

Name _____



The Sydney Opera House

By Nicky Hurle

One of Australia's most familiar man-made structures is the very unique Sydney Opera House. Located at Bennelong Point, Sydney Harbour, the Opera House is one of the most recognized symbols of Australia. It is featured on the itinerary of many overseas tourists as a "must see" experience.

The story behind the design and creation of the Opera House is one of innovation and vision. It is about the coming together of a man who was ahead of his time in terms of imagination and a city that desired a fitting venue to showcase large stage productions.

The New South Wales government launched an appeal in the late 1950's to raise money to build a new, state-of-the-art Opera House. At the same time, they announced a competition to determine the design of the new building. They wanted something special, something that would reflect the distinctive environment of Sydney Harbour.

From two hundred thirty three entries, the winning design was produced by Jorn Utzon, a Danish architect who created a plan that seemed to be impossible using the technology of the day. The building diagram had a very unusual roof which appeared to look like a ship with full sails. The engineers were skeptical that the blueprint could actually be built. Jorn Utzon had to rework the plans for several years before and after construction began on the seven million dollar project in 1959.

In March that year, builders began stage one of the ambitious scheme, but by 1961 the venture was running a long way behind schedule due to issues like weather and inconsistent contracts. Stage two also began that year as engineers, with Utzon's help, managed to adjust plans so that the awkward sails could be made on the ground and lifted into place.

Jorn Utzon resigned from the project in 1966, leaving Australia, never to return. This was due to a change of government which required different permits and various arguments about concerns such as the cost, interior design, and progress payments. After he left,

significant changes were made to his original design, but the whole project was completed in 1973 at a grand cost of \$102 million. Queen Elizabeth II of Australia officially opened the building on October 20, 1973.

The Sydney Opera House holds theatres, rehearsal venues, halls, restaurants, and shops. It is used for theatrical productions, musical performances, plays, conferences, weddings, and parties. This globally-famous building hosts three thousand events annually, and more than two hundred thousand people take guided tours of the facilities.

Although Jorn Utzon has never seen the Opera House in person, he has been involved in recent years in some redesign work on the structure. He was also acknowledged with an honorary doctorate by the University of Sydney, an Order of Australia, and the Keys to the City of Sydney. In 2003 he was also awarded the highest honor in architecture, the Pritzker Prize.

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Questions

- _____ 1. The Sydney Opera House was designed by a Danish architect.
 - A. True
 - B. False
- _____ 2. What does the word distinctive mean in this piece?
 - A. loud
 - B. common
 - C. different
 - D. similar
- _____ 3. What delayed the building of the Opera House?
 - A. The sail roof was impossible to make.
 - B. Weather and contract difficulties delayed it.
 - C. The blueprints went missing.
 - D. Jorn Utzon left the country.

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4. Why were the engineers reluctant to begin the construction?

5. Why did Jorn Utzon resign from the Sydney Opera House project?

_____ 6. Who officially opened the Opera House?

- A. the Prime Minister of Australia
- B. The government of New South Wales
- C. Jorn Utzon
- D. Queen Elizabeth II

7. Name one of the awards or honors bestowed upon Jorn Utzon in his later years.

_____ 8. The Sydney Opera House is sometimes used for sports events.

- A. True
- B. False