

Keys to the collection— Form

Blamire Young

“After a few years residence among the natives I could speak the language quite well. When I had attained this knowledge of their tongue, I found I was fast losing my own.”

—William Buckley, *Reminiscences of James Buckley*,
State Library of Victoria, Manuscripts Collection

William Blamire Young was born on 9 August 1862 at Londesborough, Yorkshire, UK. He was educated at Forest School, Walthamstow, Essex, and studied mathematics at Cambridge University. Young's parents wished that William would become a minister of the church. To escape these pressures he moved to Australia, where he was appointed mathematics master at Katoomba College, New South Wales, a position he held for eight years.

In 1893, Young returned to England. He attempted to make a living as an artist but with limited success. In 1895, he married Mabel Ellen Sawyer, an accomplished woodcarver. On his return to Australia, Young contributed to *The Bulletin* and briefly engaged in producing posters with Norman and Lionel Lindsay, and Harry Weston.

In his own practice, Young created large watercolour scenes of Melbourne, his first solo exhibition in Melbourne in 1909. In 1911 he was commissioned to produce new designs for the first Commonwealth of Australia stamps. The Kangaroo and Map stamps were first issued in 1913 and continued to be in use until 1935.



Young returned to England again in December 1912 and early in 1915 he joined the British Army training soldiers in the use of firearms. Immediately after the war he took up painting again and exhibited at the Royal Academy, London.

In 1923, back in Australia, Young settled in Montrose in the hills east of Melbourne. He was art critic for *The Herald* newspaper and held occasional solo exhibitions before his death in 1935.

Buckley acting as interpreter at Indented Head—

Is a pictorial presentation where the Aboriginals blend with the scenery: their spears and poles merge with the distant pattern of trees, and the Europeans crowd the frame in the foreground. Buckley is placed with the Aboriginal group, facing the Europeans.

**Geelong
Gallery**

AusVELS level 7 to VCE
geelonggallery.org.au/learn

Blamire Young
*Buckley acting as interpreter at
Indented Head (detail) 1901*
watercolour
Collection: Geelong Gallery

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Blamire Young

born United Kingdom 1862;
arrived Australia 1884;
returned United Kingdom 1913-23;
died Australia 1935

*Buckley acting as interpreter at
Indented Head 1901*
watercolour
58.0 x 180.0 cm
Collection: Geelong Gallery
Gift of GM Hitchcock, 1903

Question

Young was extremely interested in the life of William Buckley. What does his composition tell us about his thoughts about Buckley's situation?

Research

"It was not without regret, that I resolved on leaving the colony, because I had believed that my knowledge of the language and habits of the natives, acquired during my sojourning amongst them, might have led to my being employed by the local authorities during the rest of my life; but, when I reflected on the suspicion with which I was viewed by the most influential white men, and on the probable doubt the natives would entertain in my sincerity after having left them, I thought it best to retire to Van Diemen's Land."

—William Buckley

John Morgan, *The Life and adventures of William Buckley*, 1852

Research the life of Buckley from the time of his arrival in October 1803 at Sullivan Bay settlement, until his death. From this research write a short story of one part of his life as if you were Buckley himself.

Activity

Young believed that imaginative and decorative compositions allowed more room for creativity and fantasy than an 'en plein air' or naturalistic painting. He was disappointed that critics referred to his work as 'posters'. Using his style, create a watercolour that makes a social comment on prominent persons in the 21st century. To complete your art work it would be helpful to view some of Young's other works, paying attention to his limited palette and his use of black.

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