

Never Lose Hope - The Story of Australia's First School

By Mark Wilson

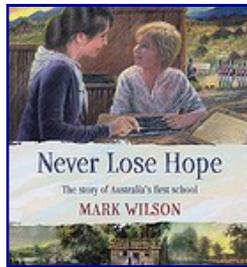
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**PICTURE BOOK OF
THE MONTH**

John is a child convict, transported to New South Wales for stealing a shirt. Life is grim in the fledgling colony and when food runs short, John once again has to steal to survive. Starving and alone, he is taken in by Australia's first school teacher, Isabella Rosson. In her simple classroom, John learns to read and write and soon becomes her star pupil - until he is discovered by the soldiers and again sent away in chains. Yet John never forgets Isabella's lessons, the power of words - and the hope for a brighter future. Inspired by the life of convict Isabella Rosson, the first teacher in the colony at Port Jackson, and John Hudson, the youngest First Fleet convict, this touching story is illustrated with Mark Wilson's vividly realistic and evocative artwork.



Teacher Notes have been based on those supplied by the publisher. A full version is available on our website.

Themes:

- Hope
- The Importance of Education
- Friendship, Compassion & Survival
- Colonial Life In Australia

Discussion Questions:

- Hope is a human trait which is sometimes difficult to maintain. How easy would it be to become a convict as a child; to be completely isolated from the country and home you once knew; and then to be sent to a brutal penal settlement remote from what you had come to know, as John is?
- 'One morning when the children were playing outside Isabella found John inside still drawing on one of the slates. When she asked him what it was he said it was a farm, the farm he would own some day.' This is an extraordinary dream for a poor convict boy raised in English slums. What role can dreams play in creating our future reality?
- Although this book doesn't detail John's future life as an adult, the final frame does give the reader a sense of hope for him. What does it suggest?
- It is suggested in the final frame in this book that Isabella's intervention in John's life had a profound influence on his future. Can such acts of kindness and love change the course of a life?
- Reverend Johnson and his wife, Mary, clearly demonstrate compassion, as does Isabella. How difficult would it have been to maintain such feelings amidst the brutal conditions endured by these early settlers?
- Different forms of housing are evident in the opening spread – a cabin built of timber, and a large tent to the right, and another cabin and tent in the background to the left. Research housing in colonial Australia.
- Isabella's diary entries give some information about the times, as well. For example, she writes about the backgrounds of her convict pupils; about the food supplies running low; about how children are forced to steal; and about the harsh punishments meted out to those who commit such petty crimes. What else did you learn from the diary entries in this book?
- Research colonial life and the conditions in which convicts were imprisoned, with some later released to become settlers.
- The soldiers in this text seem to have inordinate power, and to be a law unto themselves. Research the role of the military in early colonial life, and what powers they wielded.
- Create a classroom mural which tells the story in a series of frames designed and executed by students.
- Write, direct and act a play scene based on any incident in this book.
- Create a diorama of one of the scenes in this book using a cardboard box as your frame.
- Complete the 'Collage Image' page that is attached

Blackline Masters

Create a collage by drawing a scene around this image of Isabella and John and then applying materials such as fabric, cardboard, fur, etc. to create a vibrant image.

