

Read and Respond: Australia

Directions: Highlight the answers to the following questions and write them out in complete sentences on your own sheet of paper.

GEOGRAPHY OF AUSTRALIA

The best way to visualize Australia is to think of huge desert plains stretching across the country's middle. Think of milder climates along the southeastern and southwestern coasts. Most Australians live in these southern coastal regions, especially on the east coast.

The largest part of Australia consists of semi-arid or dry lands known as the outback. The climate of the north is more varied. Northern Australia has a tropical climate. In the north, you will also find rain forest, mangrove swamps, grassland, and even more desert.

Australia is unique. Australia is the only country on the world's smallest and flattest continent. It has our Earth's oldest and least fertile soils. Only the continent of Antarctica, located more than 4,000 miles south of Australia, receives less annual rainfall. Most of the Commonwealth of Australia is located on the continent's mainland. The Commonwealth of Australia also includes Tasmania, a large island south of the mainland, and several other islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. These two major oceans surround Australia, along with some seas.

Four important physical regions of Australia can be located on a political-physical map. These are the Great Barrier Reef, the Coral Sea, Ayers Rock, and the Great Victoria Desert.

1. **Where do most people live in Australia?**
2. **What is the largest part of Australia called and describe the land?**
3. **Why is Australia unique?**

Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef. The reef lies a short distance off the northeast coast of Queensland. Queensland is one of Australia's states. The reef extends along Queensland's coast for more than 1,200 miles. The reef is in waters known as the Coral Sea.

As you move south along the coastal waters, you will find an amazing variety of marine life. The reef contains the world's largest collection of coral. There are 400 types of coral, more than 1,500 species of fish, and 4,000 types of mollusks (animals like snails, clams, octopi, and squid). Some species are rare. The reef's rare species include the "sea cow" or dugong, and the large green turtle. They depend on the Great Barrier Reef as their habitat.

4. **What is the Great Barrier Reef?**
5. **Describe what lives in the Great Barrier Reef?**

The Coral Sea

The Coral Sea, an important source of coral for the Great Barrier Reef, is actually part of the Pacific Ocean. The sea is off the northeast coast of Australia. When Earth's crust moved millions of years ago, the movement created the Coral Sea and the Great Dividing Range. The Great Dividing Range is the largest mountain range in Australia.

Coral Sea islands are scattered over thousands of square miles of ocean. Australia claimed these islands as a territory of Australia in 1969. No one lives on these islands except for a small group of weather specialists based on the Willis Islets. Many other Coral Sea islands and reefs house automated weather stations and light beacons.

6. **Where is the Coral Sea located?**

Ayers Rock

If you leave the eastern coast of Australia and travel into the continent's center, you could find a huge, reddish rock towering out of the flatlands. This rock is a monolith called Ayers Rock. A monolith is what you can see of a single, large rock sticking out of the earth. Stone Mountain, near Atlanta, is a monolith made of granite. Ayers Rock is the visible tip of a massive underground sandstone rock cemented together by sand and mud. Ayers Rock is gray-colored before it rusts. It appears reddish because its iron content "rusts" at the surface. It is nearly 12 stories tall and almost six miles wide around its base!

The Aborigines are native peoples of Australia. They call Ayers Rock “Uluru,” which is its official name. A European surveyor visited the rock in 1873 and named it after Sir Henry Ayers, a government official in South Australia at the time.

In 1950, Australia created Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, which you can visit to view Ayers Rock. The park is located in the southwest corner of the state called Northern Territory.

- 7. Where is Ayers Rock located in Australia?**
- 8. What is a monolith?**
- 9. What do the Aborigines call Ayers Rock?**

Great Victoria Desert

Ayers Rock is very close to the actual geographical center of the continent. When you leave Ayers Rock, you could travel southwest into the states of South Australia and Western Australia. There you enter the Great Victoria Desert. This desert receives only eight to ten inches of rain each year, and it never snows. There are some grasslands in the desert along with sand hills and salt lakes.

The first European to cross the desert named it after British Queen Victoria in 1875. It is a large area—more than 160,000 square miles—and is a protected wilderness area of Western Australia. Very few Australians live in the Great Victoria Desert because it is too hot and dry.

- 10. Describe the land in the Great Victoria Desert?**
- 11. Who was the desert named after?**

Location of Australia

Australia is both a continent and a country. The continent lies about 2,000 miles southeast of Asia. It is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean on the east and the Indian Ocean on the west. The country lies in the southern hemisphere. Australians say they come from a land “down under” because their country is on the lower part of the globe.

The coastal areas of Australia are the most highly populated. Most people live along the eastern coast. The most populated city is Sydney, the capital of the state of New South Wales. Queensland is another state. It is seven times the size of England. More than half of Queensland’s population lives near its capital city of Brisbane.

Nearly 80 percent of Australians live in urban areas. That makes Australia one of the world’s most urbanized countries. About 70 percent of all Australians live in cities of more than 100,000 people. Sydney has about 3½ million people, and about 3 million people live in Melbourne.

- 12. Why do Australians say they are from “down under”?**
- 13. Where do most people in Australia live?**

Climate of Australia

The climate of Australia varies across the continent. Australia is south of the equator, so the seasons are opposite of those in North America. Its summers are December to March, and winters are June to September.

The northern part of Australia is closest to the equator. It has a tropical climate, and it is warm-to-hot all year long. This area also gets more rain than other parts of the country. There are seasons in this region, wet and dry. Winter is wetter and cooler than the hot and dry summer.

Desert is the largest part of Australia. Little rain falls in the central part of the country. Most of the central part of the country gets less than 10 inches of rain a year.

Only the southeast and southwest corners have a temperate climate. They have summers that are not too hot and winters that are not too cold. The climate in these regions is the one that Australians like most. In fact, most Australians live along the southeastern coast.

- 14. What physical feature makes up most of Australia?**
- 15. What is meant by a temperate climate?**

Natural Resources of Australia

Australians call the remote countryside “the bush”. The term outback refers specifically to the continent’s dry interior. The outback is mainly open countryside, including vast expanses of grazing land. There are a few widely scattered settlements in the outback. Many of these outback settlements grew up around mining operations.

Mining takes advantage of the natural resources in the ground. Australians mine for coal, iron ore, copper, tin, gold, silver, uranium, nickel, tungsten, mineral sands, zinc, oil, and natural gas. Australians lead the world in the production of diamonds and lead. They also lead in the mining of bauxite, an ore from which we get aluminum. Uranium is a metal needed to make nuclear fuel. China and the United States are very interested in buying uranium from Australia.

Australia's minerals are often found in areas that are difficult to reach. Highways and railroads are expensive to build, but they are needed to get workers and machinery to remote locations. Once these resources have been mined, expensive equipment is needed to move the minerals to populated areas for trade.

Another of Australia's natural resources is arable land. There are enough areas with good land and rainfall to make farming an important business. Farmers in Australia produce more than Australians can consume. The food from Australia's farms is sold around the world.

16. What is the remote countryside of Australia called?

17. What are three mined minerals that Australia leads in the production of in the world?

18. Why is mining difficult in Australia?

19. What is arable land?

HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA

Origin and Culture of the Aborigines

Aborigines are the native people of Australia. Just as Native Americans lived in North and South America before the European explorers, Aborigines lived in Australia. The Aborigines occupied Australia for at least 40,000 years. They arrived from Southeast Asia and entered the continent from the north. Australia, Tasmania, and New Guinea were one large landmass at that time.

The word aborigine means "the people who were here from the beginning." The Aborigines developed efficient ways to adapt to the harsh Australian environment. Their way of life was slow to change. They built containers for storing water and built wells to connect with underground water. They were hunters and gatherers and ate animals, wild nuts, fruits, and berries. They were nomadic, moving from place to place in search of food.

Archaeology has revealed some Aboriginal inventions. Aborigines created some of the earliest rock art as well as the first boomerangs, ground axes, and grindstones in the world. There is no written record of prehistoric Aborigines. What we know of the ancient Aborigines is found in archaeological evidence. The Aborigines kept their history by telling stories that were passed down from generation to generation.

Before the Europeans arrived in 1788, 250,000 to 500,000 people lived in Australia. The Aborigines settled in the same places as present-day Australians, where the climate was most pleasant and water was available. In the tropical north, most Aborigines lived along the coasts and rivers.

The traditional social structure of the Aborigines consisted of a tribe or "language group" of as many as 500 people. A tribe included bands called "hordes," of 10 to 20 people. Hordes joined for daily food gathering and hunting.

20. What are the native people to Australia called?

21. How did the native people of Australia first get to Australia?

22. What does the word Aborigine mean?

23. How did the Aborigines keep their history?

24. What is the social structure of the Aborigines?

European Exploration and Colonization

The first Europeans to sail into Australian waters arrived in 1606. During the next 164 years, ships from several nations reached the continent. In 1770, English Captain James Cook claimed the Australian east coast for England when he landed at Botany Bay. This site is near the present-day city of Sydney. Cook named eastern Australia "New South Wales." English sailors mapped the coast of Australia and Tasmania.

25. Who claimed Australia and what country did he sail for?

Prisoners as Colonists in Australia

The American Revolution resulted in independence of the American colonies from Great Britain. The Georgia colony in North America had been used as a penal (prison) colony for Great Britain at one time. After Great Britain lost colonies in North America, it began to look for other locations for prisoners. Australia seemed like a good choice. It had no colonies from other countries. There seemed to be few indigenous people, and it was in a region where Great Britain did not have any other colonies.

From 1788 to 1823, the colony of New South Wales was officially a penal colony consisting mainly of convicts, marines, and the marines' wives. About 20 percent of the first convicts were women. The British transported prisoners to Australia until 1868. By then, many free immigrants had settled in the region. They were building trading posts, farms, and businesses.

Great Britain saw that Australia was a good location to base its navy in the South Pacific. Its location would make it possible for British ships to make repairs and get supplies. There were opportunities for trade between Asia, Australia, and the Americas. In addition, the British government did not want the French to get a foothold on the continent. The countries of Europe were jealous of each other. The Europeans believed that if their countries had colonies, they would be better off.

Non-prisoner colonization continued. Major coastal settlements became seven independent colonies. By 1861, officials created the boundaries between the colonies that are still used today. The Commonwealth of Australia was established on January 1, 1901. Melbourne served as the national capital until Canberra was completed in 1927.

- 26. What was the colony of Georgia used as by Great Britain?**
- 27. Why did Great Britain set up a penal colony in Australia?**
- 28. Why was Australia a good place for Great Britain's military?**
- 29. When did Australia become independent of Great Britain?**

The Impact of European Diseases and Weapons on the Indigenous People of Australia

The British settlers had an immediate impact on Aboriginal life. European settlers took over good sources of water, fisheries, and productive land. Settlers turned land used by the Aborigines into colonial towns, farms, and mining operations. Some Aboriginal people welcomed the colonists. Some thought whites were the spirits of the dead. Others tried to protect their hunting lands and homes.

The most damaging things the Europeans brought to Australia were diseases. Smallpox, for instance, was a new disease for the Aborigines. They had no immunity to the disease. Smallpox began to sicken and kill large numbers of Aborigines. It is estimated that half of the indigenous people of Australia died of diseases brought by Europeans.

The British guns gave the colonists a major advantage in fights. Many Aboriginal people living near settlements were killed or forced to leave. Those Aboriginal people who survived the British expansion often tried to remain near their original homeland. Others began to live on the edges of colonial settlements.

The British brought cattle and sheep from Europe to Australia. To stay healthy, these animals needed water supplies and large areas for grazing. Livestock altered the landscape as settlers cleared trees, built fences, farmed, and grazed livestock on the land. The lands that were used were often those that were home to the Aborigines. Because the British were heavily armed, they were able to push aside anyone who stood against them.

As the number of British settlements expanded, Aboriginal people turned to violence to protect their land. A gold rush in the 1850s attracted thousands of new settlers to Australia. That resulted in more conflicts with Aboriginal people and hundreds more deaths. In some areas, white farmers formed revenge groups. These groups responded to the killing of sheep and cattle by murdering Aboriginal women and children. In the remote outback, ranchers needed Aboriginal labor to work their cattle and sheep farms. Ranchers asked surviving local Aboriginal populations to work as stockmen and domestic workers.

- 30. What did the Aborigines think of the European settlers when they arrived?**
- 31. How did disease impact the aborigines? What disease was the most damaging?**
- 32. Why were the British able to push the Aborigines off their lands so easily?**
- 33. How did the Europeans change the landscape of Australia?**
- 34. Explain the conflict between Aborigines and the Europeans in the 1850's?**

GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA

The Federal Parliamentary Democracy of Australia

Form of Leadership

Australia's six states represent the six British colonies united to create the Commonwealth of Australia. These six states approved a constitution. The constitution gives the federal government the right to pass laws on certain subjects. It also allows the states to convene a state parliament and pass certain laws.

Any land within Australia's national border that is not claimed by one of the states is called a territory. Territories cannot convene their own government or pass laws. The Commonwealth makes the laws for the territories.

Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state for Australia. The Queen lives in England, not Australia. She does not run the country. The Queen signs laws and is the commander-in-chief of the army, navy and air force. The Queen does approve elections. The Queen is not busy at any of these jobs, however. Australia's prime minister recommends someone to represent the Queen in Australia. This person, the governor-general, serves the Queen, represents her in Australia, and fulfills her duties and responsibilities there.

The head of government is the prime minister. This person is the leader of the political party with the most members in the Commonwealth Parliament. The person in this position is the most powerful political figure in Australia.

35. What type of power distribution in government does Australia have?

36. What type of democracy does Australia have?

Type of Legislature

In Australia, an elected government operates the country. Every four years, Australians who are over age 18 vote for the people who will be in Parliament. People who are elected go to Parliament in Canberra, the national capital. The Parliament meets several times a year. Parliament makes laws that affect how Australians live. There are two houses of Parliament. These are called the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Australia is divided into areas called electorates. Each electorate has about the same number of people living in it. The people who live in each electorate vote for a person to go to Parliament to represent them. That elected person becomes the MP (Member of Parliament) of the House of Representatives for that area. There is one seat in the House of Representatives for each electorate.

The other house of Parliament is the Senate. People of each state, the Northern Territory, and the Australian Capital Territory elect twelve people to be their senators. No matter how big or small a state or territory, each has the same number of senators.

After an election, the political party that wins the most seats in the House of Representatives becomes the government. The winning party's leader becomes the prime minister. The prime minister is the head of the government. The party with the second highest number of seats in the House of Representatives is called the "Opposition." That party's leader is "the leader of the Opposition."

When a Member of Parliament first suggests a law, it is called a bill. The bill is explained, discussed, and often changed. If the House members vote to pass the bill, it goes to the Senate. There the process repeats. If the bill passes the Senate vote, the bill becomes an "Act of Parliament." The governor-general signs the act, and it becomes a law that Australians must obey.

37. What is the legislative body of Australia's government called?

38. What is an electorate?

39. How is the Prime Minister chosen in Australia's parliamentary democracy?

40. How does a bill become a law in Australia?

The Role of the Citizen

Australians have an important role in their government. Since they have a democratic form of government, the voters choose the lawmakers. In Australia, voters must be 18 years old or over to vote. Voting is compulsory. That means that everyone that is eligible to vote is required to vote unless there is a good reason, such as illness. Australians can be fined or may have to go to court if they do not vote.

Australians vote for members of Parliament, or MPs. The leader of the political party that gets the most votes becomes the prime minister.

Voters do not vote for the head of state. The Queen holds that position. The prime minister recommends a person to the Queen to serve as her representative. That person becomes the governor-general. Citizens do not vote for the Queen, the governor-general, or even the judges on the High Court.

Australians enjoy many freedoms. They have freedom of religion and freedom of speech. They have the freedom to choose their own jobs, and they can travel around the country or to other countries. Australians can vote for the leaders that make laws and lead the country. Their level of freedom is similar to what people have in the United Kingdom and the United States.

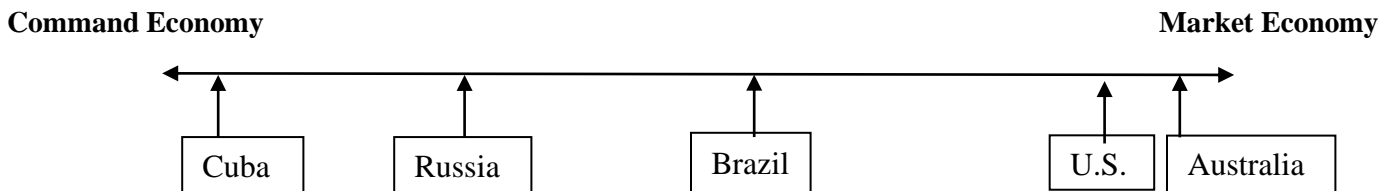
- 41. What is meant by voting is compulsory in Australia?**
- 42. Who holds the position on Head of State in Australia?**
- 43. What types of freedoms do Australians have?**

ECONOMY OF AUSTRALIA

Australia operates in a market economy. It is considered to be one of the freest economies in the world. Businesses operate without too many rules from the government. People are free to start a business and can do it quickly. Courts and laws protect the property rights of citizens.

In Australia, people are free to own their own businesses and property. Business owners decide what they produce. In the same way, farmers decide on what products they will produce and how much of the products to produce. Buyers and sellers are able to agree on prices. Competition between sellers helps to keep prices good between buyers.

Business owners and consumers can depend on good laws to protect them. The courts are considered fair and honest. Business can start easily and paperwork can be done in less than a week.



- 44. What type of economy does Australia have?**
- 45. What characteristics make Australia have this type of economy?**