Travel and Empire in Wertenbaker's Our Country's Good

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Abstract
In her article "Travel and Empire in Wertenbaker's Our Country's Good" Yi-chin Shih analyzes Our Country's Good from the perspective of travel in order to explore the exercise of empire and the practice of resistance. Considered as one of the luminaries in British theater, Timberlake Wertenbaker (1951-) has produced several successful works, especially Our Country's Good (1988), which won her a Laurence Olivier Award for the Best Play and solidified her reputation as an important playwright in world theater. Our Country's Good is based on real historical facts about the First Fleet's transportation of criminals from England to Australia to build New South Wales in 1787. Shih explores aspects of travel in the early colonial period of Australian history and its relationship between travel and empire.

Recommended Citation

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

Our Country's Good, by Timberlake Wertenbaker, is a play that begins in the hold of the vessel Sirius, a convict ship. The ship is on its way to Australia, where the British Empire notoriously shipped criminals to get them away from the British Isles. At the start of the play, convicts aboard the Sirius witness a flogging and speak fearfully about what lies ahead. In Australia, in Sydney Cove, an Aboriginal Australian comments on the arrival of the first fleet and the British Empire's presence in Australia. At first, he is curious, but that curiosity soon turns to confusion and fear. The play