Teacher’s notes

N.B. The point of this activity is to challenge commonly held views about Australia, especially the long accepted ‘colonial’ or ‘non-indigenous’ view. You’ll find that the two groups or halves of the class come up with a) the non-indigenous view of Australia and b) the indigenous view. You may well need to ensure that any imperialist views are challenged/discard. This task should provide good opportunity for class discussion.

This resource is a collection of information about Australia, taken mostly from the Wikipedia website. The information is divided into two packs, the first based on non-indigenous Australia, and the second on indigenous Australia. (N.B. You’ll need to print out a tribal map of Australia to go with the second pack - follow the link!)

One way of using this information is to split the class in two groups. Explain that they are going to do some research on Australia, but do not tell them that the information they will look at is different.

Ideally, use two separate areas in which to display the information packs. Enlarge to A3, then cut out and stick each separate item to the walls in a corridor and a classroom, or if stuck for space, two opposite walls of your classroom. Then direct each group to their relevant section.

Hand out the fact sheets (one per pupil) and set a time limit for finding out the answers.

When the fact sheets are filled in, put students into pairs to share their findings.

Encourage a whole class discussion about the differences in findings.

This can then lead into a more detailed research task for homework, in which students produce a leaflet about the history of Australia.
Two Australias?

1. Draw the flag of Australia.

2. What language or languages are spoken in Australia?

3. When was Australia ‘discovered’?

4. What is the capital of Australia?

5. How many ‘states’ are there in Australia?

6. What percentage of people stay on to year 12 of high school?

7. What is the life expectancy for men and women?

8. Who discovered Australia?
**Australia**, officially the **Commonwealth of Australia**, is a country in the Southern Hemisphere comprising the mainland of the Australian continent (the world’s smallest), the island of Tasmania, and numerous smaller islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

After sporadic visits by fishermen from the immediate north, and discovery by Dutch explorers in 1606, the eastern half of Australia was claimed by the British in 1770 and initially settled through penal transportation to the colony of New South Wales, founded on 26 January 1788. The population grew steadily in the following years; the continent was explored, and another five largely self-governing Crown Colonies were established during the 19th century.

On 1 January 1901, the six colonies became a federation and the Commonwealth of Australia was formed. Since Federation, Australia has maintained a stable liberal democratic political system and remains a Commonwealth realm. The population is 22 million, with approximately 60% concentrated in and around the mainland state capitals of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide. The nation’s capital city is Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory.
Legends of an ‘unknown land of the south’ (terra austral incognita) date back to Roman times and were commonplace in medieval geography, but were not based on any documented knowledge of the continent. The first recorded use of the word Australia in English was in 1625, in ‘A note of Australia del Espíritu Santo, written by Master Hakluyt’ and published by Samuel Purchas in Hakluytus Posthumus.

**Capital:** Canberra  
**Largest city:** Sydney  
**National language:** English

In 2004:
- 75% of the Australian population as a whole stayed on to year 12 at high school  
- 48% of adults had a vocational or higher education qualification  
- 21% held a bachelor degree or higher.

In 2009, the ABS estimated life expectancy at 78.7 years for non-indigenous men and 82.6 years for non-indigenous women.
Indigenous Australia gallery - images and text

A colourful image of a Tribal map of Australia can be found here http://mappery.com/Australia-Aboriginal-Tribes-Map.

There is great diversity among different indigenous communities and societies in Australia, each with its own unique mixture of cultures, customs and languages. In present day Australia these groups are further divided into local communities.

Although there were over 250–300 spoken languages with 600 dialects at the start of European settlement, fewer than 200 of these remain in use – and all but 20 are considered to be endangered.

Indigenous Australians are the original inhabitants of the Australian continent and nearby islands, and these people’s descendants. Indigenous Australians are distinguished as either Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders, who currently together make up about 2.7% of Australia’s population.

In 2009, the ABS estimated life expectancy at 67.2 years for indigenous men and 72.9 years for indigenous women.
Most scholars date the arrival of humans in Australia at 40,000 to 50,000 years ago, with a possible range of up to 125,000 years ago. The earliest human remains found to date are that of Mungo Man which have been dated at about 40,000 years old. It is generally believed that Aborigines are the descendants of a single migration into the continent, although a minority propose that there were three waves of migration.

It has been estimated that at the time of first European contact, the absolute minimum pre-1788 population was 315,000, while recent archaeological finds suggest that a population of 750,000 could have been sustained. The population was split into 250 individual nations, many of which were in alliance with one another, and within each nation there existed several clans, from as little as 5 or 6 to as many as 30 or 40. Each nation had its own language and a few had several. Thus over 250 languages existed, around 200 of which are now extinct or on the verge of extinction.

In the past, Aborigines lived as Hunter-gatherers. They hunted and foraged for food from the land. Aboriginal society was relatively mobile, or semi-nomadic, moving due to the changing food availability found across different areas as seasons changed. The mode of life and material cultures varied greatly from region to region. The greatest population density was to be found in the southern and eastern regions of the continent, the River Murray valley in particular.