

# Gilbert and the Guardians of Melbourne

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melb  
ourne  
day  
30 august

Presenting partner



Major partner



Proud partner



*Supporting the Community*

Bronze partner



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The day was wet and rainy. Daruka, Peter and Lizzie were catching the train into the city to work on their history project and their teacher Mrs Graham had come along to help them. Daruka opened her notebook and wrote down their research question, 'Who founded the city of Melbourne?', and underlined it in bright orange.

The train doors hissed open, letting in lots of umbrellas, damp coats and ... a cat! It was a small tabby cat with long silky whiskers and intelligent eyes. It seemed remarkably self-confident and folded itself under the seat behind, fixing them with a cool green stare.

Mrs Graham looked sternly at the cat. She was sure there was some sort of rule about unaccompanied pets on public transport, but there was something about the cat's gaze that made her swallow her words.

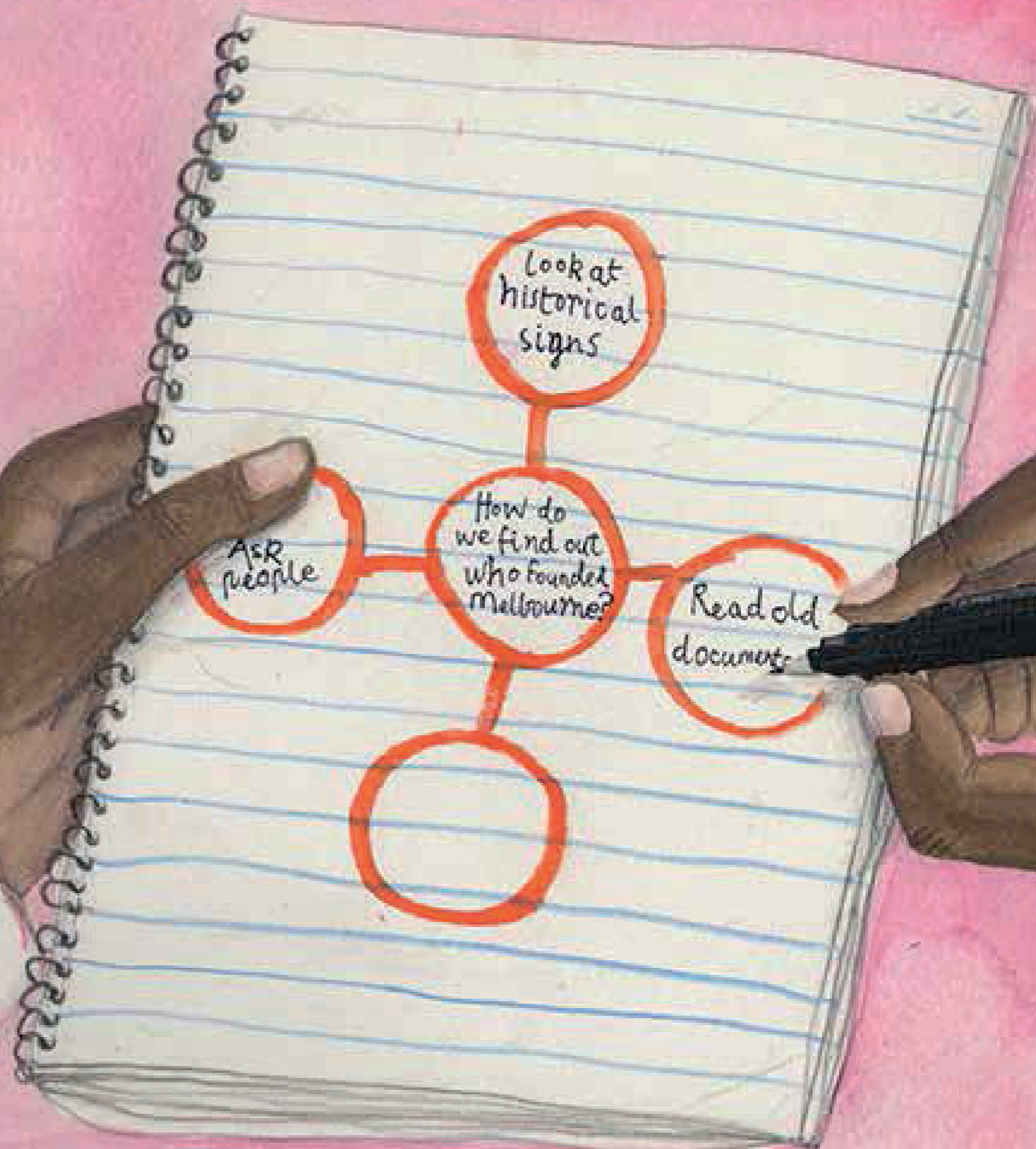
She cleared her throat and tried to remember what she had been saying.

‘Melbourne has many layers of history. Some parts are still on the surface, but for clues about the foundation of Melbourne, we’ll have to dig deeper. How should we go about finding out who founded Melbourne?’

‘Look at historical signs?’, pondered Peter.

‘Read old documents?’, considered Lizzie.

‘Ask people?’, suggested Daruka.





‘It sounds like you might need a guide’, purred a voice. ‘May I recommend myself? I’ve been living in Melbourne for what seems like ages.’

Mrs Graham and the children blinked in disbelief. The voice was coming out of the cat. Peter flipped through their assignment sheets, but there was no helpful information about accepting help from household pets.

‘I can introduce you to lots of experts who know about the history of Melbourne,’ continued the cat.

Mrs Graham gestured helplessly. ‘I suppose there’s no harm.’

‘Wonderful,’ preened the cat. A small gold tag with the name ‘Gilbert’ gleamed around his neck.

The train pulled up at Southern Cross station. ‘Let’s get out here,’ instructed Gilbert. ‘There’s somebody I want you to meet.’



‘May I introduce Bunjil?’, purred Gilbert. ‘He is the Aboriginal spirit creator of this land. He was here before the cities, the buildings and the cars.’

‘Good morning Bunjil,’ said Daruka. She had never been introduced to a statue before and was trying to be extra polite. ‘Do you know who founded Melbourne?’

‘It depends what you mean by “founded,”’ reflected Bunjil in a low and powerful voice. “Founded” is not a word I use. It was invented by Europeans. This land that I created, and the people that I created for this place, the Woi-wurrung people, belong to this place and this place belongs to them. When Europeans came here, they gave our place the name “Melbourne”. Daruka jotted it down in the notebook. ‘Is that the answer?’, she asked Mrs Graham. ‘Should we go home now?’

‘A good historian always looks at more than one opinion,’ said Mrs Graham firmly. ‘We’ll need to check a few more sources.’







‘Hmmm,’ considered Gilbert. ‘If we’re talking about the actual city of Melbourne, we should probably ask John Fawkner. But I had better warn you, when he and John Batman start talking, there is generally an argument.’

The little group followed Gilbert as he made his way through the city streets and came up to a statue of a man drawing in the dirt with a stick. He seemed to be deep in thought and the children were reluctant to interrupt him.



‘This is John Pascoe Fawkner,’ explained Gilbert.

‘Everybody knows that I founded Melbourne,’ said Fawkner. ‘I bought a ship called the Enterprize and put together an expedition to find a place for a settlement with good land and clean water. My expedition party was the first group of Europeans to build a house on this land. That house was the start of the city of Melbourne.’



‘Rubbish,’ snorted a voice from across the way. ‘Come and talk to me, children. I was the real founder of Melbourne.’ Gilbert rolled his eyes, but led the group across to another man.

‘My name is John Batman. I’m the one who wrote “this will be the place for a village” in my journal when I landed here in 1835. See?’ The statue showed them the mark on the map he was holding.

I founded  
Melbourne!

I did!



‘I owned the Enterprize,’  
claimed Fawkner.

‘But you weren’t on it when it landed  
in Melbourne,’ shot back Batman,  
‘you had to stay in Van Diemen’s  
Land because you owed money’.

‘People think of me as the founder  
of Melbourne. It says so  
everywhere!’ shouted Fawkner.

‘You lived here longer than I did. I  
died four years after I arrived and  
you did your best to discredit me,’  
retaliated Batman.

‘You cheated the Woi-wurrung  
people, the traditional owners, out of  
their land with your treaty,’ cried  
Fawkner.

‘I founded Melbourne!’

‘No, I did!’

Daruka was writing frantically in her notebook, trying to get down everything the two statues were shouting at each other. She didn't know which one to believe.

Peter had been looking up John Batman's memorial near the Queen Victoria Market on Mrs Graham's phone and had noticed a newer plaque attached to it. Maybe Bunjil had been right. Did they even need to do any further research?





‘I think we need some lunch after that!’ announced Gilbert as they turned into Chinatown in search of tempting treats.

‘There are stone lions at the entrance to Chinatown. Let’s ask them. They usually agree with each other.’

‘Is who founded Melbourne really the most important question?’ asked the female lion when Daruka showed her the assignment question. ‘What about the people who helped it grow? They helped turn Melbourne into what it is today.’

‘The city of Melbourne’s Latin moto is *Vires Acquirit Eundo*, which means “she gathers strength as she goes.”’

‘I agree,’ said the male lion. ‘Melbourne would be nothing without the people who came here to work and live. Maybe they are the true founders of Melbourne.’ Daruka sighed and drew up another column in her notebook. She wrote ‘immigrants’ at the top. This assignment was getting bigger by the moment.



After lunch Gilbert led them down towards the Yarra River. ‘Where are we now?’ asked Peter, whose feet were hurting. ‘If you wanted to know who founded Melbourne, I thought you also might like to think about why the city was built in this location. Well, here’s your answer,’ explained Gilbert, pointing dramatically with his paw. Lizzie followed Gilbert’s gaze to the seagulls bobbing happily in the water, then back at Gilbert. ‘Seagulls?’ she asked. ‘I think he means water,’ said Mrs Graham gently. People can only live in places with a good supply of clean drinking water.’

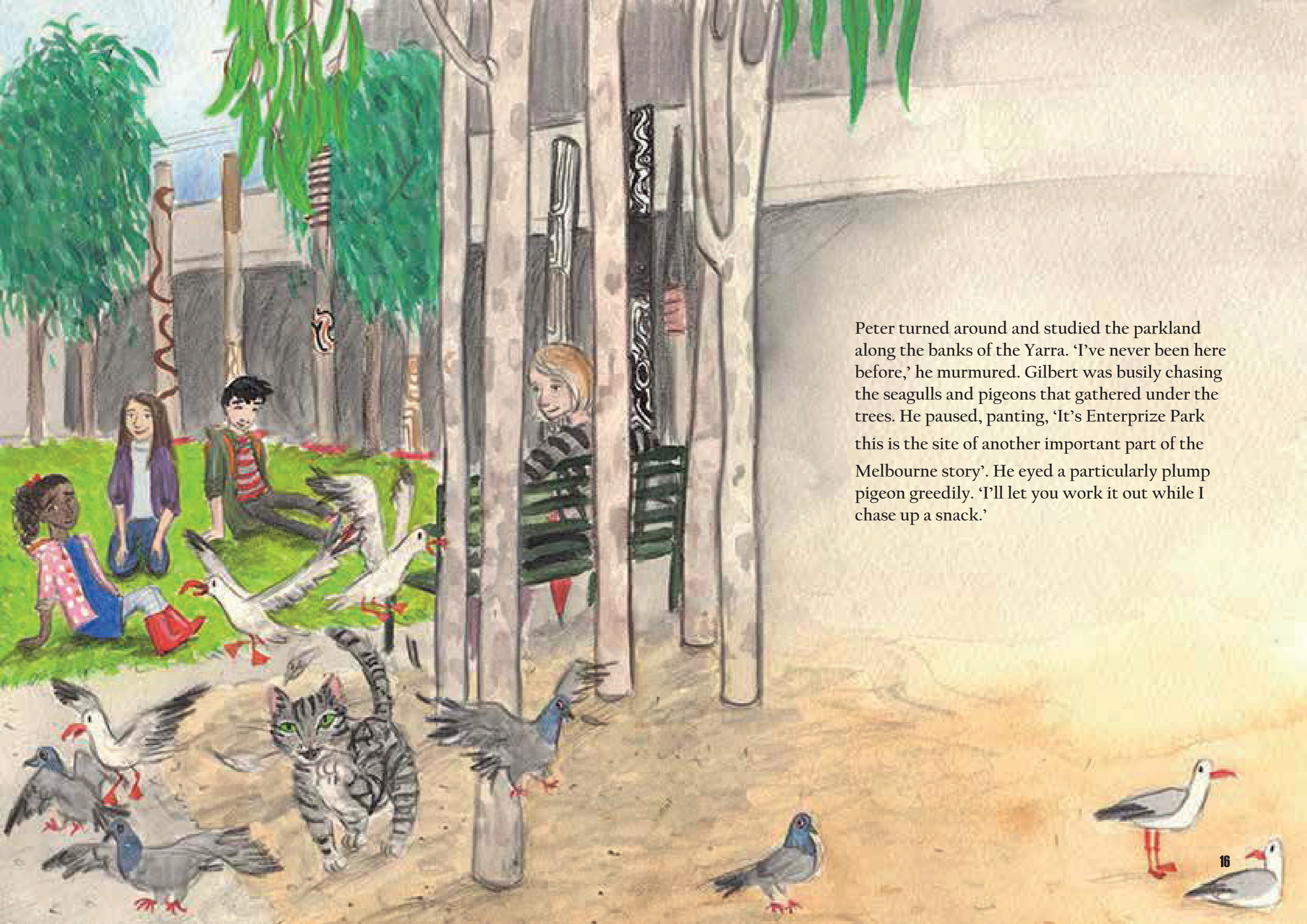


Sunlight sparkled on the Yarra. 'It may look nice now, but I remember when Melbourne was called "Smellbourne,"' smirked Gilbert.

'All the toilet waste and dirty water from the city drained into this beautiful river and made a huge stink. When the Yan Yean water supply system opened in 1857 Melbourne stopped using the Yarra for drinking water. And, it wasn't until the sewerage system was completed in 1897 that the water in the Yarra started to improve. Now Melbourne has some of the best drinking water in the world and a much cleaner Yarra.'

Daruka was counting on her fingers. That was almost 120 years ago. Exactly how old was Gilbert?

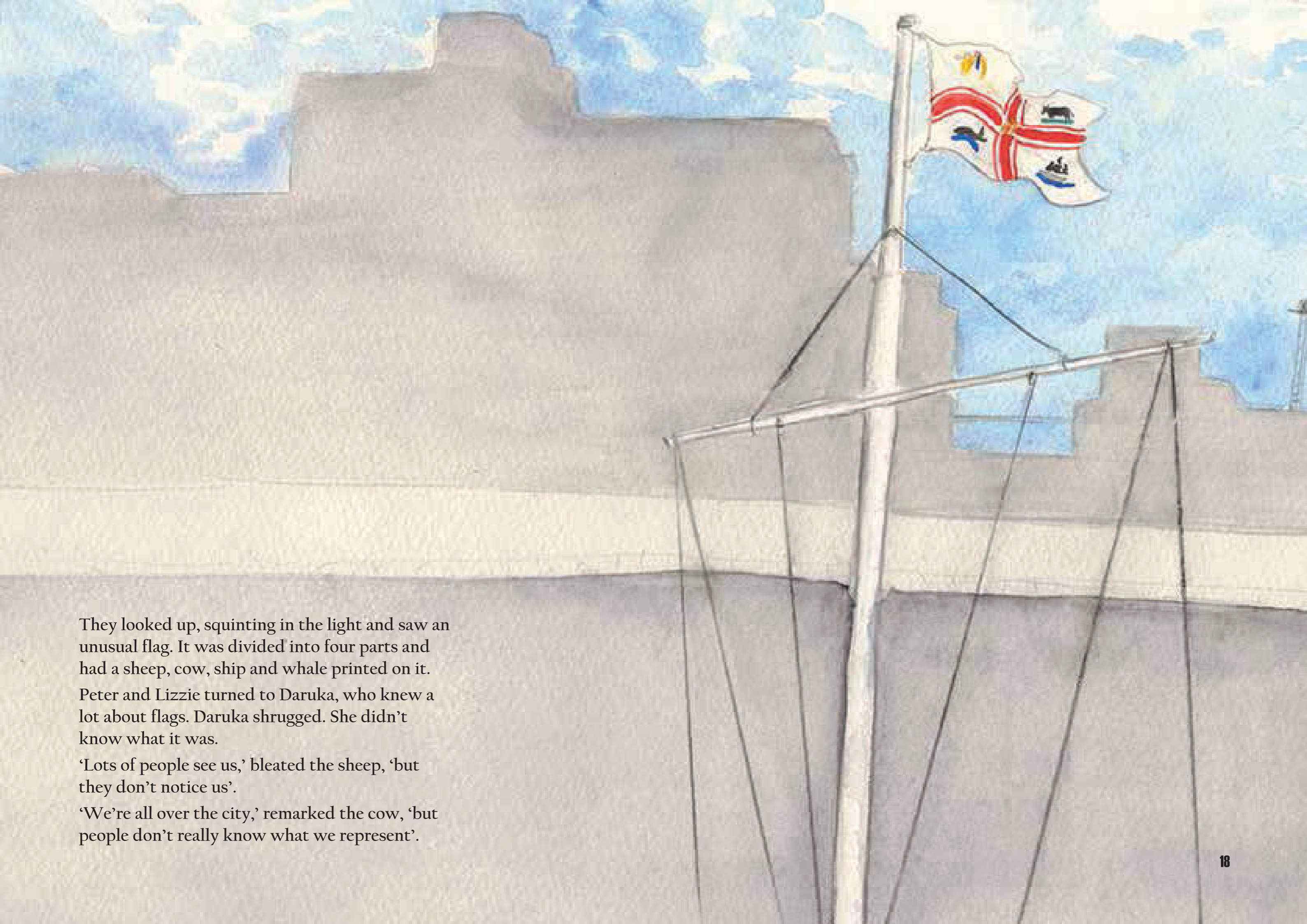




Peter turned around and studied the parkland along the banks of the Yarra. 'I've never been here before,' he murmured. Gilbert was busily chasing the seagulls and pigeons that gathered under the trees. He paused, panting, 'It's Enterprize Park this is the site of another important part of the Melbourne story'. He eyed a particularly plump pigeon greedily. 'I'll let you work it out while I chase up a snack.'

‘Enterprize Park? Wasn’t the Enterprize the name of Fawkner’s ship?’ pondered Lizzie. The children looked around. There was a plaque fixed to the wall of the dock and a tall flagpole with a flag merrily flapping in the wind. ‘Hey you!’ burred a voice. ‘Up here!’ bleated a second. The children looked around. ‘The flag!’ moored the third voice.





They looked up, squinting in the light and saw an unusual flag. It was divided into four parts and had a sheep, cow, ship and whale printed on it.

Peter and Lizzie turned to Daruka, who knew a lot about flags. Daruka shrugged. She didn't know what it was.

'Lots of people see us,' bleated the sheep, 'but they don't notice us'.

'We're all over the city,' remarked the cow, 'but people don't really know what we represent'.



‘We’re the city of Melbourne flag and we represent the types of industry Melbourne relied on in the early days,’ mused the cow.

‘So the sheep is for wool?’ guessed Lizzie, ‘and the cow is for the cattle industry?’ But none of the children could work out why there was a whale on the flag.

‘People in early Melbourne hunted whales for their meat and oil,’ explained Mrs Graham ‘Whale bones were made into ladies’ corsets.’

‘But aren’t we supposed to protect the whales?’, asked Peter, who had a ‘Save the Whales’ sticker on his backpack.

‘People had different needs and values in the past,’ said Mrs Graham. ‘We have to remember that before judging them.’

# The Enterprize Landing Memorial

In memory of those who landed here in August 1835 to begin the first settlement by Europeans, of the site that would become the city of Melbourne.

The schooner *Enterprize* (Captain Peter Hunter) from Launceston, Tasmania, reached this stretch of the Yarra River on 29 August. On the following day Sunday, 30 August, the horses and deck cargo were unloaded.

When the *Enterprize* returned to Launceston, the seven who remained were: John Lancy, master mariner, George Evans, settler; Evans Evans, his servant; James Gilbert, Thomas Morgan and Charles Wise, servants of J.P. Faulkner, the owner of the schooner; and Mary Gilbert. Mary, the only woman in the party was James Gilbert's wife. She gave birth, on 29 December 1835, to son James, the first European child born in Melbourne.



‘What does the ship represent?’ asked Daruka.

‘In the early days, people transported goods by sea,’ explained the whale.

‘The ship on the flag is very similar to the Enterprize. I remember when it first landed right where you are standing, on 30 August 1835. On board was a group of men, a woman and a cat. They wanted to start a new settlement. You can read about them on that plaque over there.’

‘A cat?’, asked Lizzie. A thought was taking shape at the back of her mind.  
‘So does that mean that they founded Melbourne?’ wondered Daruka.  
‘Well, I suppose it’s how you look at it,’ said Gilbert. He had returned from his snack break with a grey feather in the corner of his mouth and a satisfied expression.  
‘Often the credit for founding a place is given to the first person who steps off the boat. So, if you’re wondering who really founded Melbourne,’ Gilbert purred smugly and paused. ‘It was me!’  
And with a wave of his tail, he disappeared under the bridge.





On the train home, Daruka, Peter and Lizzie huddled around the notebook and looked at the photos they had taken throughout the day.

‘So what have you decided?’ asked Mrs Graham. ‘Who do you think founded Melbourne?’ Peter scratched his head. ‘I’m not sure. Every person we spoke to had a good argument. Maybe there are too many factors to give a simple answer.’

‘Maybe that’s what we should write in our assignment’, suggested Lizzie.

Daruka nodded her agreement.

Mrs Graham smiled and looked out the window as the city of Melbourne slipped out of sight and the children began to write.