

# Our National Flag ... since 1901

## TEACHERS' NOTES

### About the video

What goes into making a national flag? Cloth, a design and the maker's labour? Yes, but these do not make a flag meaningful. *Our National Flag ... since 1901* is an engaging video that explores the origins and values that have gone into the making of the Australian national flag. The video and teachers' notes aim to foster primary students' understanding of the national flag and the meanings represented by the symbols it contains. The resource can be used to support civics education in SOSE/HSIE, and has application to literacy, art and maths key learning areas.

**Recommended level:** Middle and upper primary

**Duration:** 22 minutes



AUSPIC

### The video at a glance

<i>Section (time marker min:sec)</i>	<i>Key ideas</i>	<i>Some questions for discussion during or after the video</i>
Flags as symbols (00:00 to 03:00)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Introduction: focus questions</li><li>● Use in modern and ancient times</li><li>● The Olympic flag</li></ul>	What questions does the video explore? Why is it important to have a flag at an event like the Olympic Games? What practical purposes have flags been used for?
National Flag Day (03:00 to 04:00)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Why this day?</li><li>● Purpose of the celebration</li></ul>	Why was an annual flag day proclaimed? Why do you think it is important that we celebrate our flag?
History of the national flag (04:40 to 07:15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Federation and the 1901 flag competition</li><li>● Competition winners</li></ul>	Why did Federation create the need for a new flag? Why was the Union Jack Australia's official flag at the time of Federation?
Elements of the flag design (07:15 to 11:56)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Southern Cross</li><li>● Commonwealth or Federation Star</li><li>● Union Jack</li></ul>	What symbols are on our flag? What is their role? Why is the Southern Cross included? Why is the largest star called the Federation Star? Why did the star change? Why is the Union Jack included on our flag?
Indigenous flags (11:56 to 13:05)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Aboriginal flag</li><li>● Torres Strait Islander flag</li></ul>	Why is it important for Indigenous peoples to have their own flags? What do these flags symbolise?
Role of the national flag (13:06 to 15:40)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Symbols of democratic tradition</li><li>● Citizenship ceremonies</li><li>● National identity, values and the flag</li></ul>	What are the key ideas that the flag reminds us of? Where else do you see the flag? Why is it important that the flag be seen at civic events? Why do people honour the flag?
National ideals and the flag (15:40 to 18:17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Ivor Evans describes national virtues</li><li>● Commemoration on Anzac Day</li><li>● Flags in celebrations</li></ul>	What ideals did Ivor Evans associate with the flag? What values are symbolised in Anzac Day? How is the flag used on Anzac Day? How do the other scenes in this section show the ideals represented in the flag?
Centenary of the national flag (18:17 to 21:38)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Celebrations on 3 September 2001</li></ul>	Do you believe the flag is an important symbol? Why? Why celebrate National Flag Day on 3 September each year?

## Indicators of student achievement

The student can:

- \* describe and explain the symbols on the Australian national flag
- \* briefly describe the history of the national flag
- \* explain some values attached to the national flag.

Links to State and Territory curriculum can be found on the Discovering Democracy website <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy>

## Additional resource list

The following Discovering Democracy resources provide further student and teacher resources. All primary schools in Australia have received free copies of these resources, so please check your resource centre collection.

Note that all the Discovering Democracy Units are available online at

<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy/ddunits>

- \* Discovering Democracy Primary Kit
  - *Middle Primary Units*, 'We Remember' pages 67–82 (introduces the concept of civic symbols including the national flag). This unit is available online at <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy/ddunits/units/mp3remember-glance.htm>
  - Cards of national, State and Territory flags (two copies of each)
  - *Stories of Democracy* CD-ROM 'Middle Primary Interactive' (includes a narrative on symbols and a brief history of the Australian flag)
  - *Parliament at Work* CD-ROM 'We Remember Symbols Tour' (describes details of the Australian flag that flies over Parliament House in Canberra)
- \* *Australian Readers – Middle Primary Collection*, 'Lest We Forget' page 34 (a picture of the Eureka flag)
- \* *Australian Readers – Upper Primary Collection*, 'True Patriots' pages 26–30 (poems, citizenship pledge and information on flags)
- \* *Australians All! Australian Readers – Lower Primary Collection*, 'Australia Becomes a Nation' page 27 (a losing entry in the 1901 flag competition)
- \* *One Destiny – Centenary Edition* CD-ROM 'Flag for a New Nation' interactive (includes a narrative on the history of the flag, source material and an interactive game using some of the symbols suggested in the 1901 flag competition)

## Other references

- \* *Australian flags* 1998, Awards and National Symbols Branch, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, AusInfo.
- \* Barwick, John and Jennifer 2000, *Australian flags and emblems*, Heinemann Library, Port Melbourne.

## Websites

- \* The Prime Minister's website [http://www.pm.gov.au/aust\\_focus/nat\\_symbols](http://www.pm.gov.au/aust_focus/nat_symbols)
- \* Australian flags <http://www.csu.edu.au/australia/flag.html>
- \* Anzac Day Commemoration site <http://www.anzacday.org.au/education/tff/flag.html>
- \* National, State and Territory library websites (online picture catalogues)
- \* Discovering Democracy website <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy>
- \* Parliament@Work <http://www.parliament.curriculum.edu.au>
- \* Australian National Flag Association <http://www.australianflag.org.au>
- \* Australian National Flag Association – Anzac tradition <http://www.australianflag.org.au/anzactradition.asp>

## Key words

The following terms are used in the video, and may be new to students:

**celebration, citizens, colony, Commonwealth, democracy, diversity, emblem, ensign, federal Territories, Federation, flag, heritage, honour, ideals, identity, Indigenous peoples, national, Parliament, remembrance, represent, symbol, traditions, Union Jack, values (justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude)**

## Background notes

From colonial times Australia has had a rich tradition of flag making. But when the six colonies federated in 1901, the newest nation of the British Empire did not have its own flag. In April 1901, the first Commonwealth government held a national flag design competition that attracted over 32 000 entries from men, women and children. Five almost identical entries presented the winning design and they shared the prize money. On 3 September 1901, the new Australian flag flew for the first time from the top of the Exhibition Building in Melbourne.

There were two versions of the flag: red for merchant ships (known as the Commonwealth red ensign) and blue for other use (known as the Commonwealth blue ensign), which caused some confusion. The new flag came slowly into use: in 1908 it was used to represent Australian athletes at the London Olympics, and by 1911 it was also used as the saluting flag for the Army. As a member nation of the British Empire, Australia retained the Union Jack as the flag for use on official occasions.

It was not until 1953 that the *Flags Act* established the Commonwealth blue ensign as the Australian national flag. Since then, there have been other flags proclaimed for use in Australia including the Aboriginal flag, the Torres Strait Islander flag, and flags for each State and Territory. In 1998, legislation was passed in Federal Parliament that prohibits change to the national flag except by a referendum.

## Introducing the video

### Activity 1 ✨ Flags today

- ▼ Discuss the use of flags today and compile a table listing the different flags students have seen (for example, column 1 of the table below). Invite students to describe where and when they have seen the flags, and how they are used (see columns 2 and 3).

Flag	Used at	To represent	Audience
Olympic flag	Olympic Games	Five continents, athletes and their countries	International
'Boxing kangaroo'	Sporting events	Australia's sporting spirit (commercial, unofficial flag)	National and international
Lifesaver safety flag	Beaches	Where it is safe to swim	Community
State/Territory flag	On buildings	The State/Territory and its people	State/Territory
Red Cross flag	On hospitals and ambulances	Health and rescue services	International
UN flag	On buildings and vehicles	Members of the United Nations	International

- ▼ Discuss the idea that different flags are designed to have meaning for particular groups and situations. Focus on the concept of a flag being a symbol, carrying a particular meaning or representing a particular idea or group. Invite students to nominate the particular audience for each flag (see column 4).
- ▼ Ask students to consider why a flag is used for this purpose, and what advantages a flag has over other symbols of groups (such as songs, forms of dress). Focus discussion on the Australian flag and the different contexts in which it is used – associated events, buildings and merchandising.

For further exploration of civic symbols, see 'We Remember' in the *Discovering Democracy Middle Primary Units*.

### Activity 2 ✨ Words we use with flags

- ▼ Prior to presenting the video, it may be useful to discuss some of the key words listed on page 2. Alternatively, you may wish to establish a classroom glossary or thesaurus in which students list new words. Begin with words from the list and after playing the video, review the list and invite students to draw on their contextual understandings of the words to establish meanings. Use dictionaries to confirm students' definitions.

## Assessing prior knowledge

### Activity 3 ✨ Flag foldout

- ▼ Assess students' prior knowledge on the flag by asking each student to complete a flag foldout. Explain that their responses will be sealed and saved until after they have viewed the video, when they will repeat the task and compare how their ideas and understandings have changed.
- ▼ Ask students to fold a piece of paper into quarters. Write the following directions on an OHT or on chart paper, and have students write their responses in the matching quadrant.

Students should write their names on the reverse side of the sheet.

- 1 Draw the Australian flag.
- 2 Label the parts you recognise and describe what they mean.
- 3 Describe when and where you see flags used in the community.
- 4 What does the flag mean to you?

- ▼ Collect student responses and reserve them for later use.

## Following the video

### Activity 4 ✨ Talking about the video

- ▼ Use the discussion questions listed in the table 'The video at a glance' to explore the initial viewing of the video. You might wish to replay the video and pause after each section to discuss the questions.
- ▼ Discuss the images used in the video and their associated meaning. For example, at the section about the Commonwealth Star (07:50 to 09:30), ask students to have another look at the pictures that the video producers have chosen to symbolise their State or Territory. Have the students discuss whether these images best 'represent' their State or Territory. What other pictures would they suggest could be used? This activity can be used to explore the idea of 'representation'.
- ▼ Have the students list the songs and images that they liked. Ask them to offer their own questions about the images, stories, people and information in the video.



A girl in Federation costume. She holds the 'Herald' Federal Flag Competition winning design.

Coo-ee Picture Library

## Activity 5 ★ Who needs a flag anyway?

- ▼ The video explains how Federation inspired the flag design competition and the acceptance of the flag. However, not all the colonies were keen to accept a new national flag for the proposed Federation. Each colony had its own flag and all shared the Union Jack as the official flag (Australia was a British colony). Using a PMI chart (Plus, Minus, Interesting), list possible arguments for and against a new flag design for the new Federation. You may wish students to use the *One Destiny! Centenary Edition* CD-ROM interactive 'A Flag for a New Nation' to expand on these issues.
- ▼ As an extension, invite students to pose as people in the 1890s who are for or against the adoption of a national flag. These students present their arguments to the class, who vote for and against the flag. (One student could act as designer Ivor Evans.)

If students need additional background on Federation, a short narrative on the topic appears in *Australians All! Australian Readers – Lower Primary*. The unit 'The People Make a Nation' in *Discovering Democracy Upper Primary Units* provides a more detailed study.

## Activity 6 ★ The symbols

- ▼ Locate and display your school's Australian national flag. (Contact your local federal Member of Parliament to source a national flag, and your local State or Territory Member to source your State or Territory flag.) Invite students to collaboratively develop a description of each of the symbols.

### The symbols

- The Southern Cross represents our geographical position in the Southern Hemisphere; it also represents our bright aims for the future.
- The Commonwealth or Federation Star represents the federation of all lands and people in the nation. The points on the star represent the six States, with a seventh point representing the federal Territories. The star as a whole represents Australia's bright aims for the future.
- The Union Jack is a composite of the crosses of St George (England), St Andrew (Scotland) and St Patrick (Ireland), the three major groups of colonists in the nineteenth century.

Did you know that the Union Jack has changed since 1788? Look at the section of the video (11:36 to 11:50) showing the flag being raised at Sydney Cove in 1788. The Union Jack is missing the cross of St Patrick. This wasn't added to the Union Jack until Ireland became part of the United Kingdom in 1801.

- ▼ Read the two poems about the flag that appear on page 28 of the *Australian Readers – Upper Primary Collection*, 'Our Own Flag' by Banjo Patterson and 'Flag' by Stephen Herrick. These poems were written approximately 100 years apart. Discuss the writers' views of the flag and what it means to them. Invite students to suggest words that describe each poet's feelings about the flag.
- ▼ Revisit the section of the video (15:40 to 18:17) that discusses the way national ideals have been incorporated into the flag. Ivor suggested that the stars of the Southern Cross illustrated the four moral virtues that underpinned Australia: justice (fairness), prudence (good judgement), temperance (self-control) and fortitude (courage against the odds). Discuss the examples that the video uses to support these ideals. What virtues best represent Australia today? Draw all five stars of the Southern Cross on a board and

invite pairs or groups to come up with the five ideals that they believe best represent Australians today.

- ▼ Invite students to recall the images used in the video to convey Ivor's key values, such as the footage on Anzac Day ceremonies. Re-watch the section on Anzac day (16:30 to 17:30). Ask students to make notes on what they see and hear. Have them compare their notes and discuss the symbols in the images they have seen. Replay the section again and point out (use slow motion replay) the scene where the last of the Gallipoli Anzacs Mr Alec Campbell, who died in 2002, hands the flag to a young cadet (16:57 to 17:01). Ask the students how this extra information changes the meaning of what is happening in this scene of the video. Discuss the symbolism of Mr Campbell handing over the flag to the young cadet.
- ▼ Discuss how the other images of the video (for example, volunteer firefighters fighting bushfires) suggest the values represented by the flag and ask students to come up with additional images that could also be used to represent the values of the flag.
- ▼ Focus students' attention on the music that backs this and other sections of the video. Talk about how music is also used as a symbol. Invite groups of students to brainstorm a list of songs that might best represent Australia to its citizens. (The lyrics to 'Advance Australia Fair' are included in *Australians All! Australian Readers – Lower Primary*.)



The flag honours Alec Campbell, the last Anzac, at his funeral in May 2002.

NewsPix/Craig Borrow

[Inset] Alec Campbell as a 16-year-old boy soldier in 1915.

NewsPix

Further questions and activities related to the poems in Activity 6 appear in the Teacher Guide that accompanies each set of *Australian Readers*.

### Activity 7 ★ Other Australian flags

- ▼ While the national flag is the symbol of the nation, Australia has a number of other flags that represent groups within our nation. Divide the class into groups and ask each group to investigate one of the following flags: Aboriginal flag, Torres Strait Islander flag, and the flags of the States and Territories. (Pictures of the State and Territory flags appear on Card 1a in the *Discovering Democracy Primary Kit*.) For each flag, groups should provide a poster showing the flag, describing its history and the symbols it uses, and explaining where and for whom it is designed.
- ▼ Visit the following site to find information about your State or Territory's flag, crests, and floral and fauna emblems: [http://www.parliament.curriculum.edu.au/srch\\_browse.php3](http://www.parliament.curriculum.edu.au/srch_browse.php3)
- ▼ Display completed posters in the classroom. As a class, develop a concept map that describes the similarities and differences between the flags.
- ▼ As an extension activity, students could also investigate flags from other countries and compare the symbols and ideals they represent to the Australian flag.



*Living Together, Working Together* by Frank Jakamarra Nelson  
WA1-0246 Frank (Bronson) Jakamarra, *Living Together, Working Together*.  
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

## Extension activities

### Activity 8 ★ Researching the history of the Australian flag

- ▼ This activity requires use of the video, and the additional resources and websites listed on page 2.
- ▼ Australia has had a number of different flags suggested as federal or Australian flags over time. Write the following flag names and dates on separate sticky labels, so that there is at least one flag per student or pair of students. (If you require more than one set of stickers, copy each set onto different coloured labels.) Arrange the labels at random on the board.  
Names: the 'Herald' Federal flag, the Aboriginal flag, the Eureka flag, the National Colonial flag, the Federal flag, the Torres Strait Islander flag, the Australasian Anti-Transportation flag, the Union Jack  
Dates: 1972, 1854, 1831, 1992, 1849, 1788, 1900 and 1901
- ▼ Invite students or pairs of students to select a flag name to research using the resources and websites listed on page 2. The aim is to identify the flag design for the chosen name and the year in which it was first used (or proposed for use) in Australia.
- ▼ Students could then display the flag design and create a thumbnail history (a few sentences) about each flag to share with the class.
- ▼ Once all the flags, designs, names and dates have been matched, invite students to arrange themselves in a line (or lines) according to the chronological order of the event. (For the two 1901 dates, students will need to consider the month in which the competitions were run.)
- ▼ As an extension activity, students could create a timeline that illustrates the progress towards a national Australian flag.



*The stars of the Southern Cross were used by the diggers in their flag at the Eureka Rebellion in 1854.*

Charles Alphonse Doudiet, *Swearing Allegiance to the Southern Cross* 1854.  
Watercolour, pen and ink on paper 16.7 × 23.2 cm. Collection: Ballarat Fine Art Gallery.

The websites listed on page 2 provide background or links to information on flags from Australia and overseas.

Further information and activities on the flag and its current place in Australian culture are available on page 52 of the *Discovering Democracy Middle Primary Units*, 'We Remember'.



Steven Siewert / *The Sydney Morning Herald*

### Activity 9 ✨ What does the Australian flag mean to me?

- ▼ Students can choose to create responses about the Australian flag, its history and meaning, and their personal feelings about it. Encourage students to suggest a format that most appeals to them. Some possible responses are:
  - Prepare a spoken presentation to an overseas visitor.
  - Create an information brochure for new citizens.
  - Write a short story or poem that expresses their relationship to the flag.
  - Develop a PowerPoint™ presentation or personal website.
  - Perform a role-play presenting the flag from the perspective of one of the designers.

### Activity 10 ✨ Planning for National Flag Day

- ▼ Review the section of the video (03:00 to 04:40) that shows citizens celebrating the first official National Flag Day.
- ▼ Discuss how people celebrate civic occasions, highlighting the activities in those celebrations – for example, marches, unveiling ceremonies and music. Working in groups, each group selects one key event (for example, Anzac Day, Australia Day, a citizenship ceremony). Each group creates a profile of the event by completing the following: When and where does the ceremony occur? Who is involved? What do they do? What values is the ceremony celebrating? How are these values shared with the audience?
- ▼ Introduce the idea of planning a school-based celebration for National Flag Day on 3 September. Brainstorm possible ideas for the ceremony, including the location of the event, special guests (such as members from the local RSL or

sporting identities), the program, involvement of other school members, and so on. Divide the class into work groups, each with a responsibility to plan a section of the ceremony. Groups could include: publicity, programs and invitations, staging and decorations, class liaison and ceremony coordinators.

- ▼ For a guide to how to conduct a flag ceremony at your school using the correct protocols, refer to <http://www.australianflag.org.au>. The official proclamation of Australian National Flag Day can be downloaded from <http://www.australianflag.org.au/flagday.asp>

### Activity 11 ✨ A flag for the school community

- ▼ Students design a flag for the school that incorporates the values of the school and its community. Use the school motto, school crest and school song as sources of existing symbols and values.
- ▼ Involve students in a range of activities: group discussion of key values or ideals for the school, creating the design, working out the proportions and maths of the design, doing the art work, constructing the prototype, and establishing where, when and how the flag could be used.

## Assessing student outcomes

- Repeat the flag foldout activity as a summative assessment task. Once complete, distribute the student sheets collected earlier and ask students to compare their responses now to those they completed earlier. Encourage students to explain how and why their responses may have changed.
- The student will be assessed on how he or she:
  - described the flag as a symbol of Australian identity
  - explained the elements of the design
  - briefly described how the flag design came into being
  - articulated the values he or she attributes to the flag.

This Australian National Flag Association video has been made available to all primary schools by the Commonwealth Government. The teachers' notes have been developed and funded by the Discovering Democracy Schools Materials Project as part of the Discovering Democracy civics and citizenship education programme.



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