

Countries Around the World™

Australia

Program Summary

Meet 9-year-old Jesse. He and his family live in Sydney, a city on the southeast coast of Australia. Join Jesse in Sydney Harbor as he rides a ferry over to Watsons Bay to meet his family. Along the way, students will see two structures that have become synonymous with Australia—the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbor Bridge. After a meal of fish and chips, Jesse and his family head over to the Rocks, the spot where the first colonists arrived, and witness a ceremonial dance performed by indigenous Australians and accompanied by a didgeridoo. A trip to the zoo reveals some of Australia's unique animal life, including kangaroos, koalas and echidnas. Discover the importance of the beach to Australian culture and daily life when Jesse takes a surfing lesson at Bondi Beach and trains to be a junior lifeguard. After Jesse plays a game of oztag, a non-contact version of rugby, he and his family travel to the scenic Blue Mountains to see Australia's natural beauty and to enjoy a lunch cooked on the barbie!

Country Information

- **location:** Oceania, with the Indian Ocean on the East Coast and the South Pacific Ocean on the West Coast
- **capital:** Canberra
- **official language:** English
- **type of government:** federal parliamentary democracy
- **total area:** approximately 7,686,850 sq km
- **climate:** generally arid to semiarid; temperate in the South and East; tropical in the North
- **terrain:** mostly low plateau with deserts; fertile plain in the Southeast
- **natural resources:** includes bauxite, coal, iron ore, copper, tin, gold, silver, uranium, nickel, tungsten, mineral sands, lead, zinc, diamonds, natural gas and petroleum
- **industries:** includes mining, industrial and transportation equipment, food processing, chemicals and steel
- **agricultural products:** includes wheat, barley, sugarcane, fruits, cattle, sheep and poultry

Vocabulary

Union Jack — Another name for the British flag.

Aboriginal people — A group of people who are the original, or native, inhabitants of Australia.

didgeridoo — A pipe-like wind instrument used by the Aboriginal people in traditional ceremonies.

outback — The rural semi-arid area in the interior of Australia, also known as the “bush.”

Australian dollar — The currency of Australia.

marsupial — A group of mammals, found primarily in Australia and the Americas, wherein the female has an abdominal pouch for sheltering and nurturing newborns.

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eucalyptus — A group of tall trees, native to Australia, that have aromatic leaves, which yield an oil used for medicinal purposes and wood valued as timber.

echidna — Also called “spiny anteater.” A nocturnal, burrowing, egg-laying mammal that has a spiny coat, slender snout and an extendable, sticky tongue used for catching insects. It is commonly found in Australia, Tasmania and New Guinea.

fauna — Another name for animals.

flora — Another name for plants.

oztag — A non-contact sport that is similar to rugby.

barbie — An Australian term that means “barbeque.”

cricket — A game for two teams, of 11 members each, that is played on a field with two wickets 20 meters apart.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- As a class, brainstorm a list of questions about Australia. Prompt students by asking them to share what they already know about Australia, with a focus on how Australia is portrayed in America, and what they would like to find out about the country. Students can make predictions about what they think they will see in the program. As they watch, have students keep track of how many of their questions were answered and if their preconceptions of Australia were correct or not.
- Introduce the idea of different points of view by asking students what they think about a particular place in the United States. As a class, explore where students got their information by asking questions, such as: “Did you visit the place? Did you read about it? Do you know someone from there?” Discuss how point of view and perspective can affect descriptions of place and culture.
- Distribute outline maps of Australia to the students. Have them label the capital, other main cities and the major landforms and bodies of water. Questions to ask include: Where are most of the cities located? Why do you think they are located where they are? How might climate be a factor in their location? What do you think the climate of the interior of Australia is like?

Follow-up Activities

- Since most people in Australia live on the coast, beaches are a major part of Australians' lives. Students can discover the importance of beaches to Australians by visiting www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/beach/. Then, have them design and create travel brochures about one of Australia's many beaches. Brochures can include pictures or illustrations and information about beach safety, activities and wildlife.
- Encourage students to write and illustrate an informational class book about Australia. They can include facts about Australia's geography, history, culture, wildlife and people. Divide the class into groups and assign each group a topic. Each group can produce a few pages that include pictures or illustrations, time lines, maps and other relevant information pertinent to their topic. As a resource, visit library.thinkquest.org/28994/.
- National symbols, like the flag and the national anthem, can tell a lot about a country's history and identity. Have students investigate the story of how the Australian flag was designed. Then, share the words of the national anthem, “Advance Australia Fair.” Discuss what these two symbols say about Australia and its people. Visit www.australia.gov.au/273 for information about Australia's national symbols. As an extension, discuss the similarities and differences between Australia's national symbols and those of the United States.
- Oztag is a popular Australian sport, but it is not very well-known in the United States. Learn more about this sport by visiting www.oztag.com.au/index.php. Students can create flip books featuring the rules, equipment and teams associated with oztag. If possible, have students play a game of oztag.

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- European explorer James Cook discovered Australia in 1770. In small groups, have students find facts about Cook's life and expeditions. As a class, create a time line of his life and chart his journeys on a world map. A useful resource about Cook's voyages can be found at www.hunterian.gla.ac.uk/collections/museum/cook/cook.shtml.
- Storytelling is an integral part of life for the Aboriginal people of Australia. Share with students some of these stories, handed down from generation to generation. A useful resource with written, audio and video versions is www.dreamtime.net.au/dreaming/index.htm. Then, have students recreate one of these tales in the classroom by acting it out. This can be done as a puppet show, a mime skit, a student play, etc. Divide the students into small groups and have them prepare their own production by choosing a format and thinking about the story's elements of character, setting and plot. After each group performs, conduct a question and answer session in which students talk about why they chose to retell the stories in the ways they did. Discuss the idea that adapting and changing a story by retelling it is part of the oral tradition. As an extension, invite students to tell their own tales modeled after the Aboriginal stories.
- The Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef, is a vibrant ecosystem that stretches over 2,000 km off the northeast coast of Australia and hosts a diversity of species. Have students work in small groups to design and build displays featuring aspects of the plants and animals found in the Great Barrier Reef.
- Award-winning author Mem Fox has written many children's books about Australian subjects, especially animals, including *Possum Magic* (Harcourt, 1991) and *Koala Lou* (Harcourt, 1994). As a class, conduct an author study of Mem Fox's books. On a class bulletin board, have students write and illustrate information they learn about Mem Fox and Australia. Students can explore www.memfox.com/welcome.html for information about the author, including her biography and the stories behind her books.
- A "barbie" is a barbecue? Even though Australia is an English-speaking country, some words and terms are different. Share with students a list of typical Australian words and phrases by visiting library.thinkquest.org/28994/auswords.html. Students can pick a few words from the list and write them and their definitions on a note card. Post the note cards on a word wall dedicated to Australian lingo. As an extension, have students write letters to each other using Australian words and phrases.

Suggested Internet Resources

- www.ipl.org/div/kidspace/cquest/australia/australia.html
This web quest for students links to cultural information about Australia, including national parks.
- www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/goplaces/0,12405,424866,00.html
Discover Australia and what it is like to live there! This web site by Time Inc. presents information about Australia's famous sites, history, animals and language. Also includes a quiz.
- library.thinkquest.org/CR0212302/australia.html
Learn about the culture and customs of Australia from the perspective of a child who lives there! The students of Roosevelt School in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin present this award-winning site to teach people about different cultures.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Australia and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the "World Factbook" link.

Suggested Print Resources

- Arnold, Caroline. *Uluru: Australia's Aboriginal Heart*. Clarion Books, New York, NY; 2003.
- Bartlett, Anne. *The Aboriginal Peoples of Australia*. Lerner Publications, Minneapolis, MN; 2001.
- Germaine, Elizabeth. *Cooking the Australian Way*. Lerner Publications, Minneapolis, MN; 2004.
- Heinrichs, Ann. *Australia*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2007.
- Somervill, Barbara A. *Australia*. Child's World, Chanhassen, MN; 2004.

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