Criminals or Victims: Exploring the stories of the First Fleet convicts through Process Drama.

Developed by Sharon Hogan

Introduction

The idea for this drama originated from John O’Toole and Julie Dunn’s excellent First Fleet process drama in their book Pretending to Learn. I began experimenting with their drama and realised that in changing the central focus question driving the drama the drama completely changed and so a new ‘First Fleet: John’s Journey’ process drama emerged. The process drama below weaves together drama and non-drama activities that could occur all in one day, for a few hours over a series of days or a week. The drama brings together the national Arts - Drama and History curriculum. This process drama is designed to engage year 4 student in the real context of the 1780’s and the central focus question: Were the convicts who sailed on the First Fleet to Australia criminals or victims?

In this drama learning sequence, students have the opportunity to explore and depict real and fictional worlds through the use of body language, gesture and space to make meaning as performers and audience (ACARA, 2014). Student will learn about drama content required in this band including dramatic tension and develop their role and improvisation skills. Students will develop short performances using a story structure for their peers in response to a range of stimulus material introduced through the process drama. The learning sequence will focus on the Making strand of the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum: The Arts Foundation to Year 10 (2013), states that Making engages “student's cognition, imagination, senses and emotions in conceptual and practical ways and involves them thinking kinaesthetically, critically and creatively” (p. 7).

The process drama will give students the opportunity to meet the making elaboration – “Investigate ideas and narrative structures through roles and situations and use empathy in their own improvisations and devised drama” (ACARA, 2014).

Learning through drama enables students to engage with a broad range of topics and issues. In this learning sequence the subject matter for the drama work addresses the “first contact” requirements of the national History curriculum. The human context explores stories of the First Fleet, including reasons for the journey and who travelled to Australia. Learning through drama about other issues and themes is possible because according to Ewing, “Drama can be thought of as a metaphor for bending time and space to create a place for exploratory interactions, dialogues and representations out of which new thoughts, ideas and ways of looking/seeing can emerge” (2010, p. 40). Using drama pedagogy and particularly process drama, a form of improvisational drama (O’Neill, 1995), engages students in problem solving, creative thinking and assists them to make emotional connections (Ewing, 2010; Hatton, 2013). Miller and Saxton (2011) offer a vivid description of the possibilities of learning in and through drama:

The emphasis of drama education lies... in the deepening of meaning through the discovery of richer perspectives, the exploration of relationships, the challenge of rigorous, critical attention to things that matter to us and in the opportunities that drama provides to reflect and re-create events again and again until we are satisfied. It is a way of working artistically with all students as they unravel the issues and challenges of being human through the metaphor of story without the sometimes distorting pressures of the requirements of performance (p. 121).

The use of process drama is highly appropriate to the year 4 age group because it focusses on learning about and through drama rather than the study of an
already published play script. According to O’Toole and Dunn (2013) the primary years should emphasise “classroom drama work is on dramatic play, role-play and improvisation, rather than formal plays with script and audience” (p. 4). The learning sequence reflects a pedagogical approach that aims to deepen the student’s cognitive, emotional and sensory engagement with the context and key roles. The process drama moves through the key steps of enrolment, building belief, immersion through active experiential learning and reflection. The selection of dramatic conventions provides appropriate scaffolding. They are appropriate to the age group and provide the opportunity for the teacher to work in role and support students from inside the dramatic action. The challenge increases over the learning experiences, with very clear creative constraints providing clear boundaries for students.

**The initiation phase**

This phase of the drama is often the most important component of planning drama, as it is during the initiation phase that the children are building belief in their roles, context and build their knowledge and belief in a historical time period far removed from their daily lives as affluent middle class Australians. The drama begins by building the students understanding of the human context and specifically the 1780’s time period and includes a non-dramatic research component. Students are enrolled as historians and take on the ‘mantle of the expert’ to engage with the topic of the First fleet.

**The experiential phase**

During the experiential phase students will be immersed in the real context of the first fleet. They will be enrolled as one of the youngest convicts John Hudson and explore his experiences. Students will be engaged in making and required to sustain role, build a clear setting and their understanding of the context. Working with a partner they will develop a short rehearsed scene conveying the choices that John Hudson makes when confronted with a moral dilemma (see Activity 20).

**The reflective phase**

The learning sequence culminates with students creating a visual representation of John Hudson’s overall journey that conveys their response to the question victim or criminal?

**References**


Miller, C., & Saxton, J. (2011). ‘To see the world as if it were otherwise’: Brain research challenges the curriculum of organised chunks. NJ (Drama Australia Journal), 35, 118-132.

Process Drama Plan

Focus Question: Were the convicts who sailed on the First Fleet to Australia criminals or victims?

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<th>Activity number and purpose</th>
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<th>Organisation of Learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td><strong>Warm-up game:</strong> Quiet focus game in preparation for teacher narration and visual introduction to the historical context. <strong>Memory game:</strong> Image of a large sailing boat from the 1780’s….what do they see….. The teacher displays the image for 30 seconds and students have to try and remember as many details as possible. Students are then asked questions about the image and have to try and answer all questions correctly? 1. <em>How many masts does the ship have?</em> 2. <em>What is the ship made of?</em> 3. <em>How many sails does the ship have</em> 4. <em>How is the ship powered?</em> 5. <em>What colour is the flag?</em> 6. <em>What colour are the sails?</em> This is repeated with a second image from the era. Expand and discuss in groups - When and why did people build and sail big sail ships like this?</td>
<td>10 Minutes</td>
<td>Visual images Large visual image projected on screen Memory questions</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td><strong>Establishing the Drama Context:</strong> Explain to the class that over the next few days that the class will be pretending that they are other people in another time and place and that sometimes the teacher will be roleplaying different people. Setting up the contract: The teacher asks the class if they are willing to pretend with the teacher and bring an imaginary world to life. <strong>Dramatic Convention: Teacher Narration</strong> The class are asked to sit on the floor and close their eyes. Teacher reads out the pre-text. <strong>The pretext:</strong> Can you imagine just for a moment that you are living in another time and place. Over 200 years ago in 1787 in a country called England. You are about to go on a long journey to a new country that you know very little about on the other side of the earth. You are being sent to a start a new settlement in a place called Botany Bay…in New South Wales it will take you over eight months to sail over 24000 kilometres to sail by ship because it is on the other side of the world. You were not alone…many others will be transported with you… You have no choice….you must go on this journey and you know that may never return home again.</td>
<td>5 Minutes</td>
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### Activity Three
**Unpacking the pre-text**

**Establishing the inquiry questions**

The students are asked to list the questions that came to mind as they imagined this other time and place. For example:
- Why are they leaving England?
- What does transportation mean?
- Why can’t they stay in England?
- Why don’t they have a choice?
- Where is Botany Bay?
- Key question what was life like in the 1780’s in London England?

The teacher lists the questions raised by the class on the whiteboard. The teacher does not answer them. The teacher then asks the students how they will find out the answers to their questions. Who would they need to talk to...someone that lived in this time...or a historian an expert in the time?

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<th>Activity Four</th>
<th>Out of Role Learning activity: Class discussion</th>
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<td><strong>Enrolling as historians</strong></td>
<td>The teacher then begins to build the students understanding of the blanket role that they will assume in the next role-play segment and discusses what with the students: What does a historian do? The class discuss this in order to understand what their objectives will be as they work as historians. Students complete their historian name badge, read the historians code and to personalise their badge through decoration. They are to use their real first name only so they will be Dr Tim etc.</td>
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<td><strong>Establishing Context</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dramatic Conventions: Teacher in role and whole class role play</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Introducing more information and strengthening the pre-text</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduction:</strong> The teacher explains the context for the next whole class role play - The descendent has just flown in a plane all the way from Australia to find out why their relative may have committed the crime they did before coming to Australia. The teacher explains that she will be in role and that when she picks up the suitcase she will be pretending to be the relative of a convict sent to Botany Bay in 1787. The students pin on their historian name badge.</td>
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<td><strong>Introduce tension of mystery and Tension of the task</strong></td>
<td><strong>In role:</strong> Teacher in role as Penny descendent of Mathew a convict on the first fleet comes to talk to the historians (the students). She shares a little about her great, great, great grandfather and asks the historians about details that she does not understand: Why did he have to leave England? She needs their help to fill in the gaps. The teacher signals the role through her suitcase. She opens and brings out a picture of her Great, Great, Great Grandfather Mathew. And what she knows about his journey and she shows him the Old Bailey trial notes she has found on the internet. She asks the students to help her. She understands that they are historians and experts on the period of the 1780s in England and life in London. If she comes back in an hour will they be able to help her to solve the mystery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Minutes</td>
<td>Whiteboard and pens</td>
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<td>Historian name bag</td>
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The First Fleet: John’s Journey developed by Sharon Hogan March 2014
| Activity Six Establishing the context | Out of role the class conducts research into life in the 1780’s in England  
Students are placed in small groups and begin their research. Each group is given a different range of books and resources to work with different work stations around the room. They are also given a list of website addresses and you tube clips etc. to watch. The groups work to find answers to the following questions:  
Why did convicts like Matthew leave England?  
What does transportation mean?  
Why was it decided that the convicts could not stay in England?  
Key question - what was life like in the 1780’s in London England? | One hour | Short Video: Life in England in 1780  
Websites  
Books |
| Activity Seven Establishing the context | Out of role  
Students could watch a short scene from the movie where the homeless Oliver is taught to become a pickpocket and discuss if the young boys are victims or criminals. Discussion about the types of crimes committed in the 1780’s.  
Dramatic Convention: Teacher in role and blanket role for all class members  
All of the students are asked to put on their historian badge in preparation for the arrival of Penny.  
Teacher returns in role as Penny and the students in role as historians give Penny the information. Penny probes with further questions about life in 1780 in England. Penny asks the historians if they think her Great, Great, Great Grandfather was a criminal or a victim of the time. | 10 Minutes | Movie Excerpt Oliver  
Historian Badge |
| Activity Eight Debriefing | Out of role  
The class are required to reflect on their personal thoughts about the central question. Were the convicts criminals or victims?  
Teacher introduces role cards that will be used during the next day or section of the drama. Students are asked to review the cards and check that they understand the information. What crimes did the convicts commit? Students may wish to research the crime or person’s name or ship and locate more information. The class discusses if they think the convicts are criminals or victims. The cards are collected for later drama activities.  
Out of role  
Focus on sailing boats. Student could be engaged in a range of activities exploring sailing ships of the 1870’s. There may be connections to science or maths or health. For example, building structures that must float. Discussion about what was needed on long trips and the disease of scurvy. Numeracy activities such as drawing a scaled picture of a ship. Converting imperial measurements to metric. | 15 minutes | First Fleet Role cards |
<p>| Further Activities |  |  |  |</p>
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| Activity Nine Setting the climate | **Grandmother footsteps with a twist – a game**  
The teacher assumes the position of the Judge…..the students must sneak up to the judge and steal objects, a loaf of bread, a silk handkerchief, and a treasure. Students approach and then take the objects and get back to their home without being observed moving or without the judge seeing the object in someone's possession….the game is played very unfairly by the judge.. in the final round when the entire class ends up “caught” and is required to sit in a very cramped area all together in prison. The teacher plays the game so that all students are sitting in a tight confined area.  
A debrief of the game is led by the teacher as the accused students sit in the cramped prison….  
  • Are you all guilty?  
  • Do some of you deserve to be here?  
  • How do you think people who steal should be treated?  
  • Should all crimes be treated the same way?  
The students remain in the “prison” position | 5 Minutes | A loaf of bread  
A pair of gloves  
A bag of money  
A handkerchief  
A large box |
| Activity Ten Introducing the context | **Dramatic Convention: Narration and Thought Tracking**  
The teacher reintroduces the pre-text from the previous drama session  
*Can you imagine just for a moment that you are living in another time and place. Over 200 years ago in 1787 in a country called England. You are about to go on a long journey to a new country that you know very little about on the other side of the earth.*  
*You are being sent to a start a new settlement in a place called Botany Bay….in New South Wales it will take you over eight months to sail over 24000 kilometres to sail by ship because it is on the other side of the world. You were not alone …many others were transported with you…. You have no choice….you must go on this journey and you know that may never return home again. Your name is John Hudson and you are 13 years old.*  
Students are asked to remain seated with their eyes closed and to say what they may be thinking as a 13 year old as they sit on the ship that will take them to this new land. Teacher taps the shoulder of approximately 8 students. Students speak their thoughts out loud. | 5 Minutes | Teacher Narration Speech |
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<th>Activity Eleven</th>
<th>Out of role</th>
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<td>Introducing the context</td>
<td>Using the picture book <em>The First Fleet</em> by Alan Boardman and Roland Harvey, the teacher reads up until the fleet leave Portsmouth Harbour. This sets the context for the later exploration of John Hudson’s actions. This book also introduces the role of John Hudson</td>
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<th>Activity Twelve</th>
<th>Building the context</th>
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<td>Building the context</td>
<td>There were 11 ships in the First Fleet. The teacher outlines the different ships. Discussion with the class of what was needed on a transport boat, who would the passengers be, how would they be accommodated. <strong>Dramatic Convention: Building location/ space creating the transport boats</strong> Students are divided into six groups and are each given a picture the name of one of the transport ships of the first fleet. Each group is given information about their transport ship and the number of people on board. The group may physically build each boat in the classroom space using objects in the room. The teacher moves around the room asking student which parts of the ship they are making and if they think the ship will be strong enough to last the 9 month journey and survive storms at sea etc. Will this boat be big enough to hold all of the convicts and the soldiers? Will the women and children be kept separately where will they be kept etc.? When the students are finished they may want to give the class a “tour” of the ship and point out the features of their design. The students must display the name clearly on the bow of the ship. Or the students may draw a plan of the ship and how the various passengers will be accommodated on the boat. The same questions above could be used.</td>
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<th>Activity Thirteen</th>
<th>Building the context</th>
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<td>Building the context</td>
<td><strong>Dramatic Convention: Ritual</strong> Each member of the class is given a role card with the name of a convict. They are asked to line up and one by one read out the name of their convict and the ship that they are allocated to. The teacher stands beside them and repeats I sentence you to transportation to Botany Bay One at a time they join the other convicts on each of the ships. This use of ritual slows the action down. Once all of the students are on board they are given time to share the crimes listed on the role card and talk about if the convicts deserve the sentence they have been given – out of role discussion. <strong>NOTES:</strong> If students have not built ships a sheet or mat on the ground could be used for each of the boats</td>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>25 Minutes</td>
<td>Picture Book the first fleet by <em>The First Fleet</em> by Alan Boardman and Roland Harvey</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Names of the Transport ships carrying the convicts to Australia</td>
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<td>5 Minutes</td>
<td>Role cards</td>
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**Website with fact sheets about each ship of the first fleet and the list includes a list of all of the convicts on the first fleet.**

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Materials/Items</th>
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<td>Fourteen</td>
<td><strong>Dramatic Convention: Monologue – John Hudson’s story</strong>&lt;br&gt;The teacher explains that this section of the drama will focus on the experiences of the one of the passengers the youngest member of the first fleet. The teacher reads John’s story or the student who was John Hudson in the previous ritual activity reads out the story.</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>John Hudson telling his life story&lt;br&gt;Text for his story below</td>
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<td>Fifteen</td>
<td><strong>Out of role: John’s Journey</strong>&lt;br&gt;The students remain in their ship groupings and complete the following activity out of role while sitting in their ship structure.&lt;br&gt;Drawing a map. Using an atlas and the list of ports that the ships stopped individually the students still sitting on each ship draw out a map of their journey. While the students complete this activity the teacher will play music with a nautical feel as students work. The class come together to check that everyone understands the journey.</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>Atlas&lt;br&gt;List of the ports&lt;br&gt;Information about each ship&lt;br&gt;World Map A3 size</td>
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<td>Sixteen</td>
<td><strong>Dramatic Convention: John’s journey…. Freeze Frame/ postcards and narration</strong>&lt;br&gt;This activity explores what the journey may have been like for John and the other convicts and gives the students the time to re-enact the journey from the perspectives of John through the highly structured game of postcards- A group form of making a frozen image. Large images of the story book are projected and images are created inside the story images.</td>
<td>15 Minutes</td>
<td>Picture Book the first fleet by <em>The First Fleet</em> by Alan Boardman and Roland Harvey&lt;br&gt;Projected images of the story book.&lt;br&gt;Data projector – lap top</td>
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<td>Seventeen</td>
<td><strong>Dramatic Convention: Role on the floor (wall)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Large pieces of butcher’s paper with a large body drawn on them are placed on the floor. Students brainstorm details about John Hudson. On the outside of the image students records the facts that they know and have heard about John Hudson. One or two students act as scribes for the whole class brainstorm. On the inside of the figure how would he be feeling about his future and the journey to Botany Bay?</td>
<td>15 Minutes</td>
<td>Butchers paper&lt;br&gt;Or large white board</td>
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<td>Eighteen</td>
<td><strong>Dramatic Convention: Role Circle and Teacher in role</strong>&lt;br&gt;The teacher asks the class if they could all sit in a circle and explains that they are all going to pretend to be John Hudson on board the Friendship. Teacher in role as Elizabeth a convict wears a shawl to symbolise the role. All students are in role as John Hudson. The teacher addresses them as Elizabeth or another convict on the same ship. She starts the role play by talking about life on board and about what life may be like in Botany Bay. She fantasises about a stone cottage with flowers etc. She tries to persuade John to join in on the plan of a few convicts to steal some food. John Hudson is challenged to break into the Captains quarters and steal the key to the ships food store, so that the convicts can steal more food.</td>
<td>15 Minutes</td>
<td>Shawl&lt;br&gt;Chairs in a circle&lt;br&gt;A key</td>
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The First Fleet: John’s Journey developed by Sharon Hogan March 2014
Activity Nineteen
Exploring the central question

Dramatic Convention: Conscience Alley
Teacher in role as John Hudson or one of the students or previous John that read the monologue. The class stand in two lines. The teacher in role as John Hudson walks back and forth to people standing on each side of the line. The group speak out John's thoughts. One side should give arguments for and the other against. The teacher will give each side of the line a few minutes to think about what they might say as arguments for or against. The teacher in role as John Hudson can question the students.

5 Minutes

Activity Twenty
Debrief and reflection

Out of Role
Class discussion
Reflection: What would happen to John Hudson if he was caught?
Would he do it or not? Is John Hudson a criminal or a victim?

5 Minutes

Activity Twenty One
Developing dramatic action

Dramatic Convention: Pair Improvisation – short prepared improvisation
One of the students will take on the role of John Hudson and the other pair either another convict or a guard. It is your choice. Your short scene must have 10 lines of dialogue, start with a freeze frame and convey to the rest of the class what John decides to do. The scene must include dramatic tension. Teacher revises the types of dramatic tension. The students rehearse their scene, and then show their scenes to the class. The teacher selects one of the scenes developed by the pairs in the previous activity and asks the group to repeat the scene. The class identify how the dramatic tension was developed in the scene and possible ways of intensifying the scene. The students rework their scenes before the final sharing with the class. Scenes are discussed.

20 Minutes
Handout on dramatic tension

Reflective Phase

Activity Twenty-Two
Debriefing

The class all learn the song Bound for Botany Bay. The class discuss the mood of the song and does this reflect their experience of the process drama.

10 Minutes
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wuqshKpqQTg

Activity Twenty-Three
Narrative summary

Creating a short narrative presentation
Working in groups of four, the students must create a series three freeze frames that show what might happen to John Hudson once he begins life at Botany Bay. The groups perform their freeze frames and with one person changing the captions. The teacher plays the song Bound for Botany Bay as each group performs their presentation. The captions could be developed on PowerPoint and displayed digitally or written on large pieces of cardboard.

60 minutes
Cardboard and pens
Or powerpoint and data projector
Recording of bound for Botany Bay
**John Hudson**

**Monologue**

My name is John Hudson I am 13 years old and one of the youngest convicts on my way to Botany Bay. I am not really sure how I have ended up here….maybe it is just bad luck. I can't remember my mother and father – I was left with some farmers when I was about three. I had to move on from the farm and took up my first job in the city when I was around 7 years old. I was a chimneysweep. My job was to clean the dusty insides of chimneys and brushing away the soot that stuck to the bricks. I'd get stuck, as the chimneys were quite narrow and didn't allow a lot of space. My knees and elbows had cuts from climbing the chimney walls. My eyes were always red and itchy because of the soot in them. When it was summer, my master threw me out, as there was no need for chimneys in the hot weather. That's when I took up thieving.

At first I joined the local gang when I was 8; we snuck into rich toffs houses. The oldest in the gang was probably ten or eleven; I was the youngest. They always sent me inside to unlock the door for the rest of them. Since I was small for my age, I squeezed in through window gaps. When I was nine I was caught breaking into a big house.

The court officer asked me, ‘How old are you, son?’ He had a big moustache and mean dark eyes, he looked nasty. ‘Going on nine,’ I says. Best to be polite, so I hastily added, ‘Sir’.

‘Where is your father and mother?’ he inquired.

‘Dead, sir, not sure how long ago’.

The court sentenced me to be transported to America…..but then… well that didn’t work out and I ended up back on one of them stinking hulks in London before I ended up here on my way to a place no one had ever really heard of called Botany Bay, on the other side of the world. ‘A new place for misfits like you,’ a guard told me. He doesn’t have a kind bone in his body…he’ll get what’s coming to him one day. So here I am, on the sailing ship the Friendship, traveling to the end of the world. We have been travelling for so many months out at sea. It is a long wait, but I hope it's worthwhile. The conditions on board are bad…. but I won’t give up. I want to live. I just hope there’s a better future for me out there.