

# *Discovery Atlas*

## *Australia Revealed: Short Stories*

### Teacher's Guide

**Grade Level:** 6–8

**Curriculum Focus:** Social Studies

**Lesson Duration:** 1–2 class periods

#### **Program Description**

Australia is not one country but many, a land where 140 nationalities live side by side. Although 70 percent of the country is semiarid or desert, it also contains rich rain forests and one million animal species, many found nowhere else on Earth. Explore this colorful land of contrasts “down under.”

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#### **Discussion Questions**

- Where do the majority of people in Australia live?
  - What kinds of natural resources and industries are found in Australia?
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#### **Lesson Plan**

##### *Student Objectives*

- Map the major landforms, topography, and population centers of Australia.
- Identify relationships between the topography, population, and climate of Australia.

##### *Materials*

- *Discovery Atlas: Australia Revealed: Short Stories* video
- Outline maps of Australia (see Procedure 3 below)
- Print resources with information about Australia's topography, climate, population, and territories
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Pencils and erasers
- Writing paper
- Computer with Internet access (optional)

## Procedures

1. Talk about Australia with the class, asking these questions: What kinds of topography would you expect to find in Australia? What do you think its climate is like? What do you know about people in Australia?

Tell students they will study the topography, population, and climate of Australia. Have them watch *Discovery Atlas: Australia Revealed: Short Stories* before holding a discussion based on these questions. What makes Australia different from other countries? How would you describe the geography and topography of Australia? What are favorite pastimes? Where do most people live in Australia, and why there?

2. Tell students they will research and examine the relationships between Australia's topography, climate, and population. Explain that they will map major landforms and population centers, then examine the country's climate. Students will use their research and maps to discuss the relationships among topography, climate, and population. Students may research using atlases, encyclopedias, and other print resources as well as the Internet. The Web sites below are a good starting point:

- Bureau of Meteorology – Climate of Australia  
<http://www.bom.gov.au/lam/climate/levelthree/ausclim/ausclim.htm>
- Department of the Environment  
<http://www.deh.gov.au/>
- Aboriginal Australians - MSN Encarta  
[http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761572789/Aboriginal\\_Australians.html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572789/Aboriginal_Australians.html)

3. Give all students a blank outline map of Australia (available at <http://geography.about.com/library/blank/blxaustralia.htm?once=true&>) and have each one map important geographic landforms and topographic areas such as deserts, basins, rivers, wetlands, rain forests, as well as the large cities in each of the seven territories (Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania). Ask students to label the territories and any population centers and geographic landmarks they may find. Encourage students to make their maps accurate and colorful, and to distinguish among the different types of landforms and sites.
4. Next, have them research the climates in the regions of Australia. Ask students to find the climate and weather patterns in all seven territories. They may write this information on their map or on a separate piece of paper.
5. Divide students into groups of five or six and ask each group to use their maps and climate information to discuss the relation between climate, population, and geography in Australia. Tell them to consider the following as starting points: How are geography and climate related in Australia? What kinds of weather does the northern, wetlands region of Australia experience? What kinds of weather does the outback experience? What is the climate in Victoria? Where are most human settlements, and what might be the reasons for their locations?

Why do most Australians live near a coast? What is the relationship between geography and climate and centers of population? How does the topography of the outback affect people who live or work there?

6. When students have finished their discussions, ask volunteers to share some of the thoughts in their groups about the relationships between topography, climate, and population in Australia. Expand on some student ideas and make sure that all seven territories have been discussed.
7. Finally, ask students to think about what part of Australia they would most like to visit and why. Have them write a one- or two-page essay describing why they want to visit this area and what kinds of vegetation, topography, plant and animal life, and climate they would expect to find.

## Assessment

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

- **3 points:** Students contributed greatly to group discussions; created accurate, legible maps of Australia that met all of the stated criteria; identified numerous relationships between topography, climate, and population; and wrote thoughtful essays that demonstrated a solid understanding of the characteristics of a particular Australian territory.
- **2 points:** Students somewhat participated in group discussions; created mostly accurate, legible maps of Australia that met most of the stated criteria; identified some relationships between topography, climate, and population; and wrote essays that demonstrated a basic understanding of the characteristics of a particular Australian territory.
- **1 point:** Students contributed minimally to group discussions; created inaccurate or incomplete maps of Australia that met little or none of the stated criteria; identified few or no relationships between topography, climate, and population; and wrote incomplete essays or essays that demonstrated little understanding of the characteristics of a particular Australian territory.

## Vocabulary

### aborigine

*Definition:* a member of the original people to live in an area

*Context:* The didgeridoo is more than just a musical instrument to Australia's Aborigines; it is a portal connecting their land and their spirits.

### drought

*Definition:* A long period of abnormally low rainfall, especially one that adversely affects growing or living conditions

*Context:* Fluctuations in ocean temperature means that Australia faces unforgiving cycles of drought and flood.

### **outback**

*Definition:* The remote rural part of a country, especially of Australia or New Zealand

*Context:* Windmills are a constant reminder of the outback's hidden lifeline.

### **semiarid**

*Definition:* Marked by light rainfall, especially about 10 to 20 inches of annual precipitation

*Context:* Although 70 percent of Australia is semiarid or desert, it is the world's largest exporter of beef.

### **wetlands**

*Definition:* A lowland area, such as a marsh or swamp that is saturated with moisture, especially when regarded as the natural habitat of wildlife

*Context:* Small pockets of wetlands flourish in the tropical northern section of Australia.

## *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/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- People, Places, and Environments

### **National Council for Geographic Education**

The National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) provides 18 national geography standards that the geographically informed person knows and understands. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.ncge.org/publications/tutorial/standards/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following NCGE standards:

- Places and Regions
- Physical Systems
- The World in Spatial Terms
- Environment and Society