History Stage 3

Australian Federation

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# Topic – Australia as a nation

**Duration**: 3 weeks – 90 minutes per week

## Key inquiry question

* Why and how did Australia become a nation?

## Overview

Inquiry 1 is a semi-guided inquiry into the origins and development of democracy in Australia, the values of democracy and the events and key figures that led to Australia’s Federation in 1901. Inquiry 2 is also a semi-guided inquiry that investigates the levels of government in Australia, the roles and responsibilities of each and an example of joint management. The learning activities in each inquiry draw heavily on resources provided by the Australian Parliamentary Education Office (PEO).

## Outcomes

A student:

* **HT3-3** identifies change and continuity and describes the causes and effects of change on Australian society
* **HT3-5** applies a variety of skills of historical inquiry and communication.

Outcomes and other syllabus material referenced in this document are from [History K–10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/hsie/history-k-10) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2012.

## Content

Key figures and events that led to Australia's Federation, including British and American influences on Australia's system of law and government (ACHHK113)

Students:

* identify the influences of Britain and the USA on Australian democracy
* sequence key figures and events and explain their significance in the development of Australian democracy, for example, Sir Henry Parkes, Edmund Barton, Louisa Lawson, Vida Goldstein
* outline local, state and federal government structures and responsibilities.

## Historical inquiry skills

* Comprehension: chronology, terms and concepts
* respond, read and write to show understanding of historical matters
* sequence historical people and events (ACHHS098, ACHHS117)
* use historical terms and concepts (ACHHS099, ACHHS118)
* Analysis and use of sources
* locate information relevant to inquiry questions in a range of sources (ACHHS102, ACHHS121)
* compare information from a range of sources (ACHHS103, ACHHS122)
* Perspectives and interpretations
* identify different points of view in the past and present (ACHHS104, ACHHS123)
* Empathetic understanding
* explain why the behaviour and attitudes of people from the past may differ from today
* Research
* identify and pose questions to inform an historical inquiry (ACHHS100, ACHHS119)
* identify and locate a range of relevant sources to support an historical inquiry (ACHHS101, ACHHS120)
* Explanation and communication
* develop historical texts, particularly narratives and descriptions, which incorporate source material (ACHHS105, ACHHS124)
* use a range of communication forms (oral, written, graphic) and digital technologies. (ACHHS106, ACHHS125)

## Selected historical concepts

* **Continuity and change**: some things change over time and others remain the same, for example, aspects of both continuity and change in Australian society throughout the twentieth century.
* **Cause and effect**: events, decisions or developments in the past that produce later actions, results or effects, e.g. events and other reasons that led to migration to Australia; reasons for the struggle for rights and freedoms for various groups in Australia.
* **Perspectives**: people from the past will have different views and experiences, for example, differing attitudes of various groups to Federation or to granting rights and freedoms to women and Aboriginal peoples.
* **Empathetic understanding**: an understanding of another's point of view, way of life and decisions made in a different time, for example, differing attitudes and experiences of living in an Australian colony; understanding the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, women and migrants throughout the twentieth century.
* **Significance**: the importance of an event, development or individual/group, for example, determining the importance (significance) of various peoples' contributions to the development of a colony.

## Assessment

All activities require students to demonstrate their learning. All are assessment for learning activities.

## Vocabulary

* Colonies, federation, Commonwealth, influence, democracy, significance, development, local, state, federal, nation, government, law, responsibility, structure, Britain, USA, law, govern, senate, house of representatives, constitution, monarchy, governor general.

# Teaching and learning activities

This learning sequence comprises 2 inquiries.

## Inquiry 1 – origins of Australian democracy

Through a semi-guided inquiry, students investigate the origins and development of democracy in Australia, the values of democracy and the events and key figures that led to Australia’s Federation in 1901. Using primary secondary sources, students could work independently or in pairs to undertake the activities.

### Stimulus

Undertake a simple class vote on an issue of relevance to the students to introduce the meaning, concept and values of democracy and Australia’s democratic society. Unpack the voting process, highlighting the values of democracy that were demonstrated, for example, fairness, equality, reciprocal rights and responsibilities to express different views.

Using Think-Pair-Share, students define the word ‘democracy’ then as a class, undertake a joint construction of the definition of democracy. A definition could be, ‘democracy provides the opportunity to participate in decision making at many levels, it is a way we make decisions in which the rights of the individual are taken into account’.

### Historical inquiry step 1 – question

Formulate a set of inquiry questions relating to Australian democracy and the key figures and events that led to Australia's Federation.

**Sample questions**

* What is democracy?
* What are the origins of Australian democracy?
* What is the sequence of key events that led to Australia’s Federation?
* Who are the key figures that played a role in the lead up to Australia’s Federation?
* What are the key British and American influences on Australian democracy?

**Note**: inquiry questions may need to be redesigned through the historical inquiry process.

### Historical inquiry steps 2 and 3 – research and analyse

**What is democracy?**

#### Source 1

ABC Behind The News (17 May 2016) [What is democracy? (4:08)](https://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/what-is-democracy/10524786)

Students view the video in Source 1 and list the values of democracy. Their list should include values such as freedom, equality, fairness, justice, freedom of election and being elected, freedom of assembly and political participation, freedom of speech, expression and religious belief, rule of law, other basic human rights.

Students use their local newspaper online, or an Australian news site such as the ABC, to find examples of at least 3 of the values of democracy. They use these to complete Table 1.

Table 1 – examples of values of democracy

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Value of democracy | Australian example |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**What are the origins of Australian democracy?**

#### Source 2

Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) (2023) [Snapshots – Federation (2:36)](https://peo.gov.au/understand-our-parliament/history-of-parliament/federation/introducing-federation)

#### Source 3

Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) (2023) [The Federation of Australia](http://www.peo.gov.au/understand-our-parliament/history-of-parliament/federation/the-federation-of-australia/)

Students view the video in Source 2 and read reasons for Federation in source 3. They identify people’s views of Federation and list them in Table 2 using the perspectives of social, political, economic and cultural.

Table 2 – reasons for Australia’s Federation

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Perspectives | People’s views and reasons |
| Social |  |
| Political |  |
| Economic |  |
| Cultural |  |

**What is the sequence of key events that led to Australia’s Federation?**

#### Source 4

Education Services Australia (2017) [Discovering democracy: Federation timeline](https://www.scootle.edu.au/ec/viewing/L8208/L8208/index.html)

Students interact with Source 4. Locate primary sources and information on the key events that led to Australia’s Federation. They organise their information in Table 3.

Table 3 – timeline of key events that led to Australia’s Federation

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date  | Place | Event  |
| 1854  | Sydney | Beginning of Federation movement. Articles published in the Sydney Morning Herald by the Reverend John West promoting a federal union of colonies to have greater influence on London. |
| 1854 | Ballarat |  |
| 1889  |  |  |
| 1890  |  |  |
| 1893  |  |  |
| 1898  |  |  |
| 1900  |  |  |
| 1901  |  |  |

**‘Firsts’ in the development of Australian democracy**

Students list 4 other significant ‘first’ events between 1855 and 1901 that demonstrate one or more values of democracy, listing them in Table 4.

Table 4 – historical ‘firsts’ that demonstrate the values of Australian democracy

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date  | Place | Historical ‘first’ | Value of democracy |
| 1856  | Melbourne | An 8-hour working day is successfully negotiated. | Fairness |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Table 4 word bank**

freedom, equality, fairness, justice, freedom of election and being elected, freedom of assembly and political participation, freedom of speech, expression and religious belief, rule of law, other basic human rights.

**Who are the key figures that played a role in the lead up to Australia’s Federation?**

Using jigsaw groupings, students each research one key figure – Sir Henry Parkes, Edmund Barton, Alfred Deakin, Louisa Lawson, Vida Goldstein. Students communicate their key figure’s role in the development of Australian democracy. Suggested questions:

* Who was the person?
* What was their viewpoint on Federation?
* What was their contribution to the establishment of Federation?

**What are the key British and American influences on Australian democracy?**

#### Source 5

Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) (2023) [How have the British and US systems of government influenced the Australian government system?](https://peo.gov.au/understand-our-parliament/your-questions-on-notice/questions/how-have-the-british-and-us-systems-of-government-influenced-the-australian-government-system)

Students read Source 5 and list one main influence of Britain and the United States of America on development of Australia’s system of government.

### Historical inquiry step 4 – evaluate

Are there inconsistencies or contradictions between the primary and secondary sources used? Do the inquiry questions need to be redesigned as a result of analysing and evaluating sources?

### Historical inquiry step 5 – communicate

To mark the inauguration of Australia’s Federation on 1 January 1901, the Commonwealth Celebrations were held. Commencing with the Great Inaugural Procession held in Sydney on the morning of 1 January, the events ran over 8 days and celebrations were held across Australia. The stereograph in Source 6 shows the procession through the French arch erected in Pitt Street Sydney. It shows the spectators lining the street, a procession of military men on horses, helmeted police officers supervising the crowd, the decorative arch stating ‘France welcomes Australian Federation’ and garlands across the street. A stereograph is a twin photograph. When viewed through a stereoscopic viewer the twin images form a 3D view.

#### Source 6

Figure 1 – Stereograph of the French arch, Commonwealth celebrations, Sydney, January 1901



[‘French Arch, Commonwealth Celebrations, Sydney’](https://www.flickr.com/photos/statelibraryofnsw/23181418522/) by unknown, courtesy of State Library of New South Wales and licensed under [Flickr: The Commons](https://www.flickr.com/commons/usage/).

**Take on role as a spectator at the procession**

Students step back in time and imagine they are a spectator at the Great Inaugural Procession. They role play a conversation with another spectator reflecting on the pros and cons of Federation and changes to Australia they expect will occur. Roles should represent different types and views of people in society of the time such as influential figures, landowners, city dwellers, Aboriginal people, women or poor people.

### Reflection

Students reflect on the historical inquiry process, reflecting on what they learned, how they learned it and what else they would like to find out.

## Inquiry 2 – Australia’s levels of government

Students undertake a semi-guided inquiry into the 3 levels of government in Australia. They identify examples of the levels in operation in media articles, examine joint management of the Great Barrier Reef and communicate their understandings through graphic organisers.

### Stimulus

Ask students to outline an issue they have noticed or heard about in their local area, such as the local sports fields have a rough surface, insufficient facilities or lighting, or the local garbage bins being emptied late or pot-holes on local roads. Ask who their parents or carers would telephone or email to have the issue addressed. Use the discussion to introduce the 3 levels of government – local, state and federal.

### Historical inquiry step 1 – question

Formulate a set of inquiry questions. Sample question: ‘What are the roles and responsibilities of Australia’s three levels of government?’

### Historical inquiry steps 2 and 3 – research and analyse

**Levels of government**

#### Source 7

Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) (2019) [Three levels of government (2:27)](https://www.peo.gov.au/multimedia/videos/snapshots-three-levels-of-government.html)

Students view the video in Source 7 and use a mind map to summarise the responsibilities of each level of government in Australia. To reinforce understanding students play the interactive [three levels of government game](https://www.peo.gov.au/sub-site/three-levels-of-government-game/index.html) from the Parliamentary Education Office.

**Government at work**

Students browse online local news media to find issues being raised such as restoration of a local boardwalk, crime watch and Centrelink payments. They determine which level of government has the responsibility for each of the issues, recording them in Table 5.

Table 5 – examples of levels of government at work

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Local government | State government | Federal government |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Shared roles and responsibilities**

#### Source 8

Department of the Environment and Energy (DCCEEW) (2 December 2016) [Partnerships and the Great Barrier Reef (2:56)](https://youtu.be/Bc_l8mD3o-8)

View the video in Source 8 that highlights the partnerships involved in managing the Great Barrier Reef. Note the key stakeholders and different levels of government they represent. Recall the key points on why management of the Great Barrier Reef is a shared responsibility.

Students use a placemat chart to record information on actions taken by the Australian Government, Queensland Government, local governments and Aboriginal traditional owners that work towards managing and protecting the Great Barrier Reef. **Note**: councils in the Great Barrier Reef catchment are members of the Reef Guardian Council program.

### Historical inquiry step 4 – evaluate

During research and analysis, students evaluate the reliability of the sources. Are there inconsistencies or contradictions between the sources? Do the inquiry questions need to be redesigned as a result of analysing and evaluating sources?

### Historical inquiry step 5 – communicate

**Government in action**

Students undertake the [three levels of government quiz](https://www.peo.gov.au/learning/quizzes.html) by the Parliamentary Education Office.

With reference to their placemat charts, students use the pair and share strategy to explain the roles and actions undertaken by each level of government in the management of the Great Barrier Reef. They generate a plus, minus, interesting (PMI) chart on the joint management.

### Reflection

Students reflect on the historical inquiry process, reflecting on what they learned, how they learned it and what else they would like to find out.

# Resources

* Australian Electoral Commission (2024) [Democracy rules](https://education.aec.gov.au/democracy-rules/)
* Commonwealth of Australia (2019) [*Voting in Australia* (PDF 7.1 MB)](https://education.aec.gov.au/teacher-resources/files/voting-in-australia.pdf) – Australian Electoral Commission brochure
* Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) (2024) [Image library – Australia’s Parliament House](https://www.peo.gov.au/multimedia/image-library/australias-parliament-house-il.html)
* Parliament of New South Wale s(n.d) [Parliament of New South Wales virtual tour](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/about/Pages/Virtual-Tour.aspx)
* Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) (2024) [Three Levels of Government](https://peo.gov.au/understand-our-parliament/how-parliament-works/three-levels-of-government)
* NSW Department of Education (2023) [Civics and Citizenship](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/civics-and-citizenship)
* NSW Department of Education (2023) [Civics and citizenship learning sequence](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/hsie/hsie-curriculum-resources-k-12/hsie-k-6-curriculum-resources/civics-and-citizenship)

# References

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