This is Frederick McCubbin’s first painted response to the great national occasion of Federation. The official Opening of the First Federal Parliament of Australia by the British Duke of Cornwall and York (later King George V) was held in Melbourne on 9 May 1901. Many decorative arches were built marking the passage of the Duke and Duchess through Melbourne. The largest was the Triumphal Arch, painted by McCubbin during the procession itself.

How do we know that there are people present in this painting, even though we can’t see them?
This painting shows us a ‘typically Australian’ scene that was popular at the time; men shearing sheep in a golden, sunny, rural landscape. Shearing was essential to Australia’s wool industry and therefore very important to the nation’s economic growth. However, the artist, Rupert Bunny, had not lived in Australia for almost 30 years and had to paint this picture from his memory and imagination.

What time of day do you think it is?
Hans Heysen is most well-known for painting Australian gum trees. They were special to him and became the central subject of his art. The trees here are quite young. Later in his life Heysen painted large gum trees in great detail, and helped to make the gum tree a symbol of Australia and our landscape.

Look closely at the small details in the foreground of this painting. What can you see?
The drover was a popular subject in Federation-era painting, shown as a heroic character on sheep stations and in the Australian bush. Harry Garlick painted *The drover* in response to the ‘Federation drought’, which officially lasted until 1903. The drought had a devastating effect on the sheep, cattle and wheat industries throughout much of Australia.

What does the artist leave out of this picture to give an impression of a dry landscape?
W.C. Piguenit was born in 1836 in Hobart. He is distinguished as the first Australian-born professional painter. He painted important visions of the Australian landscape in colonial and Federation times. He was very excited when Australians started to enjoy seeing paintings of their own country, rather than the European pictures that had been popular for so long.

Look at the sky in this painting. It has been created using impasto, a thick paint that gives texture to paintings and looks three-dimensional.

What words would you use to describe this landscape?
Frederick McCubbin came to believe that it was important for Australian artists to spend time in the bush and learn to convey the feeling and colours of the Australian landscape. This scene is from an area near McCubbin’s bush home on the rural outskirts of Melbourne. He uses the wide variety of colours of the Australian opal, Australia’s national gemstone.

What can you see in the sky?
This is a painting of St Ives, Cornwall, an old English fishing town that was very popular with artists in this era. Can you see the harbour in the background? Notice how the artist Richard Hayley-Lever has applied the paint in small brushstrokes placed very close together to create many layers of colour and the misty atmosphere of cool morning light.

What do you think are the main colours that Hayley-Lever has used?

Richard Hayley-Lever was born in Adelaide and first painted the sea as a student. He lived in St Ives for over 10 years, painting the sea and images of daily life.

Can you see the people in the village?
Hilda Rix Nicholas painted this while she was living in Montmartre, Paris. Paris was a popular destination for Australian artists and many who travelled there lived in Montmartre, close to cafes, schools and each other. It is likely that she painted this image while looking out of her studio window.

Do you think it is warm or cold outside?
How can you tell?
In this painting, women and girls wear the latest fashion of the day on an outing to Sydney Harbour. The artist Ethel Carrick was born in England; she visited Sydney for the first time in 1908, with her husband E. Phillips Fox who was also a painter. Carrick liked to paint impressions of daily life. See how she uses small brushstrokes to capture movement, light and the colours of the scene.

How would you describe the way Carrick has applied her paint?
George Lambert is regarded as one of Australia’s best artists from this time. He had a very outgoing personality and once left a party by doing cartwheels rather than walking! In *The sonnet*, we can see three figures in an imaginary landscape, each looking in a different direction; perhaps they cannot see each other. What do you think?

*Look closely into the distance beyond the trees. What can you see?*
This painting depicts two French women inside their house. The soft colours of the women’s dresses are contrasted dramatically with the bold red-striped curtain.

How many stripes can you count?

Rupert Bunny loved to paint women in long, flowing dresses. Notice how the light shines through their skirts. The woman in the dark shawl is the artist’s wife, whose name was Jeanne.

What is she holding?
Although you might not know it, Madame Hartl is wearing a costume. She is dressed as a fifteenth-century Italian woman – the wife of Giovanni Tornabuoni, who was a great supporter of the arts. Her costume is elaborate and fancy. The rich colours and fabric indicate to us that she was a wealthy woman.

Look closely at Madame Hartl’s jacket. Name two colours you can see on it.

The artist, Tom Roberts, saw Madame Hartl at a fancy dress ball in London. He admired her costume so much that he arranged to paint her portrait dressed like this.

What costume would you wear to a fancy dress party?
Violet Teague took pride in this portrait and even won a silver medal for it. The boy in the painting is Theo Scharf, who often painted with Violet in her studio.

What do you think Theo wants to be when he grows up? The clue is in his hand.

Look at how Theo is standing. How would you describe his pose? He looks straight at you. He is confident and self-assured. The artist has simplified the portrait so that Theo is the focal point.
Before Australia’s Federal Capital of Canberra was built, this is what the landscape looked like. The area was farmland and bush; Black Mountain can be seen in the background. The artist Penleigh Boyd won second place for this painting in a competition commemorating the site that would become the new capital of Australia. Boyd has painted the scene on a bright and sunny day.

What in the painting makes you sure that this is an Australian landscape?

What colours in this painting make you think it’s a hot day?
This painting was created in May 1901 to commemorate Federation and the opening of the first Parliament of Australia. It is a sketch for a much bigger painting which took the artist Tom Roberts over two years to paint, and which his friends nicknamed ‘the big machine’. This sketch shows the Duke of Cornwall and York speaking in front of thousands of people. Roberts was very excited to be officially commissioned to create such an important painting.

Look closely at the Duke of Cornwall and York. What is his most prominate feature?
Investigate what life was like for Australians living from 1900 to 1913. What are some of the differences between the lifestyle people had then compared to the lifestyle people have today? Think about things like clothing, food, transport, school, communication, technology and the environment.