

Level 5

Convict Punishments

Convicts had many rules to follow in the colony and discipline was harsh for those convicts who didn't follow them.

Solitary Confinement

One common punishment for minor crimes was being locked in a small cell away from other convicts. Minor crimes included returning late or being drunk in the barracks. The cells were dark, cold, and very uncomfortable for the convict. A convict could spend weeks in the cell, receiving only bread and water.



Chain Gangs

For more serious crimes, convicts were given time on the chain gangs.

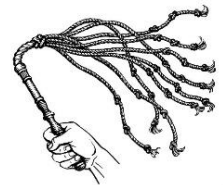
This meant that convicts were shackled in leg-irons and given back-breaking work such as road construction. These leg-irons were very heavy and made walking painful as the iron rubbed against the convicts'

bare ankles. When it was time for the leg-iron to be removed, a blacksmith would hammer it open while it was still being worn by the convict.



Flogging

Another common punishment was flogging. The whips used in floggings had nine knotted leather cords which would cut into the flesh of the person being whipped. These whips were known as the cat-o'-nine-tails. Enough strikes of the whip would cut through to the bone. The convict who was to be flogged was usually tied to a triangular frame. Floggings could only be ordered by a magistrate or the Governor. Flogging was a physically tough punishment to administer. For this reason, the job of flogging was often given to other convicts, under the watch of a guard.



Treadmills

Walking the treadmill was another torturous punishment. Convicts given this punishment were forced to step continuously on large treadmills. Their steps provided the power which rotated the treadmills. This was a physically exhausting punishment. As a medical precaution, the weight of each convict was recorded before they went on and after they got off. This punishment was helpful to the colony as the treadmills ground grains that were then used to feed the convicts.

Penal Colonies

Convicts who committed more serious crimes, or continued to reoffend, were given longer sentences or sent to dedicated penal colonies such as Port Arthur or Moreton Bay. Here, convicts were forced into back-breaking tasks such as cutting timber, clearing land and other agricultural work.

Task A: Comprehension

1. What was a 'chain gang'?

2. Who had the authority to order a flogging?

3. What kind of work awaited convicts who were sent to Moreton Bay?

4. Why were convicts often given the job of flogging other convicts?

5. Which word from the text means 'safety measure'?

6. Why do you think convicts were weighed before and after the treadmill?

7. Which punishment do you think was most beneficial to the new colony? Explain.

Task B: Language and Grammar

1. A **possessive noun** is noun that possesses, owns, or has something. We show possession with an apostrophe.

the convict's ankle = the ankle of the convict

Add an **apostrophe before the s** to complete the following possessive nouns:

- a. The colony's convicts (the convicts of the colony)
 - b. The _____ food (the food of the convict)
 - c. The _____ orders (the orders of the magistrate)
 - d. The _____ duty (the duty of the guard)
 - e. The _____ hammer (the hammer of the blacksmith)
2. **Edit** the following passage for full stops, capital letters, commas and spelling. Rewrite it correctly.

convicts were punished for a variety of reasons these included turning up late for work being disrespectful to guards attempting to escape or drunkenness

Task C: Challenge

Design a poster that warns convicts against breaking the rules of the colony.