

Pre-visit activity – ‘Perish or Prosper’ at Hyde Park Barracks Museum

Attitudes towards transportation during the 18th and 19th century

Throughout the 18th and 19th century transportation was a method used by the British government to punish people who had broken the law, from pick-pockets to highway robbers and forgers.

During this period the British government felt threatened by the prospect of revolution. For this reason transportation was also used to get rid of social reformers, rebels or anyone else that might have challenged the government, spoken out against the harsh conditions of working-class people, or acted in a way that was seen to threaten the social order.

Figure 1¹.



Inquiry question:

What does this written source tell you about attitudes toward transportation?

*"I sentence you," says the Judge, "but to what I know not-perhaps to storm and shipwreck-perhaps to infectious disorders perhaps to famine-perhaps to be massacred by savages – perhaps to be devoured by wild beasts. Away, take your chance; perish or prosper, suffer or enjoy; I rid myself of the sight of you, the ship that bears you away saves me from witnessing your sufferings, I shall give myself no more trouble about you."*²

¹ Figure 1: Detail from wall tableau painted for *Convict Sydney* exhibition, 2010. Hyde Park Barracks Museum.

² Excerpt from *The Rationale of Punishment*, 1830, Book 5 Chapter 2, p.348. Jeremy Bentham