

Embracing Cultural Diversity: Australia

A Cross-Curricular Lesson Plan

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FAST FACTS: Australia

Full Name: *The Commonwealth of Australia*

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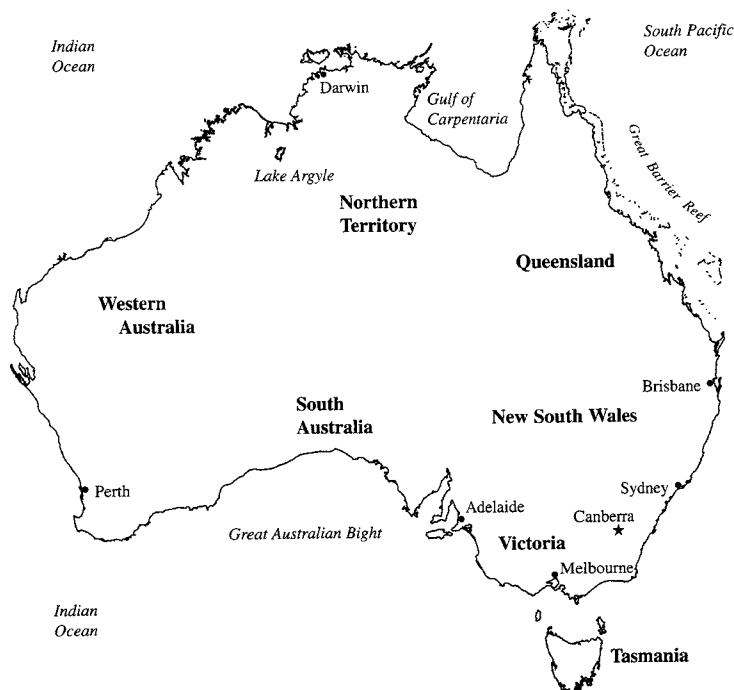
Currency: *The Australian Dollar*

Location

Australia is called the “land down under” because it is in the Southern Hemisphere, south of the equator. Like all countries in the Southern Hemisphere, summer is from December to February, and winter is from June to August.

Australia is the world’s smallest continent. It comprises the Australian mainland, the island of Tasmania, and many islands in the Indian Pacific Ocean. Indonesia, East Timor, and Papua New Guinea are its neighbors to the north. The Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia lie to the northeast, New Zealand lies to the southeast. Australia and Tasmania combined are about equal in area to the United States (excluding Alaska and Hawaii).

Australia is an island continent because it is surrounded on all sides by water—primarily the Indian Ocean, the Southern Ocean, and the South Pacific Ocean.



The People

Indigenous (native) Australians include the Aborigines and the Torres Strait Islanders who together make up more than 2.5 percent of the population. Although rich in culture and traditions, the Aboriginal people remained the poorest in terms of jobs and education until the government granted them citizenship and the right to vote in the 1960s. About 350,000 Aboriginal people and 48,000 Torres Strait Islanders live in Australia today. They each maintain their own distinct culture and traditions.

The Government



Australia’s form of government is a democracy with a Constitution that protects people’s rights and with elected officials who make decisions for the people they represent. It is also a Commonwealth Realm with England’s Queen Elizabeth II as its monarch. (You will see Queen Elizabeth’s portrait on Australian money, in public buildings, and on postage stamps.)

There are also three branches of government. The legislature, Australia’s Commonwealth Parliament, is made up of the Queen, a Senate, and a House of Representatives. The Queen is represented by the Governor-General. The executive branch or Federal Executive Council is made up of

the Governor-General who is advised by the Prime Minister and Ministers of State. The judicial branch is made up of the High Court of Australia and other federal courts.

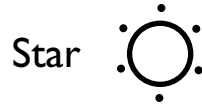
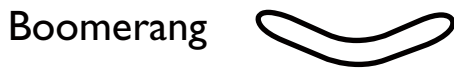
Australian Phrases

In talking to an Australian, you will probably hear some words and phrases not used in other countries. Since early Australian settlers were from Great Britain, many uniquely English phrases crept into the Australian vocabulary. See if you can match the popular terms in the left-hand column to their meaning in Australian English on the right.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. _____ ketchup | a. biscuit |
| 2. _____ McDonald's restaurant | b. lemon squash |
| 3. _____ cookie | c. ute |
| 4. _____ broken | d. barbie |
| 5. _____ French fries | e. mozzly |
| 6. _____ cantaloupe | f. chokkie |
| 7. _____ lemonade | g. bunged up |
| 8. _____ root beer | h. football |
| 9. _____ footy | i. tomato sauce |
| 10. _____ utility vehicle | j. sasprilla |
| 11. _____ good friend | k. mate |
| 12. _____ barbeque | l. prezzy |
| 13. _____ a present or gift | m. rock melon |
| 14. _____ mosquito | n. chips |
| 15. _____ chocolate | o. Maccas |

Creating Symbols

The art of the Aborigines is some of the most unique art in the world. Here are some common symbols used in traditional Aboriginal art that represent words in that language.



Create a list of at least five common things in your classroom, in your home, or in your community, such as book, door, or even the cafeteria! Write the words below and create a simple symbol for each. Share your symbols with the class.