

PUNCTUALITY

Australian Supplement to the Character First Education Curriculum

I Will:

- Be at the right place at the right time
- Prepare for unexpected delays
- Do my work ahead of time
- Plan a daily schedule and keep it
- Not fall into the trap of “just one more.”



Definition

Showing esteem for other people and their time

Illustration

Come November, at the beginning of the tropical monsoon season, Christmas Island comes alive with millions of red crabs. After spending the year in a burrow up in the rainforest, the crabs begin the trip of a lifetime down to the seashore to spawn. They are certain to face many obstacles and some may not even make it. Read the nature story about the fascinating migration of the red crabs and how they are always at the *right* place at the *right* time.

Charles Sturt is said to have solved the “riddle of the rivers” through his 1829-30 expedition down the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers. What is less known, however, was his daring journey back up the river, against the current in the sweltering mid-summer heat. Charles and his team almost died in the attempt, but they finally made it due to their meticulous punctuality. The history story uncovers one of the most heroic episodes in Australian exploration.

Punctuality in Nature

Christmas Island Red Crab



Far out in the Indian Ocean, there is an island, so small that it's a mere speck on the globe. It's a tiny island, only 135 square kilometres, nearly 2,500km from the Western Australian capital of Perth, with a population of just 1500 people.

It's called Christmas Island and even though it maybe small and insignificant, it is on this island that one of nature's astonishing wonders takes place each year.

It's November, the beginning of the monsoon season. Heavy thunderstorms roll in from the ocean, bringing flashes of lightning, peels of roaring thunder and torrential rains. It is as this takes place, nature's punctuality wonder begins to unfold.

Out from their forest burrows, adult red crabs emerge for their spectacular annual migration, from the forest and plateaus down to the seashore to mate and lay their eggs.

The rains provide overcast, humid conditions for the red crabs that start out on their relentless journey.

Although there are barely 2,000 people living on Christmas Island, there is an estimated population of 120 million red crabs! During the dry season, they will stay fairly inactive, hardly emerging from their forest burrows except to feed but with the onset of the wet season, millions of these determined little critters emerge to make the journey. They will face many challenges on the way but despite the hardships faced, red crabs are always *on time*.

For an animal of its size, the journey is exhausting and they will be thoroughly spent by the time they reach the ocean. No matter what, these hardy crabs are always at the *right* place at the *right* time.

With the arrival of the rains and humid conditions, the red crabs are off, down from their home on the high rainforest plateau, down to the ocean to lay their eggs. The walk for the red crab can be up to several kilometres but the red crab pushes on because it is always at the *right* place at the *right* time.

The six-inch red crab relies on the sugar reserves stored in its body to make the arduous trek to the beach. During the dry season,

when the red crab stays hibernating in its burrow, it usually only moves about 10 minutes a day. In the migration season, however, it now has the energy to move an average of 12 hours a day!

Red crabs make their migration, not only according to the wet season, but also according to the moon and the tides. They know exactly the right time to get moving because they are always at the *right* place at the *right* time. As they set off, the males lead the first mass migration down to the beach, followed by the females.

They know exactly where they need to be going at the *right* time. Being punctual means that we, too, know where to go at the *right* time. Being disorganised and late only breeds frustrations for others who have to wait. Learning to be at the *right* place at the *right* time is showing *punctuality*!

The journey for these brave crabs isn't at all easy, as they have to traverse many man-made structures. Even though Christmas Island has such a tiny human population, those people still need to get around too!

During the annual migration, some roadways are blocked off but still the red crabs have to negotiate roads, houses, cars,



and buildings. Special crab underpasses have been built to help funnel the crabs under open roads, but even still, many of the red crabs don't make it to the seashore.

Many are crushed by cars still trying to drive on local roads and many dehydrate before ever reaching the sea. Another big threat is the yellow crazy ant, a type of ant that was introduced to Christmas Island. It sprays poisonous acid at the crabs in self-defence.

All in all, it is not uncommon for a million crabs to perish in their perilous trek. Despite the odds, however, those who survive continue to push onwards to the beach, because they know they need to be in the *right* place at the *right time*.

Finally, after such a hazardous, week-long trek, they've arrived at their destination! They're exhausted by the time they reach the water's edge. The moment the crabs arrive, they immediately refresh themselves in the seawater.

Having arrived first, the males dig burrows in the beach to wait for the females to arrive a few days later, before they begin their mating.

When the eggs have fully developed, after about 12 to 13 days, the female then begins spawning—dropping the eggs into the ocean. Female red crabs can produce as many as 100,000 eggs, which hatch instantly on contact with the

salty sea water. The adult crabs then leave the beaches and embark on their trip back up the hills to the forest, where they return to their burrows until the next wet season.

The water down by the shore is now a cloud of red, swirling with the newly-hatched, tiny baby red crabs, which then get washed out to sea by waves and tides.

Millions of them are eaten by fish, manta rays or whale sharks, but those who survive out in the open water, continue to grow bigger and bigger. After they have spent a month at sea, they gather in pools by the shore and continue to grow. Only about five millimetres across, these tiny red crabs come ashore and begin their hefty journey inland to the forests. Being so small, they are even more vulnerable than their parents as they cross roads, traverse buildings and climb steadily uphill towards the forest, which they will reach after about nine days of travel.

Then these tiny red crabs will vanish into rocky crevasses and under the forest floor, where they will remain for about four years, until they are fully grown adults. By this stage, they will be ready to repeat the same dangerous trip as their parents.

These new red crabs will know exactly when the time is right for them to embark on the journey of their life. They will know exactly what to do, without being told by anyone, they are always in the *right* place at the *right* time.

Red crabs are never late or disorganised. Many thousands of them won't return to their forest but, slow as they may be, no matter what the outcome for each of those millions of crabs, they are always punctual, being at the *right* place at the *right* time. In the same way, it is important that we demonstrate punctuality. Planning ahead of time and keeping a schedule will help us to be at the right place at the right time, just like the Christmas Island red crab.

Punctuality in Australian History

A mob of galahs shrieked as they took flights from the tall river gums, however Charles Sturt didn't notice, his concentration was unwavering. He bent his back forward to pull on the oar, feeling the blistering sun sting his exposed neck. His ten comrades heaved and grunted as they dragged the oars through the water in unison.

Charles Sturt was leading an exploration back up the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers'. They had rowed downriver to the ocean and, now, were nearly a week into their 1,500km homeward trek.

Setting out in the whaleboat, the dauntless crew had to row from 7am to 9pm each day, stopping only an hour for lunch. The work for gruelling, but Charles knew they had to keep up the daily schedule if they were to return home safely.

amongst themselves as they stretched their cramped backs and resumed the arduous rowing routine.

For hours they continued against the strong current in the merciless summer heat. Charles' hands were covered in red blisters from gripping the oar so tightly.

As the sun began to descend in the west, the men seemed to cheer a little. "What's for dinner tonight, cap'n?" one of his crew asked.

"Damper," Charles replied, pulling out the team's meagre supply of

Against All Odds

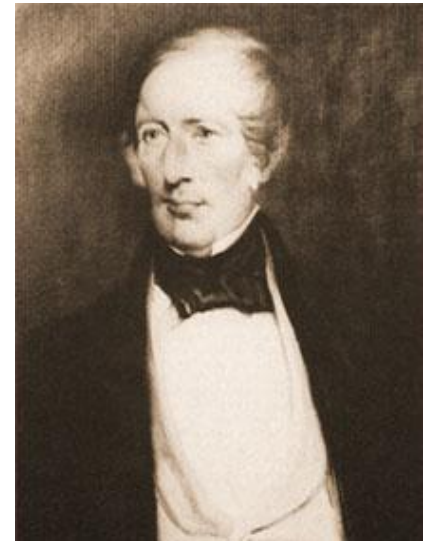
flour. Each member was restricted to three-quarters of a pound of flour per day.

Mixing the correct amount of

water with the flour on a wide piece of tree bark, Charles kneaded a loaf of damper-bread. By doing it while it was still light, it would

be ready to put on the fire when they pitched camp.

Did you spot the "I will"? Charles did his work ahead of time.



By the time darkness had settled, Charles pulled the boat up to the shore and lit a fire. The men ate, then yawned as they climbed into their swags. Charles blew out the lamp; it had been a long, tiring day.

As Charles' eyes grew heavy, he heard mumbled conversation

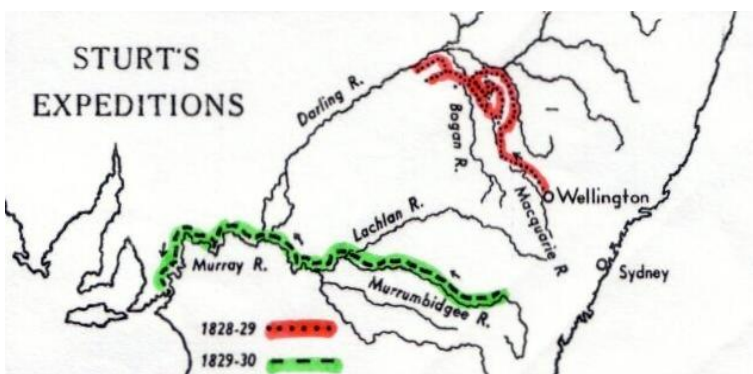
between two of his mates.

"My back is forever cramping up," said the first one.

"Tell me about it," said the



A statue of Charles Sturt in Adelaide.



Did you spot the "I will"? Charles planned a daily schedule, and kept it.

"Come on, men," Charles urged cheerfully. "Let's continue forward!" His men mumbled



The land around the Murray River is used extensively for fruit and cereal growing.

second. "My head feels like a lead weight sitting at that oar for endless hours."

"I must tell the Captain tomorrow that I can pull no more," said the first. Then there was silence.

Charles knew how his men felt. When the first glimmer of dawn appeared, he wished that he could shut his eyes and pull the blanket over his head.

However, he knew they must continue onwards, if indeed they were to survive the journey. Stretching himself awake, he went to wake his comrades.

Did you spot the "I will"? Sturt didn't fall into the trap of just a few more hours sleep; he got up at first light.

Somehow, Charles and the men clamoured back into the whaleboat to begin another exhausting day.

Relief did come to the men when it was their turn to sit at the prow of the boat to watch the river ahead. The Murray River had numerous rocky rapids and shallow sandbanks that could spell disaster for the brave adventurers.

Charles kept a sharp eye on the green water as they rounded a bend in the stream. The

Murray was full of unexpected twists and turns. He knew that he had to be vigilant or it could mean certain trouble.

Did you spot the "I will"? Sturt prepared for unexpected delays.

On the 23rd March 1830, the uncomplaining party reached the fork with the Murrumbidgee River, where Charles had embarked 11 weeks earlier.

The crew climbed onto the bank and were dismayed to find the place deserted. "What shall we do?" one of the members asked. "We have barely enough foodstuffs to last!"

Charles took a deep breath. "We shall continue up the Murrumbidgee to the plain near Wantabadgery. It's our only option."

As the travel-weary explorers prepared to push onwards, torrential rain raised the water levels 1.5 metres overnight. The peaceful stream became a gushing flood. All the men were suffering from the effects of malnutrition. Some feel asleep at the oars.

Once they reached the encampment at Narrandera,

Charles sent two men overland 140km to search for the land party.

"Now what do we do?" his companions asked. "We only have enough flour to last seven days!"

Charles bit his lip, he knew their weevil-infested supply of flour would only stretch for seven days. What was he going to do?

"Perhaps we should push forward?" he contemplated. With the flour almost gone, he resolved to do just that.

However, it was not necessary. On 18th April, the two men returned with the land party, having covered 140km in three days. Charles could have moved forward and missed the rescue team.

Did you spot the "I will"? Charles was at the right place at the right time.

The ordeal was over. Charles sank to his knees, relief washing over him. He and his mates had covered 1,500km in 23 days, instead of the 26 it had taken to row downstream. Charles Sturt's return journey up the Murray River is one of the most heroic events in Australian exploration.

References:

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Margot Ogilvie 2008

Australian explorers: Charles Sturt
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Stories of Australia's Christian Heritage
Elizabeth Rogers Kotlowski
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Project Ideas

Language

Discuss the importance of a structured daily schedule and assign each student to write a schedule to help keep them organised and on time.

Take a look at a classic example of tardiness, the White Rabbit, from *Alice in Wonderland*. Discuss how easily time can 'get away' and have the students write a list of things that can distract them from what they should be doing in a given situation.



Maths

Study train and bus timetables and how it's important for trains and buses to remain punctual. You may even want to invite a representative from your local Public Transport Authority to speak to your class about how they keep public transport punctual and how they handle delays.

Science and Technology

Clocks are one of the most obvious objects we think of regarding punctuality. Study different types of clocks – i.e. sundial, Swiss watch, cuckoo clock, Big Ben, etc.

Create a poster depicting the migration of the Christmas Island Red Crab.

Society and Environment

Write a report on time zones of the world.

Trace a map of Charles Sturt's exploration down the Murray River, noting key facts and things that happened throughout the journey.

Health

Talk about the importance of how a set daily schedule and consistent mealtimes helps us remain healthy. Write a list of the pitfalls associated with poor sleep, staggered mealtimes and little exercise.

The Arts

Make a colourful calendar as a reminder to remain punctual.

Musical notes are all about timing. Each note has a certain value and must be played accordingly. Study famous composers such as Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. Look at metronomes and recognise how they keep musicians in time when playing music.



Charles Sturt

Down what two rivers did Charles Sturt sail?



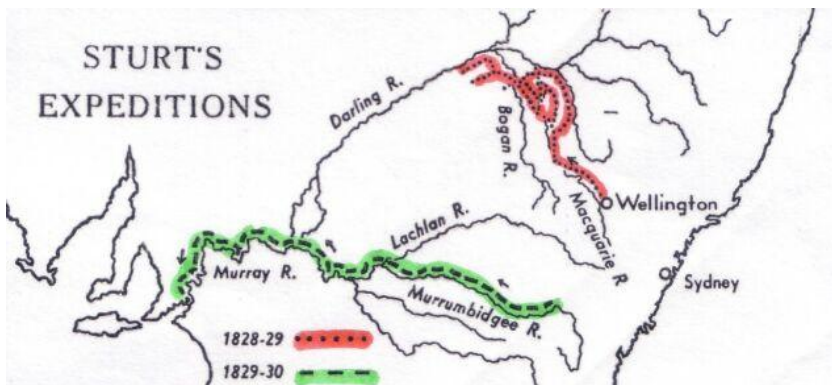
How many days did it take the party to row back up the river? _____

List two ways Charles Sturt exemplified PUNCTUALITY:

1. _____

2. _____

Consider a way that YOU can show punctuality this week:



PUNCTUALITY

Showing esteem for other people and their time.

