

Date: Tuesday May 20th 2014

Student: _____

Australian History

Many Australian words and idioms derive from events, people, and places that have been significant in Australia's history.



Cartoon: David Pope

Web: <http://www.kutsikarts.weebly.com>

http://www.nma.gov.au/engagelearn/schools/classroomresources/multimedia/interactives/aussie_english_for_the_beginner_html_version/values_and_attitudes

Bring a plate

An invitation to **bring a plate** of food to share at a social gathering or fundraiser.

There are many stories of new arrivals in Australia being bamboozled by the instruction to **bring a plate**. As the locals know, an empty plate will not do.

In earlier days the request was often 'ladies a plate', sometimes followed by 'gentlemen a donation'.



Cartoon: David Pope

Buckley's chance

No chance at all.

Often abbreviated to **Buckley's** — 'you've got Buckley's, mate!' Some claim it comes from the name of the convict William **Buckley**, who escaped from Port Phillip in 1803 and lived for 32 years with Aborigines in southern Victoria.

Others suggest a punning reference to the Melbourne department store Buckley & Nunn — 'you have two chances, Buckley's and none'.



Cartoon: David Pope

Digger

An Australian soldier.

The earliest Australian sense of digger was 'a miner digging for gold'.

But during World War I, digger came to mean an Australian or New Zealand soldier, because much of the troops' time was spent digging trenches. This usage, first recorded 1916, continued through World War II and the Vietnam War.

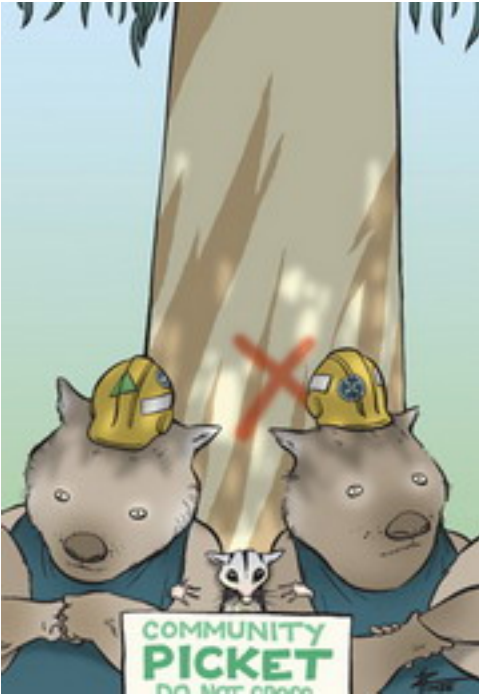


Cartoon: David Pope

Furphy

An untrue rumour, an absurd story.

The firm J Furphy & Sons, of Shepparton in Victoria, made water carts on which the name Furphy appeared in large letters. In Egypt during the First World War, the drivers of these carts often carried rumours and gossip into the camps. Any false rumour therefore came to be called a **furphy**.



Cartoon: David Pope

Green ban

A trade union ban on demolition or construction projects on sites deemed to be of historical, cultural or environmental significance.

The term arose by analogy with **black ban**, with the colour green being associated with the environmental lobby in West Germany in the early 1970s.

The term **green ban** was first recorded in 1973 in Australia and was used elsewhere later.



Cartoon: David Pope

Shoot through like a Bondi tram

Make a hasty departure.

Bondi is the Sydney suburb renowned worldwide for its surf beach.

The phrase (first recorded in 1945) probably derives from the fact that two trams typically left the city for Bondi together, the first an express tram which would '**shoot through**' from Darlinghurst to Bondi Junction. Trams last ran on the line in 1960, but the phrase has remained a part of Australian English.



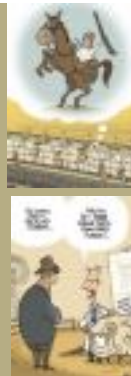
Cartoon: David Pope

Such is life

The last words spoken by the bushranger Ned Kelly before he was hanged at Melbourne Gaol in 1880. The phrase is used to express a philosophical acceptance of the bad things that happen in life.

It was further popularised by its use as the title for Joseph Furphy's famous novel about rural Australia (1903).

Some claim that Kelly's last words were in fact 'Ah well, I suppose it has come to this' — not quite as memorable.





Cartoon: David Pope

What do you think this is – bush week?

Do you think I'm stupid?

An indignant response to someone who is taking you for a fool — 'You're going to charge me how much? **What do you think this is, bush week?**'

'**Bush week**' is a time when country people come to town, and the phrase implies that they are easily fooled by the more sophisticated city slickers. The speaker resents being mistaken for a country bumpkin.

Australians often create their own versions of international words and idioms



Cartoon: David Pope

A Stubby short of a sixpack

Not very bright or clever, not quite 'with it'.

This is an Australian variation of a common international idiom, typically represented by 'a sandwich short of a picnic'. It combines the Australian '**stubby**' (a small squat 375 ml bottle of beer) with the borrowed American '**sixpack**' (a pack of six cans of beer), demonstrating how readily Australian English naturalises Americanisms.

British Dialects

Australian English has taken about 200 words from various British dialects, often changing or extending their dialect meanings



Cartoon: David Pope

Bludger

A person who does not do a fair share of work and who exploits the work of others.

The word comes from the British slang word **bludger**, shortened from **bludgeoner**, a prostitute's pimp, so named because he carried a bludgeon, presumably to ensure payment.

In Australia, **bludger** came to be applied to anyone who did not pull his or her weight.



Cartoon: David Pope

Dag

A person who is unkempt, unfashionable or lacking in social skills.

The word **dag** also means a lump of matted wool and dung hanging from a sheep's rear. This sense probably led to the meaning 'unkempt', and then to the broader meanings 'unfashionable' and 'socially unacceptable'. It was first recorded in 1891.

Also used as an affectionate term between friends when they have said or done something a bit silly.



Cartoon: David Pope

Dob

To inform on someone — '**dobbing** on your mates' — or to volunteer someone for an unwelcome task — 'I was **dobbed** in to organise the fete'.

The ethic of standing by your mates means that many Australians take a dim view of **dobbing**.

Dob may come from British dialect **dob** 'to put down abruptly', or 'to throw something at a target'. It was first recorded in 1956.



Cartoon: David Pope

Give it a burl

Give it a try, make an attempt.

'**Burl**' is one of almost 200 words that Australian English borrowed from British dialects.

It is a Scots word for a 'spin' or 'whirl', and in Australia we have varied the standard English 'give it a whirl' by replacing the last word with the Scots '**burl**': 'The mower should start now Mum — **give it a burl!**'

Indigenous Languages

Australian English borrowed more than 400 words from some 80 Aboriginal languages



Cartoon: David Pope

Bung

Broken, exhausted, out of action — 'the TV's bung'.

It comes from bang meaning 'dead', which was first recorded in 1841 in the Yagara Aboriginal language of the Brisbane region.

The word found its way into nineteenth-century Australian pidgin, where the phrase **to go bung** meant 'to die'. By the end of the nineteenth century, the present sense had developed.



Cartoon: David Pope

Koori

An Aboriginal person, usually from south eastern Australia.

First recorded in 1834, **Koori** comes from the term for 'Aboriginal man or person' in the language of the Awabakal Aboriginal people of eastern New South Wales, and in neighbouring languages. It is now widely used throughout the south-eastern states.

Different words for 'Aboriginal person' are used in other parts of Australia, such as **Murri**, **Nyungar**, **Palawa**, and **Yolngu**.



Cartoon: David Pope

Fit as a mallee bull

Extremely strong and healthy.

A mallee bull is one that lives in mallee country — poor, dry country where small scrubby eucalypts called 'mallee' grow. Any creature that survives in such difficult conditions would have to be tough and fit.

'Forty pushups every morning Kev — you'll be **fit as a mallee bull**.' The word 'mallee' probably comes from an Aboriginal language of western Victoria.



Cartoon: David Pope

Mad as a cut snake

Crazy or angry.

The two senses of the phrase derive from the fact that 'mad' has two main senses — 'crazy' and 'angry'. The 'crazy' sense is illustrated by 'that bloke wearing a teapot on his head is as mad as a cut snake', and the angry sense is illustrated by 'be careful of the boss this afternoon, he's as mad as a cut snake'.

Values and Attitudes

Many Australian words and idioms give a sense of the qualities and values that Australians like or dislike, and of distinctively Australian customs



Cartoon: David Pope

Fair go

A reasonable chance, a fair deal — 'small business didn't get a fair go in the last budget'. Australia often sees itself as an egalitarian society, **the land of the fair go**, where all citizens have a right to fair treatment.

It is often used as an exclamation — 'fair go Kev, give the kids a turn!'

Sometimes it expresses disbelief — 'fair go, the tooth fairy?'



Cartoon: David Pope

Have tickets on yourself

Be conceited, have a high opinion of yourself —

'He's got tickets on himself if he thinks I'll go out with him'.

The original meaning of 'ticket' is uncertain, but it may refer to betting tickets (a person is so conceited that he backs himself), to raffle tickets, to a high price tag (especially one on the outfit of a mannequin in a shop window), or to prize ribbons awarded at an agricultural show.



Cartoon: David Pope

Little Aussie battler

In Australia a **battler** is a person who works hard to make ends meet, someone who is doing it tough and doesn't whinge — 'there are three kinds of people in this country: the rich, the middle class and the battlers'. This sense first appeared in 1896 in a Henry Lawson story.

It is often used in the phrase **little Aussie battler** which was first recorded 1979.

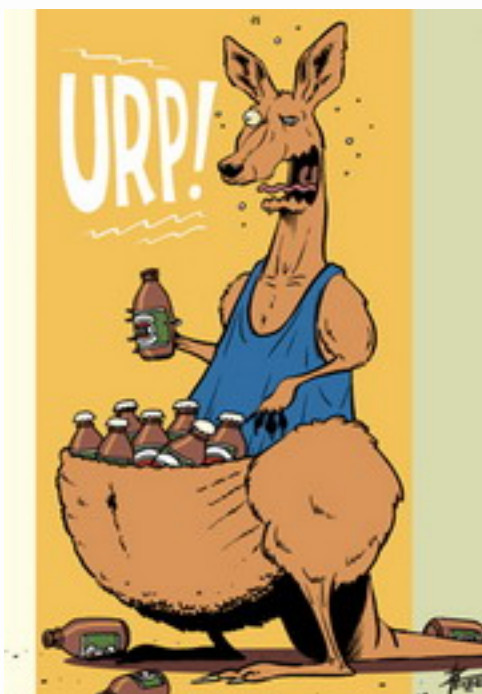


Cartoon: David Pope

Mate

Mate has special significance in Australian English, capturing the Australian values of comradeship and equality. A **mate** is a close friend, and **mateship** is the bond between close friends.

Mate is a form of address — 'g'day mate' — implying equality and goodwill, although it can also be used to bring someone into line — 'just watch it, mate!'



Cartoon: David Pope

Ocker

A rough and uncultivated Australian.

Ocker was recorded from 1916 as a nickname for anyone called 'Oscar', but the **ocker** as an Australian stereotype did not appear until much later.

It was influenced by a television character named Ocker in the satirical 1960s comedy 'The Mavis Bramston Show'. This **Ocker** was first recorded in 1971.

True Blue Aussie Quiz

... how true blue are you?

Question 1. What does the saying 'ducks on the pond' mean?

- A) Very calm weather
- B) To get cold feet
- C) Look out – a female is approaching
- D) Hard work going unrecognised

Question 2. Why was a Bondi tram said to 'shoot through'?

- A) The Bondi express route ran downhill so it seemed to be a faster service
- B) Conductors used to carry firearms to protect themselves from tram-jackings in the late 1950s
- C) The Bondi express tram ran straight through from Darlinghurst to Bondi
- D) This was a joke—the trams were always slow and late

Question 3. Why is a Mallee bull considered fit?

- A) They are not – it is sarcasm
- B) They survive in very difficult conditions
- C) Mallee country is lush and the stock are well fed and healthy
- D) It comes from the word 'malleable'

Question 4. Where did the word dinkum originate?

- A) British Midlands term dinkum, meaning a 'a fair share of work'
- B) Chinese word ding kam, meaning 'top gold'

- C) American slang, dang kids, an expression of surprise
- D) The sound a nugget of gold makes when it hits the edge of the pan

Question 5. The term 'furphy', any untrue rumour or absurd story, came from what?

- A) It sounded similar to 'furry' or 'fuzzy', descriptive of the facts within a rumour
- B) The carts used to transport water during World War 1
- C) A container used to send messages via pigeon
- D) A river in Egypt whose water is quite stagnant and muddy

Question 6. Where did the word 'billy' originate?

- A) Originally a bucket or container used to carry water around goat farms
- B) Named after a notable convict turned tea blender in the early day of the colony
- C) Tea that was imported from India came in a cylindrical tin called a billi
- D) Scottish dialect word meaning 'cooking utensil'

Question 7. The origins of the term 'plonk' stem from?

- A) Pirate culture where men were given one last drink before walking the plank
- B) The First World War mispronunciation of the French term – 'vin blanc'
- C) German settlers' term for someone who would drink himself or herself unconscious 'Ker-plonk'.
- D) Nineteenth Century English terminology for someone who would drink excessively, a 'plonker'

Question 8. The origins of the term 'To big note yourself' derive from:

- A) The physical size of the big-noter's money
- B) The volume at which a big-noter speaks in order for everyone to hear how well they are doing
- C) The fact that wealthy people were well fed and often became quite big
- D) The Italian term 'bigge-noté' meaning a high level of confidence

Question 9. Where does the term 'trackie daks' come from?

- A) The baggy trousers commonly worn by Aboriginal trackers
- B) Combination of track pants, shortened to trackie, and Daks, a trade name for men's pants
- C) General term for pants
- D) Term used for the woollen lining in men's trousers

Question 10. Which of the following are not specifically associated with Australian senses of the word 'squatter'?

- A) Unlawful occupation of an unoccupied building
- B) Aristocratic land ownership
- C) Wealth and power
- D) Grazing livestock on a large scale of Crown land without legal title

Question 11. Why are bandicoots thought to be miserable creatures?

- A) The male only mates once in their lifetime, after which they are eaten by the opposite sex
- B) Their long face suggests unhappiness
- C) In a dreamtime story the bandicoot had its nose stretched by a dingo
- D) Because at night the call of the bandicoot sounds like a baby crying

True Blue Aussie Quiz

... how true blue are you?

ANSWERS

Answer: Question 1

C) Look out – a female is approaching

Answer: Question 2

C) The Bondi express tram ran straight through from Darlinghurst to Bondi

Answer: Question 3

B) They survive in very difficult conditions

Answer: Question 4

A) British Midlands term dinkum, meaning a 'a fair share of work'

Answer: Question 5

B) The carts used to transport water during World War 1

Answer: Question 6

D) Scottish dialect word meaning 'cooking utensil'

Answer: Question 7

B) The First World War mispronunciation of the French term – 'vin blanc'

Answer: Question 8

A) The physical size of the big-noter's money

Answer: Question 9

B) Combination of track pants, shortened to trackie, and Daks, a trade name for men's pants

Answer: Question 10


B) Aristocratic land ownership

Answer: Question 11

B) Their long face suggests unhappiness

Homework: Read about:

Vocabulary of Australian English

The vocabulary of Australian English comes from many sources. To read about some of the most important sources of Australian words, and some of the important historical events that have shaped the creation of Australian words, download the  [Vocabulary of Australian English](#), as prepared by the Australian National Dictionary Centre.