



# James Hardy Vaux's 1819 Dictionary of Criminal Slang

SIMON BARNARD

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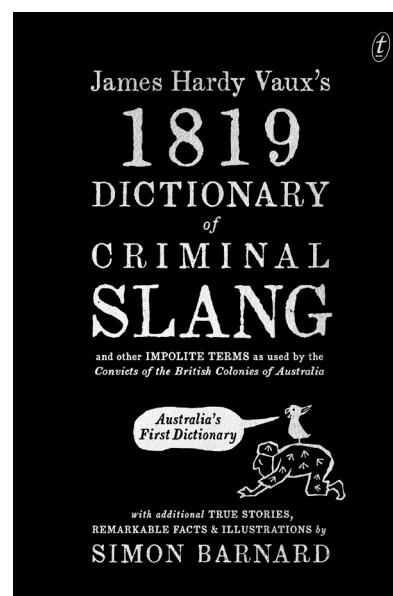
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Non-fiction

RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 14+

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## CURRICULUM GUIDE

*The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.*

*The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.*

## SYNOPSIS

Originally written in 1819 by James Hardy Vaux, *James Hardy Vaux's 1819 Dictionary of Criminal Slang and Other Impolite Terms as Used by the Convicts and British Colonies of Australia with Additional True Stories, Remarkable Facts and Illustrations* is a comprehensive dictionary of original terms and phrases coined by convicts in Australia's early colonial period.

The original text served as a helpful resource for judges and lawyers in criminal trials to assist with the deciphering of convict slang! Vaux's original text is reproduced verbatim in this edition, and has been complemented by Australian writer and illustrator Simon Barnard with true convict stories and quirky illustrations to illuminate how these terms were used at the time.

This riveting, surprising and informative book provides students with a unique insight into convict life and the evolution of Australian English and colloquial slang.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Barnard is a Melbourne-based writer, illustrator and collector of colonial artifacts. His book, *A-Z of Convicts in Van Diemen's Land*, won the CBCA Eve Pownall Award in 2015.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From a historian's standpoint, what would this book be classified as: primary or secondary? Provide examples from the book to support your thinking.
2. How does this dictionary illuminate the class hierarchy present during the colonial period?
3. Using the terms included in the dictionary, describe the experiences of convict women.
4. Imagine you're a convict in an Australian colony in 1819. Write a letter home to your family telling them about your life. Include some of the terms explained in the dictionary.
5. What words from the dictionary are still used in Australian slang today?
6. Some terms from the dictionary are familiar to modern Australians and have similar meanings, while others have completely different definitions from when they were first used. Are there any patterns you can identify from which language changes and evolves?
7. Choose a convict story from the dictionary and write a short account they might present to a magistrate in defence of their charge.
8. Some of the examples included in the dictionary reference significant events in Australia's history. How do these case studies affirm, develop or challenge your current understanding of this event?
9. Whose 'perspective' is omitted from this dictionary?
10. A number of illustrations are included in the dictionary to accompany the convict tales and phrases. How do images, symbols and colours offer a different perspective of history?