

# Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands: Land and Resources

## Teacher's Guide



**Grade Level:** 6–8

**Curriculum Focus:** Social Studies

**Lesson Duration:** 4 class periods

### Program Description

*Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands: Land and Resources*— This program introduces students to the region sometimes called Oceania. Explore islands, coastlines, harbors, lagoons, and coral reefs; learn about native plants and animals; and examine the physical features that define the landscape, affect the climate, and influence economic development. Students will discover how the physical features, climate, and natural resources have influenced past settlement, population growth, and cultural and economic development in the regions and provide the basis for future expansion in these areas.

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### Discussion Questions

- Australia's native plants and animals have evolved in very distinct ways. Why? What are some of the native animals distinctive to Australia? What animals have been introduced by European settlers?
  - How are the climates of New Zealand's North Island and South Island different? What landforms have created different rainfall patterns? Does climate account for the fact that New Zealand has few forest regions? Explain your response.
  - Which of the Pacific Island groups has the least natural resources? Why? Which group has good soil that can be farmed and yields crops for both local consumption and export? Why? What do these crops include?
  - Based on information in the program, what future would you predict for the further growth and development of this region of the world?
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### Lesson Plan

#### *Student Objectives*

- Use a map or globe to locate and accurately identify Australia, New Zealand, and the three Pacific Island groups.
- Explore the major physical features of Australia, New Zealand, and of each Pacific Island group to determine ways that these physical features affect climate.

- Discern how physical features and varied climates throughout the region have historically affected human settlement, economic development, and agriculture.
- Distinguish the physical features, climate, natural resources, population, and culture of a specified city, town, area, or island in this region of the world.
- Analyze how the physical features, climate, and natural resources influence settlement and population growth, as well as cultural and economic development in the specified city, town, area, or island in this region.

### *Materials*

- *Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands: Land and Resources* video
- Print resources on various aspects of Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands—in particular, physical features, climate, natural resources, settlement history, current population, and cultural and economic development
- Large world map or globe

### *Procedures*

1. Prior to viewing the program, ask students to brainstorm a list of physical features that they associate with Australia, New Zealand, or the Pacific Islands, and list responses on the board. To include students who have no prior knowledge of these areas, ask students to discuss how physical features might influence human settlement of an area. (For example, discuss why people are more likely to settle near water than in an arid part of a country.) Next, ask students to discuss how physical features might influence an area's cultural and economic development. (For example, discuss how a coastline with a good natural harbor would promote travel and the influx of new cultural influences, as well as support development of shipping and trade industries.) As they view the video, encourage students to learn more about the physical features of Australia, New Zealand, and the three Pacific Island groups and to note their effect on climate. Write the following prompts on the board.
  - What are some of the prominent physical features of Australia, New Zealand, and the three Pacific Island groups?
  - How do they affect climate in the region?

Alternative: If students are unfamiliar with this region of the world, use visual prompts to generate discussion. For example, show pictures of a Pacific Island or Australia's outback and ask students to identify physical features in the image. If students are unable to discuss how physical features might influence human settlement or cultural and economic development of an area, provide examples and explain how this relationship will be highlighted in the program that students will be viewing. Use the prompts listed above to focus student viewing.

2. After viewing the program, ask student volunteers to locate and accurately identify Australia, New Zealand, and the three Pacific Island groups using a large map or globe. Help students review the major physical features of these areas and discuss their relationship to varied



climates throughout the region. A large geographical map may be a useful aid during this activity. Physical features highlighted in the program include

- Australia – an island and a continent with coastal lowlands along the east, southeast, and southwest shores; large, natural harbors along the coast; an island-dotted lagoon stretching from the mainland to the Great Barrier Reef; mountains along the eastern edge of the continent (the Great Dividing Range) with highlands, valleys, and headwaters of the Murray River; the plains and low plateaus of the outback; massive sandstone rock formations.
- New Zealand – composed of two islands with numerous hills and mountain ranges and few areas of level ground; several volcanic peaks on the North Island as well as an active geothermal region; the Southern Alps mountain range on the South Island, with glaciers and fjords.
- The Pacific Islands – grouped into three main regions: Micronesia – tiny islands of coral with few significant resources; Melanesia – with the greatest land area and mountainous interiors; Polynesia – consisting of coral atolls and islands originating from volcanic activity and featuring steep mountains. Other general physical features include coral reefs (fringing and barrier) and lagoons.

Ask students to discuss how physical features and varied climates affect human settlement, cultural and economic development, and agriculture throughout the region.

3. Pair or Small Group Activity: To help students further explore this region of the world as well as to understand how physical systems have affected human systems and to examine related patterns of human settlement, each group of students will select (or be assigned) a city, town, area, or island within this region for research. This research will focus on physical features, climate, natural resources, settlement history, current population, as well as cultural and economic development. Students will also collect images related to their research but set them aside for a later activity. The following is a beginning list of areas to explore. (Note: You may wish to modify the list to fit the needs of your students.)

- Australian Capital Territory
- Northern Territory
- New South Wales
- Queensland
- South Australia
- Tasmania
- Victoria
- Western Australia
- New Zealand: North Island or specific cities – Rotorua, Auckland, Hastings, Wellington

- New Zealand: South Island or specific cities – Taupo, Queenstown, Wanaka, Christchurch, Dunedin
- New Zealand: one of the following World Heritage sites – Te Wahipounamu, South West New Zealand; Tongariro National Park; New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands
- Pacific Islands: one of the three major groupings (Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia) or one of the larger islands within a group (New Guinea, one of the islands of Samoa, or Tonga)

Once research is complete, student pairs or groups will compile their information into a fact sheet. These fact sheets will be the foundation of the culminating activity.

4. The purpose of this final activity is to help students analyze the data collected for their fact sheets and to creatively demonstrate how the physical features, climate, and natural resources influence the settlement, population growth, and cultural or economic development of a city, town, or area. The program points out that the potential for further growth and development in this region of the world is great, especially in those areas with abundant resources and relatively small populations. As a warm-up for this activity, write the following questions on the board.

- What first attracted people to your assigned location? Why?
- What features draw (or might draw) tourists, immigrants, or economic enterprise to the area?
- What geographic and cultural aspects of the area might new immigrants build on to establish lives there, expand the culture of the existing community, and begin commercial enterprises that would have appeal to the local population?
- How might an influx of tourists, new residents, or new businesses affect the physical geography of the city, town, area, or island?

Lead a general discussion of these questions and clarify them as needed.

Next, assign students the following: With these questions in mind, work with your partner or group to design a fact-based brochure or poster to achieve one of the following goals.

- attract tourism and explain the unique geographic attractions of your assigned location
- attract new immigrants and serve as an explanatory guide for new residents
- attract new economic enterprise to your assigned location
- explain the need for environmentally friendly use of local resources and the concept of sustainable development.

Remind students to creatively present information from their fact sheets and use the images collected during their research.

Completed brochures and posters will be shared and discussed with the class and, if feasible, displayed.

## Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students were attentive and highly engaged in map work and class discussions; completed the required research and produced a well-organized, comprehensive fact sheet; created a neat, informative poster or brochure that demonstrated clear understanding of the topic.
- 2 points: Students participated in map work and class discussions; completed most required research and produced a satisfactory fact sheet; created an acceptable poster or brochure that demonstrated sufficient understanding of the topic.
- 1 point: Students participated minimally in map work and class discussions; conducted inadequate research and did not produce a satisfactory fact sheet; created an unsatisfactory poster or brochure.

## Vocabulary

### **atoll**

*Definition:* A reef surrounding a lagoon that has no central island

*Context:* When sediments accumulate on the lagoon side of atolls and support vegetation, the entire lagoon may eventually fill, creating an island.

### **barrier reef**

*Definition:* A reef which in general parallels the shore but is separated from it by water that is deeper than the water over the reef

*Context:* Australia's Great Barrier Reef is located off the continent's northeast coast.

### **continent**

*Definition:* One of the principal land masses of the Earth, usually regarded as including Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America

*Context:* Australia is a country as well as the world's smallest continent.

### **fjord**

*Definition:* Steep walled inlet of a sea created by glacial gouging

*Context:* Milford Sound, a fjord located along New Zealand's southwest coast, is surrounded by sheer rock faces that rise 1,200 meters or more on either side.

### **fringing reef**

*Definition:* Coral platforms that are more or less continuous with the shore and exposed at low tide

*Context:* Fringing reefs generally follow the trend of the shore to which they are attached.

**geyser**

*Definition:* A natural hot spring that intermittently ejects a column of water and steam into the air

*Context:* New Zealand's North Island has an active geothermal region with many hot springs and geysers.

**Gondwana**

*Definition:* Name applied to the ancient (Paleozoic–early Mesozoic) southern hemisphere supercontinent that rifted apart to form present-day Antarctica, India, Africa, Australia, and South America

*Context:* The landmass of Australia has been separate from other large landmasses since the break-up of the supercontinent Gondwana many millions of years ago.

**island**

*Definition:* A landmass (smaller than a continent) surrounded by water

*Context:* Most of the islands of Micronesia are made of coral and have few significant resources other than coconut trees and the sea life in the surrounding ocean.

**lagoon**

*Definition:* A body of water cut off from a larger body of water by a reef of sand or coral

*Context:* A large lagoon dotted with islands lies between Australia's mainland and the Great Barrier Reef.

**Melanesia**

*Definition:* One of the three major subdivisions of the islands of the Pacific, roughly comprising the islands of the southwestern Pacific, south of the equator, from New Guinea to Fiji

*Context:* Melanesia includes the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia.

**Micronesia**

*Definition:* One of the three major subdivisions of the islands of the Pacific, comprising the islands east of the Philippines and north of the equator

*Context:* Micronesia includes the Caroline, Marshall, Mariana, and Gilbert islands.

**Oceania**

*Definition:* The islands of the southern, western, and central Pacific Ocean; the term is sometimes extended to encompass Australia, New Zealand, and the Malay Archipelago

*Context:* Geographers group the islands of Oceania into three main regions: Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

**outback (Australian)**

*Definition:* The remote and usually semi-arid interior of Australia

*Context:* Much of Australia's outback is sparsely inhabited and nearly roadless.



## **Polynesia**

*Definition:* One of the three major subdivisions of the islands of the Pacific, including scattered islands of the central and southern Pacific Ocean roughly between New Zealand, Hawaii, and Easter Island

*Context:* The larger islands of Polynesia are volcanic, while the smaller ones are generally coral formations.

## **Academic Standards**

### **The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)**

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- People, Places, and Environments
- Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- Science, Technology, and Society

### **Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Geography – The World in Spatial Terms: Understands the characteristics and uses of maps, globes, and other geographic tools and technologies; Knows the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment.
- Geography – Places and Regions: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place; Understands the concept of regions.
- Geography – Physical Systems: Knows the physical processes that shape patterns on Earth's surface.
- Geography – Human Systems: Understands the patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface; Understands the patterns of human settlement and their causes.
- Geography – Environment and Society: Understands how human actions modify the physical environment; Understands how physical systems affect human systems; Understands the changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution and importance of resources.