The arrival according to Bradley

- Read, in sections, the following transcription of William Bradley’s account of his ship’s arrival in Botany Bay.
- Encourage students to sketch or take notes as they listen.
- Also encourage students to think about responses to the questions that follow.

"We found that the Governor had without much difficulty met some of the Natives on the N.o side of the Bay & after convincing them of his good intentions, they receiv’d some trifling presents from him which they handed to each other without much concern. They were quite naked & had much the appearance of being well disposed toward us. We saw 8 of them setting on the rocks as we came into the Bay, they called to us, some of them walked along the Shore & others kept setting on the rocks: The Boats met with Natives in every part of the Bay but no women had yet been seen.

Captain Hunter went on board the Supply to the Governor & with him visited the South Shore taking a Guard of Marines with them. Near the place the Governor landed at, we saw several of the Natives in small parties of two, three & five together, frequently advancing & again retreating; The Governor advanced by himself & laid down some presents for them then retired, one of the Natives immediately advanced, picked it up & handed it to the others apparently pleas’d, by Noon we saw that our People & the Natives were mixed together, the Boat Crews amused themselves with dressing the Natives w paper & other whimsical things to entertain them, with which they were pleas’d for the moment.

Monday. 21. PM. An Officer & party of Men were sent from the Sirius to clear away to a run of water on the S.o side of the Bay: The Natives were well pleas’d with our People until they began clearing the Ground at which they were displeased & wanted them to be gone; At sun set when the Boats left the shore, several of the Natives came down to the water side & then went to their Huts. Mr King returned having been up an inlet on the S.o side 5 miles; He found the Country something better than what it was round the Bay but not any water; Mr King seeing some Natives on a point of land, he backed the Boat to them to endeavor to have some intercourse with them, One of the Natives threw a Spear at which all the rest seem’d much displeas’d, after which they came close to the Boat & were quite friendly; they expressed a wish to know whether the People in our Boat were Men or Women & made themselves understood by bringing some of their women down, pointing to themselves, our people & the women alternately, who as the Men were entirely naked, they were immediately satisfied in this particular by one person in the Boat which served to convince them all were the same.

The Natives that appear’d on the N.o side the Bay express’d the same wish of knowing whether our People were Men or Women, after being satisfied on that head, one of them ran in amongst the
Bushes, made himself a Belt of Grass & came dancing out with it round his waist with leaves hung over it; they were much inclin’d to steal any kind of Cloth or covering & did steal some bags which were sent on shore for Hay. AM. At day light the Governor, Captain Hunter, the Master of the Sirius & Supply went in the Long boat & 2 Cutters, to look into Port Jackson, not finding any situation at Botany Bay fit for settling & particularly from Ships in the Bay being so much exposed to the Sea in bad weather as to render their situation very dangerous. Mr King & Mr Dawes were again sent up the Inlet to determine as near as they could the extent of it.

Major Ross attended the operations on shore & as our settling here was not yet determined on; it was not judged proper to land any of the Convicts but the necessary works were carried on by the Marines & Seamen. Two of the Seamen on the N.o shore straggling into the woods without Arms or any thing to protect themselves sailor like, met with some Natives, Men, Women & Children who very very friendly, met them without fear & eagerly accepted of a Jacket which one of the Sailors gave them, they were all entirely naked.

22nd: Clearing the Ground on the S.o side the Bay it appear’d worse the lower we went down & in digging a sawpit, the whole depth of it was little else but sand, & swamps all round. Some Dogs were seen with the Natives that came amongst us.

When the Sein was hauled this evening, several of the Natives were by & when they saw the quantity of Fish brought on shore at once were much astonished which they expressed by a loud & long shout, they took some of the Fish, (which the Officer permitted) & ran away directly; Some of the Officers going to that part of the Wood, to which they retreated occasioned them to stop & make signs that they did not like to be followed, on which they were left to themselves to walk off with their Fish: We met with more success with the Sein than before; in a Cove round the point just within Bare Island; In this Cove we found better water & easier to be got at than any place we had yet tried.

Mr King & M.r Dawes returned after having been by their account about 12 Miles up the W.tern Inlet without being able to determine how much further it run.

AM. None of the Natives appear’d on the S.o side, but a great number on the N.o shore, they struck the Fish as the Sein was hauled ashore with their Spears & ran off with them sensible that what they had done was wrong.

23rd: PM. A Black man was landed among the working Party with whom the Natives were much pleas’d & seem’d astonished that he did not understand them, they wished him to stay with them & followed the Boat that he was in as far as they could, as the Boat left the shore they retired apparently as well satisfied as if the Man of their own Complexion had remained with them.

A great number of rats were seen & a flying Squirrel: The Natives we met with here were of the middle size, men wore their beards long, their hair much clotted with dirt, they appear a straight well limbed people & very active; The weapons they had with them were either a Spear, a Lance for
striking Fish or a Club; Most of those we had seen, have lost one of their fore teeth, apparently
drawn or punch’d out, & altho’ few were seen with the Bone or Stick across the nose as mentioned
by Capn Cook; they had most of them the Hole through the nose. They all expressed great curiousity
as to our Sex having our [indecipherable word] beards shaved & being clothed they could not tell
what to take us for.”

Questions to guide discussion:

- What does Bradley describe that is significant?
- What do his observations tell us about early British contacts with the Eora people?
- What do his observations suggest about his own and/or British attitudes at the time? (this
  may be an opportunity to introduce discussion about historical context and perspective)
- What do you think about this?
- How might the account be the same or different if it was told by one of the Eora people?