

A New Mate

What would it be like to live in Australia?

¹ “I think most of you have already met our new student, Gemma,” said Ms. Dimitri to her class. “As you know, she has recently moved here from Australia. I know you all have lots of questions about Australia, and Gemma has said she’d be happy to answer them. We can also try to give her an idea of what life is like here in Massachusetts.”

² Gemma was a tall girl with thick, dark brown hair. She had pale blue eyes, and there was a dusting of freckles across her nose. She smiled shyly at the class. “I’m very happy to be here,” she said. “Everyone has been really nice to me. It feels like I’ve been here longer than a week already.”

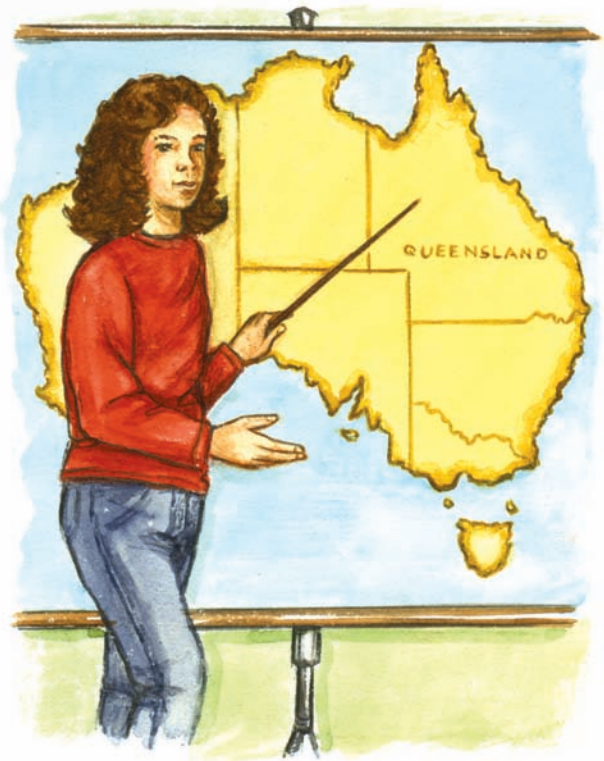
³ Ms. Dimitri smiled. “I’m glad to hear it. We’re excited to have you here, Gemma. Before we get started, why don’t you tell everyone where you lived in Australia.”

⁴ “My family lived in Queensland,” began Gemma. “It is one of Australia’s six states, and it’s located in the northeast part of the continent. Queensland is the second largest state in Australia. It’s a bit more than twice as big as Texas.”

⁵ “What is the weather like there?” asked Kayla. “Do you have cold, snowy winters like we do here?”

⁶ “Actually, because Australia is in the Southern Hemisphere, the seasons are the reverse of what they are in the United States,” said Gemma. “Queensland is in a tropical part of Australia, so it doesn’t get very cold. In January, which is summertime, it is in the 80s and 90s. In July, which is wintertime, it might be in the 60s. Queensland gets a lot of rain, and I won’t miss that at all. I can’t wait until it snows here this winter! I’ve never built a snowman or gone sledding before.”

⁷ “Queensland is near Australia’s Great Barrier Reef,” Ms. Dimitri told the class. “Gemma, can you tell us a little about it?”



⁸ Gemma nodded. “The Great Barrier Reef is the largest coral reef in the world. It lies off the coast of Queensland and is more than 1,200 miles long. It is home to all kinds of animal and plant life. It is an amazing place to go scuba diving.”

⁹ Vijay raised his hand. “Can you teach us how to say some words in Australian?” he asked.

¹⁰ “Most people in Australia speak English,” said Gemma. “But we do have some different words and expressions than you do in America. For example, the word for *friend* is *mate*. *Bonza* means *very good*. *Umbrella* is *broolly*, and *honest* is *fair dinkum*.”

¹¹ “Is there another word or expression for *thank you*?” asked Ms. Dimitri.

¹² “Yes, *ta* means *thank you*.”

¹³ “Gemma, you have given us an excellent idea of what it is like to live in Australia. *Ta*, Gemma. We’re so glad to have you in our class!”

Vocabulary Skills

Write the words from the story that have the meanings below.

1. just before the present time

_____ Par. 1

2. one half of Earth when divided by the equator

_____ Par. 6

3. opposite

_____ Par. 6

4. specific words or phrases

_____ Par. 10

In each row, circle the word that does not belong.

5. Australia Texas Massachusetts Ohio

6. freezing winter sledding tropical

7. broolly bonza idea mate

Find the compound words from the selection that contain the words below.

8. north _____ Par. 4

9. summer _____ Par. 6

10. man _____ Par. 6

When you add an apostrophe (') and the letter s to a singular noun, it shows that a person or thing owns something. Fill in the blanks below with the possessive form of the word in parentheses.

11. Ms. _____ class is interested in learning about Australia. (Dimitri)

12. _____ seasons are different than the seasons in the United States. (Australia)

13. _____ family lived in Queensland. (Gemma)

Reading Skills

A **fact** is something that is known to be true. An **opinion** is what a person believes. It may or may not be true. Write **F** before the sentences that are facts. Write **O** before the sentences that are opinions.

- _____ Gemma moved to the United States from Australia.
- _____ Queensland is more than twice as big as Texas.
- _____ It would be exciting to visit Australia.
- _____ The weather in Australia is more enjoyable than it is in Massachusetts.
- _____ Australia is in the Southern Hemisphere.

6. What is the Great Barrier Reef?

7. What does *fair dinkum* mean?

Study Skills

Guide words are printed at the top of each page in a dictionary. The guide word at the left is the first word on the page. The guide word at the right is the last word on the page. Check each word that could be found on a page having the guide words shown in dark print.

1. **gown—grateful**

_____ grape _____ grasp _____ going

2. **mallet—mansion**

_____ manage _____ mall _____ maple

3. **reflect—relax**

_____ reef _____ reindeer _____ rehearse

Australia's Giant Toads

How did cane toads get to Australia, and why do people see them as such a pest?

1 Think about toads that you may have seen in the woods, on a hike, or at a zoo. How large do you think they were? Even the largest toads probably were not as big as the cane toad. This toad, native to South America and the Caribbean, can weigh as much as four pounds!

2 In 1935, sugar cane farmers in Australia were having a problem with two types of beetles that were destroying their crops. About one hundred cane toads were shipped to Australia from Hawaii. People hoped the toads would be a solution to the problem. Unfortunately, things turned out very differently than they had anticipated. The cane toads quickly became a more annoying pest than the beetles had ever been.

3 There are several things that make the cane toad so unusual. First of all, the cane toad has almost no natural predators. If the cane toad feels threatened, it will secrete a poisonous liquid. This liquid can kill children and small animals. It can even blind an adult for several hours.

4 The cane toad is also poisonous in all stages of its life. Fish normally feed on the eggs of frogs and toads, but even the eggs of the cane toad are poisonous. Each pair of cane toads can produce more than 30,000 eggs each season. Because many of the eggs and tadpoles are able to mature, the cane toad population can grow very rapidly.

5 This is exactly what happened in Australia. Without any predators, there were suddenly thousands of cane toads in the Queensland area. People might have been more tolerant if the animals had been successful in getting rid of the sugar cane beetles. It turned out, however, that the cane toads did not have any effect on the beetles, which could easily fly out of harm's way.

6 The Australians are not quite sure how to get rid of cane toads. In fact, they continue to spread across the continent. Cane toads eat many types of Australian wildlife. They can also be dangerous to pets and children. Even so, not everyone in Australia hopes that the plans to rid the country of these animals will be successful. Some people even leave food in their backyards or adopt the giant toads as pets!



Vocabulary Skills

Write the words from the passage that have the meanings below.

1. originally from a particular place

_____ Par. 1

2. in danger

_____ Par. 3

3. to produce a liquid or other substance

_____ Par. 3

4. the number of people, plants, or animals in a specific place

_____ Par. 4

5. patient; accepting

_____ Par. 5

A **synonym** is a word that means the same, or almost the same, as another word. Find a synonym in the story for each of the words below.

6. irritating _____ Par. 2

7. grow up _____ Par. 4

8. quickly _____ Par. 4

The suffix **-ist** means *someone who does something*. For example, a *biologist* is *someone who studies biology*. Add **ist** to each base word below. Then, use each new word in a sentence.

9. art _____

10. violin _____

11. novel _____

Reading Skills

1. Do you think cane toads will continue to be a problem in Australia? Explain your answer.

2. Why were cane toads first brought to Australia?

3. Why are there so many cane toads in Australia if only one hundred or so were originally released?

4. Check the sentence that best states the main idea of the selection.

_____ Cane toads can weigh as much as four pounds.

_____ Cane toads do not have any natural predators in Australia.

_____ Cane toads were brought to Australia to eat sugar cane beetles, but they ended up becoming a dangerous pest.

Study Skills

1. If you wanted to learn more about the cane toads in Australia, check the subjects below you could use to find information in an encyclopedia.

_____ amphibians _____ Australia

_____ sugar cane _____ mammals

_____ nonnative species _____ toads

Aussie Animals

How are the animals in Australia different from those you might see where you live?

1 Gemma, Kayla, and Vijay were eating lunch on the small patio behind the school’s cafeteria. Kayla and Vijay were asking Gemma questions about Australian animals. They couldn’t believe that Gemma didn’t think it was anything special to see a kangaroo hopping along the side of a road or grazing in a field.

2 “When you see something all the time,” Gemma explained, “you hardly even notice it. Do you know how many times you’ve seen a squirrel, or a deer, or a raccoon in your life?”

3 “Of course not,” said Vijay. “But seeing a kangaroo would be completely different.”

4 Gemma laughed. “Not if you lived in Australia,” she said.

5 “Is it true that a mother kangaroo carries her baby in her pouch?” asked Kayla.

6 “Sure,” replied Gemma, pausing to take a bite of her sandwich. “Aussies call baby kangaroos *joey*s. They live in their mother’s pouch until they grow a bit larger. Then, they can take care of themselves and keep up with the others in their group. Did you know that kangaroos can travel more than 30 miles per hour?”



7 “That’s pretty fast!” exclaimed Vijay.

8 “Do any other animals carry their babies in a pouch?” wondered Kayla aloud.

9 “The koala and the wombat do,” said Gemma. “They are marsupials like the kangaroo.”

10 “I know what a koala bear is,” said Vijay, “but what is a wombat?”

11 “Well, a koala isn’t really a bear,” Gemma explained. “People just call them that because they resemble a teddy bear. Koalas spend most of their lives sleeping. There is a type of tree called a *eucalyptus* (*yoo kah LIP tuss*) that grows in Australia. It’s pretty much the only thing that koalas eat. They don’t get much energy from the leaves, though, which is why they spend so much time sleeping.”

12 “It sounds like they need a change in their diet,” laughed Vijay. “Is the wombat similar to the koala and kangaroo?”

13 “The only real similarity is that it is a marsupial, too. Otherwise, the wombat looks like a beaver or a groundhog. It burrows underground and makes tunnels that are 10 to 15 feet long. Some people get wombats as babies and train them. I had a friend who had a very nice pet wombat named Gillian.”

14 “Won’t you miss the animals in Australia?” asked Kayla. “No one in Massachusetts has a wombat for a pet.”

15 Gemma smiled. “I might miss them a little,” she said, “but I’ve never seen snow. I never saw a real raccoon or a deer before I moved here. I also never saw a cardinal or a chickadee. I think Massachusetts is going to be a very interesting place to live.”

16 “I guess it all depends on what you are used to,” said Vijay. “But I’d take the animals of Australia over a deer any day of the week!”

Vocabulary Skills

Write the words from the story that have the meanings below.

1. an area next to a building that is often used for eating outdoors

_____ Par. 1

2. feeding on grass

_____ Par. 1

3. a type of mammal that carries its young in a pouch

_____ Par. 9

4. look like

_____ Par. 11

Words that are opposite in meaning are called **antonyms**. Read each word below. Then, write the letter of its antonym on the line beside the word.

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| 5. _____ true | a. shrink |
| 6. _____ grow | b. always |
| 7. _____ similar | c. different |
| 8. _____ never | d. false |

Underline the compound word in each sentence. Then, write the two words that make up each compound.

9. The babies of marsupials live in their mothers' pouches until they can take care of themselves.

10. The wombat makes its nest underground.

11. The wombat looks like a groundhog or a beaver.

Reading Skills

1. What are baby kangaroos called in Australia?

2. Why do koalas spend so much of their time sleeping?

3. What kind of pet is Gillian?

4. Why do you think a baby kangaroo lives in its mother's pouch for a while after it is born?

Study Skills

Write the name of the reference source you could use to find out the information in each question below.

encyclopedia	dictionary
atlas	

1. Where could you look to find the location of a particular city in Australia?

2. Where could you look to find the meaning of the word *burrows*?

3. Where could you look to find information about what kangaroos eat?

The First Australians

Who are the Aboriginal people of Australia?

¹ The Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Australia. Archaeologists believe that they have lived in Australia for about 50,000 to 60,000 years! Today, they make up a little more than two percent of the population of Australia.

² In the past, Aboriginal people were hunters and gatherers. This means that they survived by hunting, fishing, and gathering plants. They did not settle permanently in one place. Instead, they moved around the continent when they needed to refresh their supply of food. The Aboriginal people had, and still have, a strong respect for and connection to the land and nature. It influences almost every part of their culture, from food and shelter, to art and religion.

³ Things quickly changed for the Aboriginal people when Europeans began arriving in Australia in 1788. They brought diseases that the Aboriginal people had never been exposed to before. The Aboriginal people also had to fight for the land that was theirs. There were many years of difficult times. The Aboriginal people had to learn to live in a society that was very different from their ancestors'. They had to fight to keep their culture alive.

⁴ The situation started to improve for the Aboriginal people in the 1960s. They were finally given the right to vote. Later, the Australian government also began trying to make up for some of the unfair treatment the people had suffered. They returned some of the land to the Aboriginal people that had been taken from them more than a century before.

⁵ The contributions of Aboriginal people to Australia can be seen in many areas. For example, they created the boomerang, a curved piece of wood that has been used both as a weapon and for sport. Aboriginal rock paintings can be found in many areas of Australia. Some are believed to be 30,000 years old. The didgeridoo (*didge er ee DOO*) is a well-known Australian wind instrument. It is a straight trumpet made from a hollow piece of wood or bamboo. Some people believe it may be one of the world's oldest wind instruments.

⁶ The Aboriginal people are an important and valuable part of Australian society. Today, many still live a traditional lifestyle in the bush, or Australian wilderness. Others have become a part of modern-day Australian culture and live in cities around the country. Their influences can be found in many aspects of Australian life.



Vocabulary Skills

Write the words from the passage that have the meanings below.

1. people who live in a particular place

_____ Par. 1

2. scientists who study past cultures

_____ Par. 1

3. for a long time

_____ Par. 2

4. has an effect on

_____ Par. 2

5. left open to harm without protection

_____ Par. 3

6. a period of 100 years

_____ Par. 4

In each row, circle the word that does not belong.

7. hunt fish settle gather
 8. fight struggle improve conflict
 9. hollow trumpet didgeridoo instrument

10. Find the word with the suffix **-ist** in paragraph 1. Then, write the meaning of the word.

The suffix **-able** means *able to*. Add the suffix to the verbs below to form adjectives. Then, write a sentence with each adjective.

11. comfort _____

12. break _____

Reading Skills

1. Why did Aboriginal people move around instead of staying in one place?

2. What influences almost every part of the Aboriginal culture?

Study Skills

Use the map of Australia's six states and two territories to answer the questions that follow.



1. Which state is directly south of the Northern Territory?

2. Which state is east of the Northern Territory?

3. What is the name of the state that is the furthest south?

4. Which state is larger—Western Australia or New South Wales?

