Catholics built a much grander one. The two great spires of the Cathedral were finished in 2000.

Hyde Park Barracks

The Barracks were designed by architect, Sir Francis Greenway, 1817- 1819.

The building has had many functions such as housing convicts, female immigrants, government agencies and law courts. It is now a museum.

St James Church

This church was designed by convict architect, Sir Francis Greenway. He is admired for his eye for 'perfect proportion' and his 'ability to identify with the terrain, to grasp its nature and its character'.

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The Opera House

Built on Bennelong Point, Sydney's Opera House was opened by the Queen in 1973, fourteen years after it was commenced. Danish architect, Joern Utzon won a competition with his design, which was a challenge feat to construct from an engineering point of view, adding to the political controversy of the project.

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Government House

Built in the 1840s, while the town was undergoing a major depression, it was intended to represent British power with stability.

Built in a 'mock gothic' style, its grand style was out of keeping with the reduced powers of the colonial governors.

The Botanic Gardens

The reason for establishing the gardens was to advance botanical research by collecting new plants and experimenting with which existing plants would thrive in the new world. Most people find the gardens a place for relaxation and delight. A statute of 'A Hunter and his Dogs' was the only item saved from The Garden Palace fire. It is still on the site. See if you can find it & draw it

The Rum Hospital

Part of this old hospital is now incorporated into the building which is the Parliament of NSW. The other wing has become the Sydney Museum. Between the two old wings of the Old Rum Hospital is a functioning hospital, the plans of which were approved by Florence Nightingale. On the footpath is a bronze statute of a wild boar. Touching its nose is said to bring good luck. Draw this statue here.

The Mitchell Library

Here is one of the great collections of books on Australian History. It is named after David Scott Mitchell who started collecting books as a young boy and eventually donated his entire collection to people of NSW. On the floor of the library's foyer is a mosaic map based on the chart of an early Dutch explorer.

The Gates of The Garden Palace

Built for Sydney's International Exhibition of 1879, this amazing building was destroyed in 1882 in a spectacular fire. It owed much in its design to London's Crystal Palace, especially the view of their city and harbour laid out in panorama. The gates are a clue to the shape of the Garden Palace. Why?

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SYDNEY: STORY OF A CITY STUDENT QUIZ

1. Where was the town of Sydney to be originally located?

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2. How many prisoners were sent to NSW over 55 years of transportation?

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3. Who were the Aboriginal inhabitants of Sydney Cove?

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4. How many years had Aboriginals inhabited Australia before white settlement?

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5. Where did the first fleet land?

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6. What was the Garden Palace built for?

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7. Why is the Garden Palace no longer there?

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8. What is the only remaining evidence of the Garden Palace?

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9. When did convict transportation to Sydney end?

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10. What effect on the colony did crossing the Blue Mountains have?

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11. When was the Sydney Town Hall completed?

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12. What building material gives Sydney buildings their character?

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13. When did Governor Macquarie arrive?

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14. Who was an architect amongst the convicts?

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15. When was the Commonwealth of Australia formed?

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16. When was the Sydney Harbour Bridge completed?

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17. What was a difficulty encountered in the construction of the Harbour Bridge?

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18. Where is the site of the Opera House and who is it named after?

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19. What was the nationality of the architect of the Opera House?

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20. When did surfing start in Sydney?

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STUDENT ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Australian History

Students work in small groups and select an aspect of Sydney's history for their group to research. Each group presents its findings to the class. Examples may be:

- Convict transportation
- Aboriginal Australia
- Federation
- The Gold Rush
- Multiculturalism
- Explorers: Who were they?

Genealogy

- Have students research and draw their family trees.
- Interview parents and grandparents about their family history
- Bring in an old photo or document to show class

Architecture

- Have students research an architect of a famous Sydney building such as the Opera House or Hyde Park Barracks.
- Make a model of a prominent Sydney building
- Hold a discussion on issues raised by the film:
 - Why should historic buildings be preserved?
 - What directions should be taken in the future development of Sydney?
 - What criteria should be considered when listing buildings for preservation?
- Follow this discussion with a debate on the topic:
"That no further demolition should take place in the city of Sydney."

Archaeology

- Students research other famous archaeological digs in the world, such as those in Egypt, Italy and Greece.
- Make a time capsule of items that would be telling about life in Sydney as we reach the new millennium. This could be computer designed and become a 'virtual' time capsule.

YOUR FAMILY TREE

Complete your details in the Family Tree below. Include in each space, the name, birth date and place of birth:

