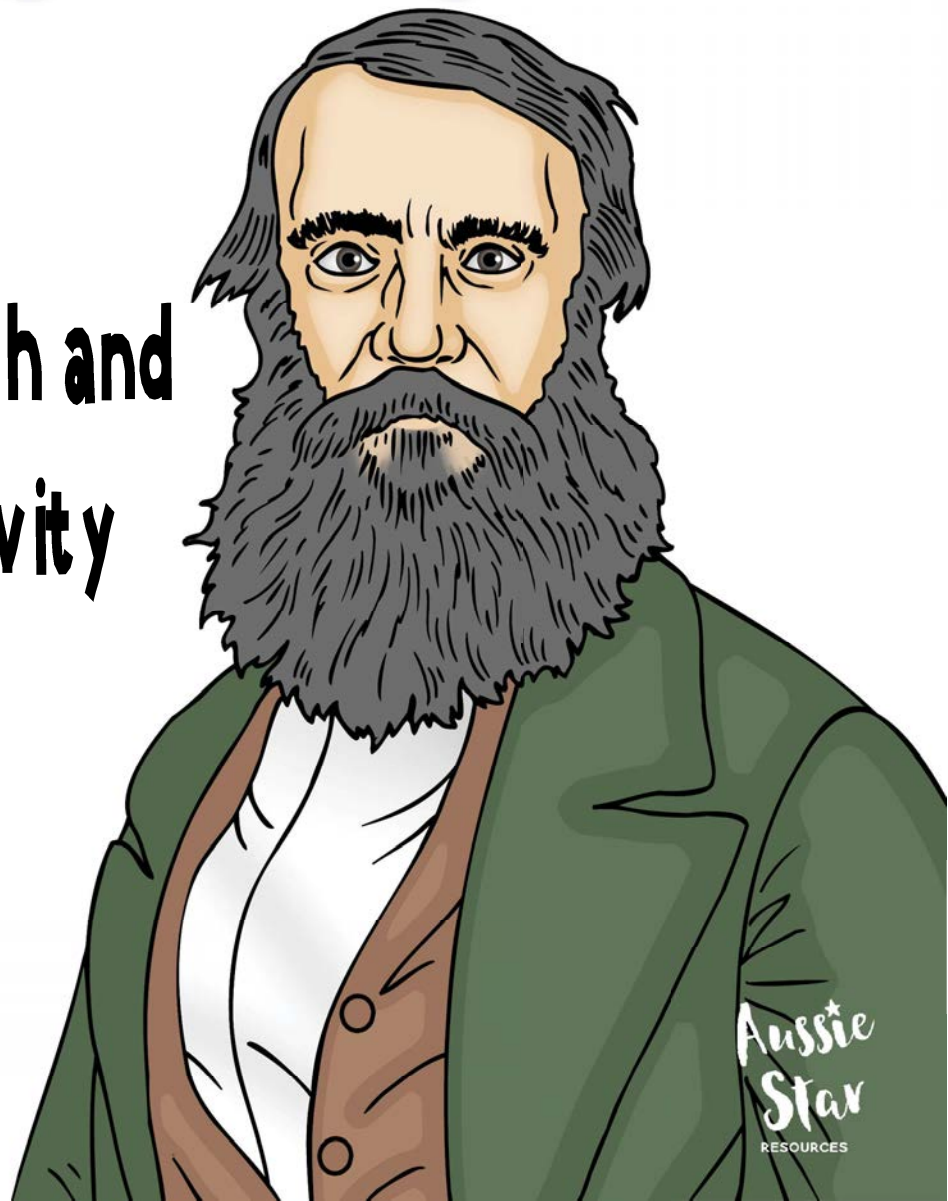


**Grade 5 HASS**  
**Australian History**

# **Australian Explorers**

## **John McDouall Stuart**

**Overland Telegraph and  
Morse Code Activity**



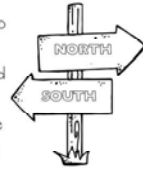
**Aussie  
Star**  
RESOURCES

## Overland Telegraph Line

Imagine not being able to hear from your family or friends regularly. Imagine what it would be like to find out information and news, such as the birth or death of a family member, 5 months after it had happened. And imagine what it would be like to read or watch the news and realise that it happened 6 months ago. This is what life was like in Australia after European settlement. Colonists had to wait months for letters and newspapers from England to arrive so they could find out what was happening. Transferring news between the colonies wasn't much easier; there were no radios or fast transport services, so the colonial governments started to search for a solution to this problem.

In 1814 a man named Samuel Morse invented the Morse Telegraph. This was a clever machine which sent messages via a single electrical wire in the form of pulses which were then translated in to words. The enormous potential of this invention was recognised throughout the world and in less than ten years a telegraph line was installed between Melbourne and Williamstown and by 1866 Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Tasmania were all connected by telegraph line.

Connecting the colonies was a great achievement but it still meant that Australia was isolated from the rest of the world. In the early 1860s discussion turned to finding a way to connect Australia to the rest of the world and the colonies raced to be the first to do this. Two famous explorers took on the challenge to find a suitable route to run an overland telegraph line across Australia and the race was on between Burke and Wills and John McDouall Stuart. Additionally, Queensland wanted to have the overland telegraph and so began a process of negotiations between the colonies and the British Government to



© Aussie Star Resources 2017

determine the best route, which colony could manage and finance such an enormous project. In the end Charles Todd convinced the South Australian government to build their own telegraph line and construction began in 1870 and guaranteed the British Government that it would be completed in two years!

To complete such a large project in such a short time Charles Todd decided that the best way to manage it was to break it up in to three sections, southern, central and northern, with three separate construction parties working at the same time eventually connecting with each other to complete the line. The construction parties consisted of blacksmiths, carpenters, cooks, storeroopers, linesmen, surveyors and telegraphers. Each construction party was equipped with everything that they would need to work 6 days a week. Their supplies included electrical equipment such as insulators, batteries and tools. They also needed food and medical stores. Todd's plan required poles to be erected every 250 meters so, where possible, the construction team would cut down trees from the location to construct the posts to hold up the wire. If there weren't any trees available to cut down, they would need to use iron posts so they had to carry three thousand iron posts and 3,000 kilometres of galvanised telegraph wire. Afghan camel trains were used to transport supplies and 2,000 sheep were taken to supply meat to the workers.

The overland telegraph line was completed 22nd of August 1872 and it became Australia's main means of keeping in contact with the rest of the world, and as a nation. This continued up until 1942 when, during World War II the Japanese bombed Darwin and the decision was made to cut the international line in case of an invasion. The line was never reconnected as other technologies became available after the war including the use of air mail. Today the line has mostly fallen down and is in a state of disrepair, however one of the eleven transmitter stations that were set up along the line to relay messages has been preserved in Alice Springs and can be visited as a tourist attraction.



© Aussie Star Resources 2017

# Morse Code Breaker

The answers to these questions have already been provided but first you will have to decode them from Morse Code! Once you have decoded them use the text passage to help you work out which word is the correct answer for each question.



A	●
B	●
C	●
D	●
E	●
F	●
G	●
H	●
I	●
J	●
K	●
L	●
M	●
N	●
O	●
P	●
Q	●
R	●
S	●
T	●
U	●
V	●
W	●
X	●
Y	●
Z	●

 Aussie Star Resources 2011

Before the construction of the Overland Telegraph line colonists would have to wait \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ to get information from their friends and \_\_\_\_\_ back in England.

In 1844 a man named \_\_\_\_\_ invented the Morse \_\_\_\_\_ which sent messages via a single \_\_\_\_\_ wire as short \_\_\_\_\_. Each letter of the alphabet has its own code which would be tapped out and translated in to \_\_\_\_\_.

In 1870 a man name \_\_\_\_\_ Todd convinced the Government to  
\_\_\_\_\_ their own telegraph line across the \_\_\_\_\_ from  
\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. This took \_\_\_\_\_ and stretched  
almost 3000 kilometres.

Write a message to your teacher or friend in morse code and ask them to translate it!

[illegible]

Aussie Star Resources 2017



