Symbols of Australia

Classroom hints

This series of wall charts has been designed to support students in recognising and understanding the significance of symbols of Australia.

Students will learn that:
• evidence of historical and cultural heritage is all around them in their daily lives and in their local communities, as well as in national landmarks and icons;
• evidence of a country’s values can be found in things such as community halls, monuments, places of worship, churches, temples and shrines, heritage sites, parks, monuments, archaeological sites, museums, war memorials, statues and monuments;
• much applies for the World Heritage listing of a local site;
• advertising campaigns for natural and built landmarks;
• role-plays involving historical events or people;
• event planning for a commemorative occasion;
• debates (political and parliamentary);
• newspaper articles, editorials, and letters to the editor about cultural or historical events and people;
• oral history recordings of people in the local community;
• scientific explanations for the development of particular natural landmarks.

Background to chart

• broad description of each image on the Wall Chart is given in relation to Australia.

Also available:

Macmillan Library series: Symbols of Australia

1. Advance Australia Fair
2. Flags and coats of arms
3. Emblems
4. Conmemorative days
5. Icons: Food
6. Icons: Old and New
7. Natural landmarks
8. Built landmarks

Questions:
• What symbols and emblems might they be?
• Why are they significant?
• In what ways do they represent Australia?
• How do they relate to the icons, emblems, places of worship (churches, temples and shrines), heritage sites, parks, monuments, archaeological sites, museums, war memorials, statues and monuments?
• What other symbols and emblems are used in Australia?

Also available:

• documentaries
• teacher’s resource packs
• teacher’s guide
• teaching notes

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Letters to the editor about cultural or historical events and people...
An anthem is a special kind of song which people sing as a celebration. A national anthem is a country’s special song. It will often include references to things such as the country’s people, history, traditions and natural environment. The Australian national anthem is played at public ceremonies and sporting and community events. It is an important way to unite people in feeling proud to be Australian.

‘God Save the Queen’ was Australia’s national anthem from 1788 until 1984. It is the national anthem of the United Kingdom. ‘Advance Australia Fair’ has been Australia’s official national anthem since 1984. ‘Advance Australia Fair’ was written by Peter Dodds McCormick. McCormick was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1835. He migrated to Australia in 1855. His song, ‘Advance Australia Fair’, was first performed publicly in Sydney in 1878. It was also sung by a choir of 10 000 people at the inauguration ceremony for the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901. McCormick’s original song has been slightly changed. For example, Australia’s sons let us rejoice has been changed to Australians all let us rejoice.

‘Waltzing Matilda’ is another popular Australian song. It is often referred to as Australia’s unofficial national anthem. The music was composed by Christina Macpherson. The lyrics were written by Banjo Paterson in 1895.

The lyrics tell the story of a swagman (homeless person) who steals a sheep from a squatter (farmer) and drowns himself in a billabong rather than be caught by the police. For many Australians the song symbolises rebellion against authority.

Many other popular or famous songs and poems include references to Australia’s natural environment, history, people and heritage. These include ‘I Love a Sunburnt Country’ by Dorothea Mackellar, ‘The Man from Snowy River’ by Banjo Paterson, ‘I Still Call Australia Home’ by Peter Allen, and ‘I Am Australian’ by Bruce Woodley and Dobe Newton.

**Key ideas**

- A national anthem is a special song that unites people in celebration of their country.
- Australia’s national anthem is ‘Advance Australia Fair’.

**Questions**

**Observing**
- What are some occasions when you have sung the national anthem?
- What other occasions have you noticed the national anthem being performed?
- What poems and songs about Australia can you recall?

**Comprehending**
- What pictures do you imagine when you think of Australia or sing the anthem?
- How did ‘Advance Australia Fair’ become Australia’s national anthem?

**Applying**
- What things would you write about in a national anthem for Australia?

**Analysing**
- What do the lyrics in each line of ‘Advance Australia Fair’ mean?
- Why do you think a beach photo was chosen to illustrate the anthem?
- What other images could represent the anthem?

**Reflecting**
- How do you feel when you sing the national anthem?
- How do you think members of Australia’s defence force serving overseas feel when they hear ‘Advance Australia Fair’?

**Evaluating**
- Why are national anthems important?
- Why is ‘Advance Australia Fair’ a more suitable national anthem than ‘God Save the Queen’?
- How do you think ‘Advance Australia Fair’ compares with national anthems from other countries?

**Acknowledgements**

‘Advance Australia Fair’ by Peter Dodds McCormick, used with permission by Commonwealth of Australia; Photo of Australian coastline: Shutterstock/Arapov Sergey.
Flags and coats of arms are symbols that represent people and places. A coat of arms is a European tradition. It usually includes a shield and distinctive colours, emblems, symbols and sometimes also a motto. In Australia there is a flag and coat of arms for the Commonwealth of Australia as well as for each state and territory, including Norfolk Island. Christmas Island has its own flag and uses the Commonwealth Coat of Arms.

The Australian national flag, which was chosen in 1901, includes the Union flag to represent Australia’s British heritage. It includes the five stars of the Southern Cross to represent Australia’s geographical location in the southern hemisphere. The Commonwealth Star has seven points to represent Australia’s six states and territories.

State and territory flags include symbols which represent things relevant to the particular state or territory. The Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag are symbols of Indigenous heritage and culture. The Aboriginal flag was first flown in 1971 and was used to represent Aboriginal protest against the government, particularly on land rights issues. It became an official flag in 1995.

Red signifies the earth and the spiritual relationship Indigenous Australians have with the land. Black represents the Indigenous Australians. The yellow circle is the sun.

The Torres Strait Islander flag was designed in 1992 and became an official flag in 1995. It shows green, blue and black to symbolise the land, the sea and the people. The five-pointed star represents the five main islands of the Torres Strait. A traditional headdress, the dari (or dhoeri) is in the centre.

Key ideas
- Flags and coats of arms are symbols that represent people and places.

Questions

Observing
- What symbols and emblems can you see on the flags and the coats of arms for Australia, and its states and territories? Describe them.

Comprehending
- What do the symbols on the flags mean or represent?
- What do the symbols on the coats of arms mean or represent?

Applying
- When and where is the national flag flown?
- When and where do states and territories fly their flags?
- Where do you see the coats of arms?

Analysing
- Why were the particular symbols on your state or territory’s coat of arms chosen?
- What are the rules (protocols) for flying the Australian national flag, and the state and territory flags?

Reflecting
- If you were designing a coat of arms for your family or a local group, what symbols, emblems, colours and motto would you choose and why?
- Why did the states and territories get official flags and coats of arms in different years?

Evaluating
- How well do you think your state or territory flag and coat of arms represents your state or territory?
- Why do you think the flags of the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory do not include the Union flag?
Emblems

Background to chart
An emblem is a symbol. The state and federal governments of Australia choose their emblems from mammals, birds, plants, gemstones, marine creatures and fossils. Emblems can be made official by proclamation of the governor-general. The wattle is an official floral emblem of Australia. Some emblems, such as the kangaroo, are unofficial emblems.

Emblems are chosen because they best represent an area’s uniqueness or heritage. Emblems can have literal and figurative meanings associated with them. For example, the golden wattle is a very hardy plant that grows throughout Australia’s harsh climate, surviving frost, drought and bushfires. It symbolises the Australian spirit of never giving up. Its colours of green and gold are used in Australian national sporting uniforms.

Some of the fauna emblems are endangered species, such as the Leadbeater’s possum, which is only found in Victoria, and the numbat, which is unique to Western Australia.

Gemstones and mineral emblems represent Australia’s unique geology. The black opal is a gemstone emblem for New South Wales because the town of Lightning Ridge in New South Wales is one of only two places in the world where black opals can be found.

The gogo fish fossil was chosen in 1995 as an emblem of Western Australia. The fossil represents the ancient history of the state. Discovery of the fossil in 1986 proved that a large part of Western Australia was covered by a giant reef, 375 million years ago.

Some Australian emblems are recognised internationally. The red kangaroo and the boxing kangaroo are unofficial emblems that are internationally recognised. The boxing kangaroo is usually portrayed in green and gold. It symbolises Australia’s fighting spirit. The boxing kangaroo was painted on the sides of Australian warplanes in World War II and has been used at sporting events since the America’s Cup race of 1983.

Key ideas
- Emblems are animals, birds, plants, gemstones and other items that are unique to a place and represent that place and its people.

Questions
Observing
- What are some emblems used in your school or community?
- What are the floral, bird and mammal emblems for each state and territory?

Comprehending
- Have you noticed any of these emblems anywhere? Describe the situation.
- When and why are the official national, state and territory emblems used?

Applying
- Does it matter whether or not an emblem is made official?
- What are some emblems associated with other countries? Describe them.
- What are some different sorts of emblems used by businesses in advertising? Describe them.

Analysing
- What is unique or special about each emblem on the chart?
- How can an emblem symbolise an emotion or activity?

Reflecting
- Which state or territory’s set of emblems do you prefer? Why?
- If you could only choose one emblem to represent Australia at an international event, which would you choose? Why?

Evaluating
- How important do you think the national, state and territory emblems are in the day-to-day life of Australians?
Background to chart

Countries allocate certain days to commemorate particular events or important aspects of the country’s history, culture or heritage. Some commemorative days are for celebration. Other commemorative days are opportunities to remember sad events and to honour particular people and times.

1. Australia Day commemorates the arrival of the First Fleet on 26 January 1788, when New South Wales was declared an English colony. Events are held around the country and the governor-general awards the Australia Day Honours. Australia Day is a popular date for citizenship ceremonies. Many Indigenous Australians use this day to mourn the invasion of Australia by the British.

2. Remembrance Day commemorates the end of World War I in 1918. One minute’s silence is held at 11am on 11 November each year. Australians use this time to remember all those who have died in wars. The red poppy is symbolic of Remembrance Day.

3. ANZAC Day is commemorated on 25 April. On this day in 1915, Australian soldiers landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. On ANZAC Day Australians acknowledge the sacrifice of all people who have served in the armed forces or died in wars.

4. Harmony Day is a multicultural celebration day held on 21 March. Harmony Day is a day to think about the many different cultural backgrounds of people in Australia and the valuable contribution they all make to Australian society. Harmony Day encourages tolerance, acceptance and a celebration of diversity.

5. National Sorry Day is held on 26 May. This day is used to remember a sad period in Australia’s history when many Indigenous Australian children were taken away from their families. These children are referred to as the ‘stolen generations’. National Sorry Day is also a day of celebration of Indigenous cultures.

Other important commemorative days include Labour Day, Mabo Day and Wattle Day.

Key ideas

- Commemorative days commemorate particular events or important aspects of a country’s history, culture or heritage.
- Some commemorative days are public holidays.

Questions

Observing

- What are some commemorative days?
- What happens in your family (or school or community) on one of these commemorative days?

Comprehending

- What is the history and significance of one commemorative day you know of?

Applying

- What events could your community organise as a good way to celebrate Harmony Day?

Analysing

- Why are commemorative days important to a nation?
- Labour Day (or Eight Hours Day) is commemorated by a public holiday. Why is Labour Day an important day?

Reflecting

- Why do you think the Prime Minister of Australia apologised to the Stolen Generations in 2008?
- What difference do you think the apology makes to Indigenous Australians?

Evaluating

- Why do different people have different points of view about Australia Day?
- What does Australia Day mean to you?

Acknowledgements

Background to chart

An icon is an object, symbol or place. Australian food icons are popular foods that people associate with Australia. They are historically or culturally significant.

1. Lamingtons have been popular since the days of the early settlers. In those times cakes quickly went stale without refrigeration, so the settlers filled their stale cake with jam, and rolled it in chocolate and coconut to hide the fact that it was stale.

2. Vegemite was invented in 1923 and has been popular with Australians ever since.

3. Barbecues and sausage sizzles are popular Australian traditions. Australians enjoy eating outdoors.

4. ANZAC biscuits were made in Australia during World War I and shipped to Australian soldiers serving overseas. The biscuits were based on a Scottish recipe using oats. They were nutritious and could be stored in airtight tins such as Billy Tea tins for a few months.

5. It is thought that pavlova was invented in New Zealand, but it is so popular in Australia that it is acknowledged as an Australian icon. The dessert is named after a Russian ballet dancer, Anna Pavlova, who toured Australia and New Zealand in 1926.

6. The macadamia nut is an example of a bush food. Bush foods have always been important in Indigenous culture but are now becoming more popular with non-Indigenous Australians and also in overseas markets. Other bush foods include Illawarra plums, ribberries and acacia pods.

7. Australians eat more meat pies than any other country in the world.

Chinese eateries have existed in Australia since the late 1800s when Chinese migrants came to Australia during the gold rush. Greek and Italian migrants brought feta cheese, pizza and pasta dishes to Australia in the 1950s. Asian migrants in the 1970s and 1980s brought Asian cooking to Australia, including Vietnamese, Thai and Indian foods. Australia’s expanding multicultural population has provided a vast variety of foods and ingredients to Australian diners.

Key ideas

- Some famous or popular foods are called icons because they represent aspects of a country’s history and/or culture.

Questions

Observing
- What are some of your family’s favourite foods? Describe them.
- Which of the foods on the wall chart do you like to eat?

Comprehending
- What country or culture does your favourite food come from?
- What food do you think is the most famous Australian food?

Applying
- What foods would you list as iconic Australian foods?
- Why are ANZAC biscuits famous?

Analysing
- What other foods do you think belong on a list of Australian icons? Why?

Reflecting
- What are some popular foods eaten in Australia that come from other countries?
- Why do you think Vegemite is popular in Australia but nowhere else in the world?

Evaluating
- If your job was to persuade tourists to eat iconic Australian foods, which food would be easiest to sell and why?
- Which iconic food would be hardest to convince tourists to eat, and why?
- Is bush food the only truly Australian food?

Acknowledgements

Background to chart

An icon is an object, symbol or place. Icons are things that people value. They can have cultural and/or historical significance.

1. Organisations can be icons, such as the Surf Lifesavers. Bondi and Bronte in Sydney both claim to be the oldest lifesaving clubs in the world. Both clubs were founded between 1904 and 1907. The red and yellow lifesaving uniforms and flags are instantly recognisable on any Australian beach.

2. Items of fashion or clothing can be icons. Thongs, ugg boots and items of swimwear such as the bikini and budgie smugglers have become Australian icons.

3. The boomerang is an icon that represents Indigenous Australia. Other Indigenous icons include rock art, dot paintings and natural landmarks such as Uluru.

4. The Hills hoist rotary clothes line was invented just after World War II by Lance Hill in Adelaide. It is a symbol of backyards across Australia. Other iconic Australian inventions include the Victa lawnmower, invented in 1952 and the ute (utility truck) invented as a farm vehicle in 1932.

5. Australian soldiers have worn the slouch hat since 1885. The rising sun badge was first created and worn in 1902 at the end of the Second Boer War.

6. The billy and camp oven are icons of the outback. They are used for cooking over an open fire. Other Australian bush icons include gum trees, the akubra hat (‘akubra’ is an Aboriginal word for head covering), and the cork hat.

7. The Dog on the Tuckerbox is a historical monument in New South Wales. Sculpted in 1932, it is based on a poem called ‘Bullocky Bill’ which tells of the loyalty of a bullock driver’s dog. The monument is a tribute to early pioneers.

8. Ned Kelly was a bushranger who became something of a folk hero. The suit of armour he wore was made from parts of farm machinery. Ned Kelly has been the subject of books, art, film and song. Other ‘people’ icons include Don Bradman, Kylie Minogue and Cathy Freeman.

Key ideas
- Icons are things that are special to particular groups of people.
- Icons can have cultural and/or historical value.

Questions

Observing
- What are some Australian icons? Describe them.
- Are there any objects or people in your community that are local icons?

Comprehending
- In what ways are the icons on the chart valuable to Australians?

Applying
- What is the historical importance of the Dog on the Tuckerbox?
- What is the cultural importance of the boomerang as an icon?

Analysing
- Who is a person you think of as an Australian icon? Why?
- Why are clothes lines, lawnmowers and utes icons of Australia?

Reflecting
- What do the slouch hat, the akubra and the cork hat, each represent to you?
- How do you think something becomes an icon?

Evaluating
- What is the difference between a historical icon and a cultural icon?
- How can icons be both culturally and historically important?
Background to chart

Australia has many famous natural landmarks. These landmarks have environmental, cultural, historical or geological significance.

1. Uluru, in the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in the Northern Territory, is 9.4 kilometres around and over 340 metres tall. The Anangu people are its traditional owners. It is World Heritage listed for its natural and cultural significance.

2. The Great Barrier Reef, off the coast of Queensland, is the world’s largest coral reef system. It is over 2300 kilometres long and about 344 400 square kilometres in area. It is World Heritage listed.

3. The World Heritage listed Greater Blue Mountains Area, west of Sydney, includes the Three Sisters landmark. More than a million hectares in area, it is home to the ancient Wollemi Pine. There is a Dreaming Story about the Three Sisters.

4. The Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair National Park, is a Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Lake St Clair is the deepest lake in Australia. It has been carved out by glacier ice over the last two million years.

5. Lake Eyre, in South Australia, is the largest lake in Australia when it is filled with water. It can stretch to over 9500 square kilometres but is usually just a dry salt pan.

6. The Twelve Apostles, off the coast of Victoria, are 20 million years old. Erosion has separated the limestone pillars from the cliffs. The tallest pillar is 45 metres.

7. In Western Australia, Wave Rock is 2700 million years old. It is 110 metres long and 15 metres tall, made of granite and created by erosion.

Other World Heritage listed natural Australian landmarks include: Kakadu National Park, the Willandra Lakes Region, the Tasmanian Wilderness, the Lord Howe Island Group, the Wet Tropics of Queensland, Shark Bay, Fraser Island, the fossil mammal sites of Riversleigh and Naracoorte, Macquarie Island, and Purnululu National Park, which includes the Bungle Bungle Range.

Questions

Observing
- What are some natural landmarks in your area? Describe them.
- Where in Australia would you find the landmarks on the chart?

Comprehending
- What makes these natural landmarks special or significant places?

Applying
- How do natural landmarks get a World Heritage listing?
- What difference does it make to a site to have a World Heritage listing?

Analysing
- What types of threats can natural landmarks face? Describe these threats.
- Why are natural landmarks popular tourist destinations?

Reflecting
- Why do people value natural landmarks?
- How did the natural landmarks on the wall chart become famous?

Evaluating
- How do you think Australians would feel if they lost a natural landmark such as the Great Barrier Reef?
- How can natural landmarks be protected for the future?

Key ideas
- A natural landmark is a prominent or readily recognised part of the natural landscape.
- Early explorers used natural landmarks such as trees and boulders to find their way around.

Acknowledgements

Built landmarks are important evidence of human activity. They can have historical, cultural and religious significance. Important landmarks can receive State Heritage, National Heritage and/or World Heritage listing. They can be privately or publicly owned.

1. The Sydney Opera House opened in 1973 and is World Heritage Listed. Designed by Danish architect Jørn Utzon, it is a very recognisable Australian icon.

2. The Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), established in 1854, was a venue for the 1956 Summer Olympics and the 2006 Commonwealth Games. It is a world famous cricket venue and hosts regular AFL matches. It is National and State Heritage listed. Victorians refer to it as the 'spiritual home of Australian sport'.

3. Established as a timber station in 1830, Port Arthur in Tasmania became a convict prison and was known as the harshest prison in Australia between 1833 and 1853. It closed as a penal settlement in 1877. It is World Heritage listed.

4. The Sydney Harbour Bridge opened in 1932 and was an engineering marvel at that time. It is one of the most famous steel arch bridges in the world. Its top is 134 metres above the water.

5. New Parliament House, in Canberra, opened in 1988 and is the home of Australia’s federal parliament. Old Parliament House is listed as a National Heritage building and was home to Australia’s federal parliament from 1927 to 1988.

6. The Swan Bells in Perth are a set of 18 bells installed in an 82.5 metre glass and copper tower. Twelve of the bells are historic bells donated to Western Australia and the City of Perth by St Martin-in-the-Fields Church in London. Six of the bells were newly made by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London.

Questions

Observing
- Are there any built landmarks in your area? Describe them.

Comprehending
- When were your local landmarks built? What was their purpose at that time?
- When was each landmark on the wall chart built? What was their purpose at that time?

Applying
- What is the oldest built landmark in your area? What is a more recent landmark in your area?
- What do people in your community value about the built landmarks in your area?

Analysing
- Why is it important to preserve old buildings and other built landmarks?
- How can a built landmark have cultural significance?
- What difference does it make to a site to have State Heritage, National Heritage and/or World Heritage listing?

Reflecting
- What can a built landmark tell us about the time in which it was built?
- If you were involved in building one of the landmarks on the chart, what would you have thought about it at the time?

Evaluating
- What is the significance of each of the built landmarks on the chart?
- Which of the landmarks on the chart do you think is the most important to Australia? Why?

Key ideas

- Built landmarks can be things such as community halls, bridges, places of worship (churches, temples and shrines), sports stadiums, grandstands, parks, cemeteries, heritage sites, archaeological sites, museums, war memorials, statues and monuments.

Acknowledgements