



My Canberra Project

by
**Gregory Murdoch
and Rachel Flynn**

Teacher Notes prepared by Catherine Crowley

Readership: Mid to Upper
primary, reluctant readers early
secondary

Genre: Non-fiction & Fiction

Canberra is far from boring, as Gregory Murdoch and Joybelle Smyth find out on a school excursion. Read their scrapbook and learn about the secret panels that once hid safes and beds in Old Parliament House. Visit the new Parliament House where politicians argue more than kids on detention. Read about the Ngunnawal people, inhabitants of Australia thousands of years before Europeans arrived. Learn about great sportsmen and women, great art and interesting science. This is a school excursion not to be missed.

Rationale

Students should use the text and other sources to complete the tasks in these teacher notes. They are designed to encourage students to understand and question the world in which they live.

Students could present their answers in a scrapbook form, following the layout used by the author. The students will compile different information, creating a companion text to the one under study.

How to use

Learning activities suggested in one KLA (Key Learning Area) may also be applicable to another KLA.

About the book

My Canberra Project explores, in a lively and humorous format, facts about Australia's capital city, Canberra. The text is presented as a school project scrapbook. The authors of the assignment, Gregory and Joybelle, present relevant information in a style that is suitable for a young audience. The students' teacher, Mrs Fyfe, acts as a third narrator. Her comments add further detail to the chapters.

Readers are provided with a basic timeline of European settlement and development. General information about the traditional owners of Canberra, the Ngunnawal people, highlights the more complex issue of white settlement impact on indigenous Australians.

The text explores the political significance of the capital. It explains the role of the Governor General, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Interesting facts engage reader interest. For example, the front garden at Yarralumla is big enough to play a footy match on. Specific facts provide a basis for a solid understanding of the political system. For example, one role of the Governor-General is to perform constitutional and statutory duties.

Readers are also given information on the cultural significance of the capital through the presentation of key attractions. For example, Gregory and Joybelle visit places such as

the National Library, the Australian War Memorial, the Captain Cook Water Spout, the Australian Institute of Sport and the National Gallery of Australia.

Topics covered

- Notes about Canberra
- Map of Canberra
- Yarralumla
- Old Parliament House
- The Australian War Memorial
- Duntroon
- Lake Burley Griffin
- Australian Institute of Sport
- The Australian University
- New Parliament House
- The Federal Parliament
- The National Gallery of Australia
- The National Museum of Australia
- The National Library of Australia

Themes

- Aboriginal history
- European exploration and early settlement
- Conflict in Australian history
- Cultural Heritage
- Sporting Heritage
- Democracy
- Gender equity
- Multiculturalism

SOSE/HSIE

Draw a map of Australia. Mark in the states, territories and capital cities. Include a border, title, north arrow, key and scale on your map. Use symbols in your key to represent Canberra's population and climate.

In 1820, European explorers discovered the place where Canberra was eventually built; however, the Ngannawal people had been living there for thousands of years before this. Research the Indigenous people of this region and present your findings as a list of facts like the one on page 27. Include some information about what happened during the protest in 1826 at Lake George. A good site to start with is <http://culture.gov.au/articles/canberra/index.htm>

Research the explorers Joseph Wild, James Vaughan and Charles Throsby. Present some interesting facts about these men in pull-out boxes like the ones used in the text. Choose a heading that will capture the reader's attention.

Create a timeline of Australia's Prime Ministers. You could arrange it across the top of your pages in the same way as the author of this book has done. Include one key fact about each man. A good site to visit is <http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/>

Research one female politician and present the information as part of your scrapbook. Find things such as birth date and place, education and outstanding career achievements.

Find out what electorate you belong to and record this in your scrapbook. Find out who your member of parliament is and record this, too.

Draw a plan of the House of Representatives chamber. You will find an easy diagram to copy at http://www.peo.gov.au/students/now_hor.html#about. Colour it green. Mark in where the following people sit:

- Prime Minister
- Ministers
- Government
- Speaker
- Advisors
- Clerk
- Deputy Clerk
- Leader of the opposition
- Shadow ministers
- Opposition
- Minor parties and independents
- Sergeant-at-Arms

Research the role of a senator. Some useful information can be found at <http://www.peo.gov.au/students/library/pages/0172.html>

Walter Burley Griffin won a competition to design Canberra. Research this man and write a biography on him in your scrapbook. Include some of your own comments on his life, like Gregory has done in his scrapbook.

Create a quiz show game where the questions are all about Canberra. Test your classmates' knowledge on the facts!

SCIENCE

The Botanic Gardens in Canberra covers 50 hectares on the slopes of Black Mountain.

It is home to many birds and plants. Draw a map of the garden in your scrapbook. (Hint, you will find a few on the website!) Include on your map some of the plants that can be found here.

Research the royal bluebell, the floral emblem for the ACT. Find out things such as the other name for this plant, the areas where it is found in Australia, how it is propagated, and the conditions it needs to grow. Add this information to your map.

Research one bird found in the gardens; include information on habitat, breeding patterns and diet. A good site to look at is <http://www.anbg.gov.au/birds/birds.html> Include this

information on your map.

On page 14 we learn that the Academy of Science is located in Canberra, near the Australian National University. Find three interesting facts about science on the Academy's website. Record these facts in your scrapbook.

On page 13 we learn about the Australian Institute of Sport. The job of the AIS is to produce champions. Research the diet of these athletes and record a typical menu in your scrapbook.

ENGLISH

Reading and writing

Gregory and Joybelle have had fun recording their trip to Canberra. Write about a holiday you have taken. Give lots of detail about the things you observed on your trip.

On page 7 we see one version of a family tree. Draw your family tree. Interview someone on it and write a biography of their life so far.

Write about a time when you have experienced conflict.

One job of politicians is to debate issues that affect Australians. In groups, look through the paper and cut out articles about issues that you think are important. As a class, make a list of these issues. Choose one of these and write a letter to the paper expressing your opinion on it.

Imagine that you have been elected Prime Minister. Write a paragraph in your scrapbook explaining three ways you will make Australia a better place.

On page 4 we learn that there are secret panels in Old Parliament House. Write a narrative where you lose your way in this building and find a series of secret tunnels that lead to something unexpected!

Speaking and listening

On page 19, Joybelle Smyth comments that she should be able to vote, even though she is not 18. Write a speech where you agree or disagree with Joybelle.

On page 3 Gregory informs Joybelle that Australia has never had a female Governor General or Prime Minister. As a class, discuss reasons why this might be the case.

Read the poem, In Flanders Field, by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae. As a class, discuss the images in each stanza. Comment on whether this poem is encouraging or discouraging war.

Book Features and Format

My Canberra Project has many features that are important in factual texts:

- Table of Contents
- Photographs and maps

- Break-out boxes (information inside a box)
 - Index
 - Page numbers
1. Locate each of the above features in the book.
 2. There are some features in this book that are unusual for a factual text. List as many as you can.
 3. Are these features effective? Why or why not?
 4. What sort of information is included in the break-out boxes?
 5. Why use boxes to highlight this information?
 6. List some features of this book's index that make it clear and well organised.
 7. Create an index for your scrapbook, following the same clear, well-organised format.

VISUAL LITERACY

Photographs

Choose one photograph and list three things you have learnt from it.

What is your favourite photograph? Explain your choice.

On page 9 there is a photograph of cadets who have graduated at the Royal Military College of Australia. From the photograph, write down two qualities that a cadet must have. Explain your answer.

OTHER UNITS

CREATIVE ARTS

On page 1 we learn that Canberra has its own coat of arms. The symbols on it represent some important parts of Australia's history. Add three symbols to make the coat of arms more relevant to contemporary Australian society. Draw this new coat of arms into your scrapbook. Use labels to provide an explanation of your symbols.

Canberra has many places to appreciate art. On page 21, Gregory writes that his favourite painting at the National Gallery of Australia (ANG) is *Golden Summer, Eaglemont* by Arthur Streeton. Find a picture of your favourite piece of art and explain why you like it. Record this in your scrapbook.

On page 13 we learn that Petria Thomas was so famous that she got to be on an Australia stamp. Design your own Canberra postage stamp. Draw on it a picture or pictures that you feel symbolise the capital.

About the Author

RACHEL FLYNN

Rachel's first book was published in 1990 and she has continued to write, mostly for children. She is probably best known for her very successful series *I Hate Fridays*. Rachel has also written poetry and plays for adults, as well as material for the education market. She now divides her time between writing and teaching.

About the Illustrator

HEATH MCKENZIE

Heath McKenzie is the illustrator of the Granny series, *The Australian Twelve Days of Christmas* and *The Aussie A to Z*, all published by black dog books.

