

Title: Discovering Australia: New Places, New Ideas, New Experiences

Grade Level: 6-8; 9-12 Curriculum Focus: Social Studies, Science

Video Segments:

[Populations Old and New](#) (3:01)

[Unique Wildlife](#) (3:02)

[Geography and Weather](#) (2:58)

[Traditional Culture and Arts](#) (2:49)

Program Description: The purpose of this micro-lesson with accompanying videos is to introduce students to Australia’s geographic characteristics, its cultural history, its peoples, and its art. A fascinating fact about Australia is its peoples—from its many Aboriginal tribes to the thousands of immigrants from Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. In the last 60 years 6 million immigrants have made Australia their home.

Because the land is so unforgiving and arid, most of Australia’s inhabitants live on the urbanized coasts. The many aboriginal tribes live in-land, maintaining and sharing their age-old culture, while embracing the new.

A significant cultural fact about Australia is its mythology about *dreamtime*. The Aborigines, one of the world’s oldest surviving cultures, believe that in the time of Dreams, their ancestors bequeathed the land to humans so that the land and the humans would be one—neither one master over the other. Since that time, Aborigines pay homage to their ancestors through dance and song and art. An instrument they use is the *Didgeridoo*.

Geographically, Australia contains an amazing wildlife population: the platypus, unique to Australia, the kangaroo, adapting to the terrain and climate by hopping, and the koala, adapting by having a smaller brain. The continent also has more venomous snakes than non-poisonous ones. The wetlands and woodlands have more plant species than all of Europe.

Australia’s natural bounty is the Great Barrier Reef, the largest and most complex of all of the reefs in the world. The size of Japan, the reef supports 1500 species of fish, 350 species of coral. The Reef is known as “a floating arc at the bottom of the world.” Because the continent is in the middle of the tectonic plate, it has not had volcanic eruptions or earthquakes; however, it is affected by El Nino, an irregularly recurring flow of unusually warm surface waters. The Great Artesian Basin and aquifer help farmers in the outback to mine what they call “their liquid gold”—underground water.

Learning Objectives:

After viewing this video students will be able to:

- Compare and analyze societal patterns for preserving and transmitting culture while adapting to environmental or social change

- Explain how language, art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements can facilitate global understanding or cause misunderstanding
- Understand how an organism's behavior evolves through adaptation to its environment
- Understand that populations of organisms can be categorized by the function they serve in an ecosystem

Classroom Connections: 140 nationalities

A: As you prepare to learn about Australia, you will find that it is a place of both indigenous tribes and immigrants from Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Interestingly, all of these peoples meld into a nation of Australians who maintain their culture and traditions. Consequently, there exists in this continent an appreciation and curiosity and acceptance of difference in addition to national unity.

As a class discuss your school, community, city, state, and country with regard to your experiences with people who have come from different places to make the United States their home. As you explore this topic, discuss how both native inhabitants and immigrants make a place their own while retaining their cultural distinctions, thereby creating an ever richer community.

B: Often geography and weather affect not only where people live but also *how* they live. Review the geography and weather video chapter and think about how the geography and weather affect you and where you live. Include in your analysis not only where you live but also where you have traveled.

Discuss what you do daily or what you have to do when you travel to adjust to the geography and weather: clothes, shelter, work, communication, travel, amusement, etc.

Target Vocabulary:

Australia: 1 continent of the eastern hemisphere SE of Asia & S of the equator *area 2,948,366 square miles (7,665,751 square kilometers)* 2 or **Commonwealth of Australia** dominion of the Commonwealth of Nations including the continent of Australia & island of Tasmania □ Canberra *area 2,967,909 square miles (7,716,563 square kilometers), population 17,562,000*

Aboriginal: 1: being the first or earliest known of its kind present in a region <aboriginal forests> <aboriginal rocks> 2 a: of or relating to **aborigines** b: *often capitalized:* of or relating to the indigenous peoples of Australia

Platypus: a small carnivorous aquatic monotreme mammal (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) of eastern Australia and Tasmania that has a fleshy bill resembling that of a duck, dense fur, webbed feet, and a broad flattened tail —called also *duck-billed platypus*

Great Barrier Reef: coral reef 1250 miles (2012 kilometers) long Australia in Coral Sea off NE coast of Queensland; most of the area designated a marine park

Didgeridoo: a large bamboo or wooden trumpet of the Australian aborigines

Koala: an Australian arboreal marsupial (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) that has a broad head, large hairy ears, dense gray fur, and sharp claws and feeds on eucalyptus leaves —called also *koala bear*

Tectonic Plate: 1: a theory in geology: the lithosphere of the earth is divided into a small number of plates which float on and travel independently over the mantle and much of the earth's seismic activity occurs at the boundaries of these plates 2: the process and dynamics of tectonic plate movement ; *also* : a similar process on a body other than earth

Indigenous: 1 : having originated in and being produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment <*indigenous* plants> <the *indigenous* culture> 2 : INNATE , INBORN

El Nino: an irregularly recurring flow of unusually warm surface waters from the Pacific Ocean toward and along the western coast of South America that prevents upwelling of nutrient-rich cold deep water and that disrupts typical regional and global weather patterns — compare LA NIÑTILDEA

*All definitions from *Merriam Webster Dictionary Online* <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

** Definitions are from video

Academic Standards:

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidance for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

- Understand the significance of studying culture and cultural diversity
- Understand global connections and interdependence

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) has adopted The National Academies Press national standards to provide guidance for teaching science. To view the standards online, go to <http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=0309053269>

- Understand population and ecosystems
- Understand diversity and adaptations of organisms