

Australia: Module Overview

Australia is a fascinating country to study geographically, and is an excellent choice of non-European country to focus upon at either KS1 or KS2. By following the course of this module, teachers will cover the key areas of learning and objectives of the new geography curriculum. This module is easily adapted to suit KS1 or KS2 pupils, and many lessons include differentiated options so the subject knowledge and geographical skills match the ability or age range of the pupils.

Lesson One: Locating Australia

In this introductory lesson, pupils discover where Australia is located in relation to other countries and continents. They learn it is unusually both a country and continent, and is located in the Southern Hemisphere. Pupils learn that like the UK, it is an island as opposed to a landlocked country, and is surrounded by the Pacific and Indian Oceans. In the main activity, pupils compare the size of Australia with other countries and continents, and interpret a bar chart of continents' land area, which they then transfer to a world map.

Lesson Two: Australia's Diverse Landscape

In this lesson, pupils explore the physical geography of Australia. They learn that Australia has a remarkably varied or 'diverse' landscape and learn the four key landform regions of Australia: Coastal Plains, Eastern Highlands, Central Lowlands and Western Plateau. In the main activity, pupils use a range of maps that show the location of physical characteristics (highland areas, high rainfall areas, and bodies of water) and answer a series of questions by overlaying these maps on one another using overhead projector paper or tracing paper. Pupils discover the interesting ways in which these physical characteristics relate to one another.

Lesson Three: Weather and Climate

In this lesson pupils learn that Australia's size means that different areas of the country experience varied weather and climate conditions. They learn that there are three climate zones: arid, temperate, and tropical. Pupils discover that latitude and proximity to the Equator can affect the climate of an area, as well as the height of the land and proximity to the coast. The main activity involves creating a factual report on a type of extreme weather in Australia; bushfires, cyclones or drought.

Lesson Four: The Australian Population

Lesson four explores the human geography of Australia, focusing upon the people and the population distribution of the country using population density maps. Pupils learn that Australia is home to both indigenous and non-indigenous populations and learn that it is a multi-cultural population, with residents from different locations all around the world who have relocated through the process of migration to settle in Australia. The main activity involves creating a map and key showing the population distribution. Pupils conclude that the areas of most dense population (urban areas) are in coastal regions and explore the reasons behind this.

Lesson Five: Australia's Cities

Lesson five teaches pupils about the urban areas of Australia. They learn the country has man-made political boundaries that split the country into states and territories. They learn the capital city of each state, and also that there is a national capital of the country as a whole (Canberra). The main activity involves peer-teaching; pupils become experts on the geography of their allocated city using information provided and through independent research before creating an information poster to share with the class.

Lesson Six: Daily Life in Australia

Pupils consider the similarities and differences between places at a range of scales. They first compare aspects of daily life in the UK and Australia, then compare two locations in Australia (one rural and one urban). In this lesson, they have the wonderful opportunity to watch video recorded interviews of real Australian children, who answer questions related to the geography of their local area. The module concludes with an end of unit assessment, and optional activity of enjoying some typical Australian foods!

Subject Content Areas

Locational Knowledge

Pupils locate Australia on a world map and globe. They explore Australia's location in relation to its surrounding countries, continents and oceans, and also in relation to the UK. The climate zones, landform regions, and political boundaries of the country are located on a range of maps and pupils learn the significance of the Equator and latitude. Pupils locate Australia's largest cities and most populated areas.

Place knowledge

Pupils learn that the size of Australia means that places in different locations have very different geographical human and physical characteristics. They explore the physical and human geography of places through contrasting location studies (comparing UK and Australia, as well as places in rural and urban Australia). Pupils explore the reasons why some places are more populated and attractive to live in than others.

Human Geography

Pupils discover countries are divided by man-made constructed boundaries (state or political boundaries) as well as natural boundaries such as landform or climate regions. They gain an understanding of where Australians have come from, the term 'migration', the indigenous or Aboriginal population and culture, and consider why most people choose to live in coastal areas. They also discover industry and employment characteristics of Australia, and compare these with the UK. Pupils learn the definitions of 'rural' and 'urban' areas and compare the daily lives of Australian children living in rural and urban areas.

Physical Geography

Pupils locate Australia and discover the land area of the country/continent; and compare its size to other countries and continents. They learn the four major landform regions of Australia, and discover their key geographical features (island, plateau, lake, gorge, desert, mountain ranges). The weather and climate of Australia is explored, as well as the factors that affect the climate of Australia (proximity to the coast and altitude, latitude and proximity to the equator). Extreme weather events are investigated and pupils also locate the regions that are most severely affected.

Geographical Skills and Fieldwork

Pupils interpret a bar chart of the relational size of different continents and transfer the information to a world map. This unit allows children to really develop their map reading skills, and they gain geographical insight into Australia through comparing a range of overlay maps showing human and physical characteristics of the country. Pupils gather relevant geographical information from mixed media sources (PowerPoint, video, fact sheets, and own independent research) related to the geography of Australia and present their findings in an organised way.