

PATRICK GIBBONS – 1869

READERS THEATRE

Students are on the raised platform of the York Courthouse and have their scripts in folders. The students do not need to know their parts but should be well rehearsed in reading them. Even though the parts are read, students should still make eye contact with the audience. The performers do not look at each other. Students may take on different roles.

Suitable Years: **years 7 to 10**

Number of Students: 5

Cast:

Reader One
Reader Two
Reader Three
Reader Four
Patrick Gibbons

Venue:

York Courthouse Complex, 1874 Courtroom

Synopsis:

After the convict period finished there were still a lot of convicts in the Swan River Colony. Ex-convicts continued to make up the majority of petty crime and offences in the records of the York Courthouse. Most of their visits to the York courthouse involved drinking and fighting. Patrick Gibbons was one of these.

Costume:

The readers should all be dressed in a similar manner. They could be dressed as people from the mid nineteenth century or wear a neutral costume such as theatre blacks (black shirt and trousers with black shoes). School uniform would also be suitable. Patrick Gibbons would be dressed as an old ex convict. Worn out collarless shirt, trousers with braces and lace up boots.

York Courthouse Complex has some costumes available for student use.
Ask at time of booking.

Reference:

Erickson, Rica: *The Brand on His Coat: Biographies of some Western Australian Convicts*, University of Western Australia Press; 1893

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READERS

- One After the convict period finished there were still a lot of convicts in the Swan River Colony.
- Two Ex-convicts continued to make up the majority of petty crime and offences in the records of the York Courthouse.
- Three These were mostly men who had never married or settled down and because they didn't have skills or perhaps didn't want to work, they tended to wander about the district.
- Four Most of their visits to the York Courthouse involved drinking and fighting.
- One Some of these men appear in the records again and again, mainly for drunken and disorderly behaviour, brawling, petty thieving and absconding from their places of employment.
- Two Life was hard for these men because sometimes the only jobs they could get were in hotels as yardmen, stable hands or helping in the bar.
- Three In those days it was against the law for people to be without 'visible means of support or place of abode'. They could be charged by the police with vagrancy and might be sent to gaol.
- Four A hotel or public house was a good place for these old men to work...as long as they didn't drink too much and get into trouble.
- ALL ...but they did!
- One Patrick Gibbons was one of these. In 1869 only one month after getting his ticket of leave, Patrick Gibbons got another fifteen months gaol.
- Two Gross and insulting language to the Resident Magistrate – one-month hard labour.
- Three Drunk and disorderly - two months' hard labour.
- Four Assaulting Resident Magistrate while on the bench and making use of obscene language to him - twelve months hard labour.
- One Over the next few years he was in court for drunkenness, fighting and for breaking the rules of his ticket of leave.
- Two October 1877. York Occurrence Book. Michael Brady ticket of leave, reported at the Police Station at three thirty pm.

- Three I was drinking with Patrick Gibbons and we got into a bit of an argument. Later, while I was asleep, I felt a sharp pang and on waking found my lower lip gone. I saw Gibbons standing in front of me with my lip still in his mouth. The whole of my bottom lip had been bitten off from the chin leaving only the corners.
- Four Gibbons was remanded in custody for three weeks, until the witness and victim Brady was able to testify.
- One Gibbons was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment in Fremantle Prison and his ticket of leave was revoked.
- Two He returned to the York District and kept appearing in the York Police and Court records.
- Three August 1881. Patrick Gibbons was taken into custody for being drunk in town and charged with wilfully destroying a pannikin belonging to the government.
- Four In 1886 he was arrested four times for being a loose, idle, drunken and disorderly person.
- One Loitering about public houses and having no visible means of support or place of abode, he was given twenty one days imprisonment or fourteen days hard labour.
- Two January 1889. Patrick Gibbons. You are charged with stealing two bottles of cordial.
- Three February 1889. Patrick Gibbons. You are fined ten shillings, with thirteen shillings and sixpence costs for abusive and threatening language to George Inkpen. You have one day to pay.
- Four Patrick Gibbons. You were found drunk on Avon Terrace and locked up for the night. You are sentenced to fourteen days hard labour for the repeat offence.
- One April 1889. Patrick Gibbons. You are an old offender, well known to this court. You appear in the dock with your face severely bruised and your clothes covered in blood, evidently the result of some pugilistic encounter. You admit to a charge of drunkenness.
- Two You are in such a sorry state that I am inclined to deal with you most leniently. You are fined five shillings but I am also giving you the option of retiring (in gaol) for seven days.
- Three December 1889. Patrick Gibbons. You are charged with being drunk and disorderly.
- Four Sir. I must protest! It is far worse than that! The accused has threatened to



burn me out and blow up my business because he claims that I would not find him work on the roads.

One Patrick Gibbons, you are fined twenty shillings in default of twenty-one days hard labour.

Two September 1890. Patrick Gibbons. You are charged with deliberately setting fire to an outhouse at the York hotel.

Three I am Sir, Edward Ingram of the York Hotel. Gibbons admitted to setting the fire to the hotel and many others heard him. He shouted at us.

Gibbons Yes I did and I'll burn the whole bloody place down.

Four Gibbons had been about the Hotel for some days probably sleeping in the ostler's room. On several occasions when worse for liquor, he talked wildly of burning the place down but we didn't take him seriously, even though we knew that Gibbons was not a harmless man when drinking.

One Patrick Gibbons, in view of these threats and the matches found in your possession you are committed for trial in the Supreme Court Perth.

Gibbons I am innocent Sir as I was drunk at the time and so I knew nothing about it.

All Not Guilty!

Two Many in York could only express surprise at the verdict. The jury having misunderstood their duty had found him Not Guilty!

Three Patrick Gibbon's died in 1890.

Four I find that Patrick Gibbons came to his death by falling out of a cart four miles out of York and being crushed under a wheel.

All He was drunk!