



Teacher Guide

Year 5-6: Lesson 2

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL FLAG



UNLOCKING OUR STORIES: AUSTRALIA'S SYMBOLS

Unlocking Our Stories is an engaging resource for teaching about the national symbols in Australian classrooms. Developed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, this curriculum-aligned resource for Years 3-8 will help you and your students discover the rich meaning and history of the Australian National Anthem, the flags of Australia and other national symbols.

Introduction to Lesson 2

LESSON OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this lesson are for students to:

- **Understand** the history of the Australian National Flag
- **Apply** knowledge of the protocols for use of the flag to a new situation
- **Evaluate** the existence of multiple flags.



AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Year 5 - History

The reasons people migrated to Australia and the experiences and contributions of a particular migrant group within a colony
(ACHASSK109)

Year 5 - Civics and Citizenship

How people with shared beliefs and values work together to achieve a civic goal (ACHASSK118)

DIFFERENTIATION

Teachers are encouraged to use discretion to present these materials based on their students' individual needs and existing knowledge and understanding. This includes presenting information orally to the whole class or small groups, providing screen reading technologies, giving support through peer partnering, and allowing students to work independently and self-paced.

Further differentiation options are presented in the student worksheet where 16 additional activities are provided. These are grouped according to subject area (English, Maths and Science, The Arts and additional research) and increase in complexity and demand. Tasks requiring more time are indicated with a star.

Year 6 - History

Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants, women and children (ACHASSK135)

Stories of groups of people who migrated to Australia since Federation (including from ONE country of the Asia region) and reasons they migrated (ACHASSK136)

Year 6 - Civics and Citizenship

The shared values of Australian citizenship and the formal rights and responsibilities of Australian citizens (ACHASSK147)

Teacher Notes

LESSON OVERVIEW

The recommended learning progression and timing is outlined below.

- Step 1** **Read** the story chapter and check for understanding (10-15 mins)
- Step 2** **Explore** the lessons objectives through activities and discussion (20-40 mins)
- Step 3** **Practise** through worksheets and interactive lesson (20-30 mins)
- Step 4** **Go further** with independent or whole class activities (varying duration)

CONNECTING HOME AND SCHOOL

Encourage students to deepen understanding of their own cultural background by utilising the resources provided for engagement at home.

The *At Home* area, within the *Unlocking Our Stories* website, provides links and information to help families support the child's learning.

The *At Home* Guides include background information and recommendations for conversations and activities that can be held at home.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOURS

Some of the content in this lesson may generate diverse opinions and touch on culturally sensitive topics. To assist you in providing a safe and inclusive learning environment, please read through the following guidelines:

Creating a culturally inclusive classroom:

- Be aware of your own perspective on issues and any potential for bias
- Show that you are comfortable discussing different perspectives and opinions
- Demonstrate genuine interest in learning about different perspectives and opinions
- Avoid creating a 'correct' and 'incorrect' approach to culture
- Value the different experiences that each student brings to discussions
- Make connections to students' prior knowledge and experience
- Monitor the language you use when referring to people from diverse backgrounds
- Watch for attitudes that may promote discrimination and racist behaviour
- Encourage respectful discussion and debate when there are different points of view
- Use inclusive language (monitor the use of 'we', 'us', 'them', 'they')
- Encourage critical thinking and questioning
- Provide the opportunity for all students to identify as Australian

Adapted from [Cultural inclusion](#) (NSW Department of Education, 2020)

The Australian National Flag

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Australian National Flag was first flown in 1901. It is Australia's foremost national symbol and has become an expression of Australian identity and pride.

The flag is paraded by our defence forces and displayed around the country at sporting events and by service organisations, schools, community groups and private citizens.



Union Jack

The Australian National Flag has the Union Jack in the upper left-hand quarter nearest the flagpole (the canton) to acknowledge the history of British settlement in Australia. The rest of the background (the field) is coloured dark blue. The Union Jack, is the flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The first Union Flag, created in 1606, combined the red cross of St George (England) on a white background and the white diagonal cross of St Andrew (Scotland) on a dark blue background. When Ireland became part of the United Kingdom in 1801, the red diagonal cross of St Patrick was added to the Union Jack.

Commonwealth Star

The Commonwealth Star on the Australian National Flag created in 1901 had six points representing the states (formerly colonies). The seventh point was added in 1908 to represent Commonwealth territories. Another reason for this change was for the star to match the crest of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, the first version of which was created in 1908. The Commonwealth Star is sometimes referred to as the Federation Star.

Southern Cross

Four seven-pointed stars arranged in a cross, together with a smaller five-pointed star appear on the right-hand side (the fly) of the flag to represent the Southern Cross. The Southern Cross is a constellation that can be easily seen in the night skies of the Southern Hemisphere. It was a common feature of many of the early unofficial Australian flags. The formal name of the Southern Cross is *Crux Australis* and the individual stars are known by the first five letters of the Greek alphabet in order of brightness: (clockwise from the bottom star) Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and Epsilon.

History

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

1801

The Union Jack was flown in Australia as the national flag for the first time.

1 January, 1901

At Federation, the Australian colonies joined to form the Commonwealth of Australia.

3 September, 1901

Prime Minister the Right Hon Edmund Barton announced the winning design of a public flag competition. This was the first time the Australian National Flag was flown.

20 February, 1903

King Edward VII approved a design for the flag of Australia (Commonwealth blue ensign) with the Southern Cross stars simplified to four seven-pointed stars and one five-pointed star.

23 February, 1908

The Australian National Flag was modified to the current form, with a seven-pointed Federation Star.

4 December, 1950

The Australian Cabinet adopted the Commonwealth blue ensign as the Australian National Flag.

3 December, 1953

Flags Act 1953 bill passed by the Australian Parliament.

14 April, 1954

Flags Act 1953 takes effect and declares the Commonwealth blue ensign as the Australian National Flag.

9 July, 1971

Australian Aboriginal Flag was first raised.

29 May, 1992

Torres Strait Islander Flag adopted during Torres Strait Islands Cultural Festival.

14 July, 1995

Australian Aboriginal Flag and Torres Strait Islander Flag were proclaimed as flags of Australia in the *Flags Act 1953*.

3 September, 1996

Australian National Flag Day was proclaimed.

24 March, 1998

The Flags Amendment Bill became law and ensured that the Australian National Flag can only be changed with the agreement of the Australian people. If a poll is required, the existing design of the Australian National Flag must be one of the designs in any selection put to the people.



Australian National Flag Protocols

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Australian National Flag may be flown on every day of the year. Any person may fly the Australian National Flag. However, the flag should be treated with the respect and dignity it deserves as the nation's most important national symbol. The following guidelines apply to the Australian National Flag and to flags generally.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

[Information about the Australian National Flag](#)

[Australian Flags Booklet](#)

[Protocols for the Australian National Flag](#)

[Flag images and downloads](#)

1. The flag should not be allowed to fall or lie on the ground.
2. The flag should not be used to cover a statue, monument or plaque for an unveiling ceremony; to cover a table or seat; or to mask boxes, barriers or the space between a stage and the ground.
3. The flag should never be flown when in damaged, faded or dilapidated condition. When the material of the flag is no longer suitable for use, it should be destroyed privately, in a dignified way.
4. When flown in Australia the Australian National Flag takes precedence over all other flags.
5. The flag should not be flown in a position inferior to that of any other flag or ensign.
6. The flag should not be smaller than that of any other flag or ensign.
7. The flag should be raised briskly and lowered with dignity.
8. The flag should always be flown aloft and free as close as possible to the top of the flag mast.
9. Unless all the flags can be raised and lowered simultaneously, the Australian National Flag should be raised first and lowered last when flown with other flags.
10. When the flag is raised or lowered, or when it is carried in a parade or review, all present should face the flag and remain silent. Those in uniform should salute.
11. The flag should be raised no earlier than first light and should be lowered no later than dusk.
12. The flag may only be flown at night when illuminated.
13. Two flags should not be flown from the same flagpole.
14. The flag should not be flown upside down, even as a signal of distress.

Step 1 – Read the Story

THE TALENT QUEST

The story is the catalyst for each lesson in this series. It is important to read Chapter 2 of **The Talent Quest** before commencing the lesson.

Story overview

Laleh and Aidan have entered the local talent quest but their hopes of winning are threatened by a mischievous marsupial. Neville the Numbat wants to be famous but no one gives him any attention. Sabotaging national symbols all across the city in an effort to be noticed, Neville leaves poetic clues for Laleh and Aidan to solve. Can they save the symbols and get their shot at fame or will Neville steal the show?

In the first chapter, the focus was on the Australian National Anthem. In this chapter the characters explore the protocols for respectful use of the Australian National Flag. Chapter 3 investigates other national symbols.

Use the guidance provided to support understanding before, during, and after reading.

BEFORE READING – Prepare for Understanding

Explore the meaning of key vocabulary.

Vocabulary words	Definitions in this context
numbat	a small termite-eating Australian marsupial
protocol	the rules of behaviour used on official occasions
naval base	a centre of operations for the navy
dignity	a position or quality that is worthy of respect
topsy-turvy	upside down, backwards, or back to front
emblem	something used as a sign or symbol
press conference	a meeting arranged to discuss something important with journalists and reporters

DURING READING – Support Understanding

Discuss and explain:

- Where are these events taking place?
- Why are the children following Neville?
- What is the purpose of Neville's clues?

Step 1 – Read the Story

AFTER READING – Check for Understanding

Use questioning to check for understanding.

Literal

1. What clues led the children to the naval base?
2. What is the difference between a mast and a flagpole?
3. What big event was happening at the naval base?
4. What three flags were flying at half-mast?

Inferential

1. Why were the flags being flown at half-mast?
2. Why did Laleh raise her eyebrows when Aidan called them 'Team AL'?
3. Can you solve any of the clues left by Neville?
4. Why do the children need to solve the riddles before the press conference?

Evaluative

1. What do you think the word *tampered* means?
2. Why do you think there are so many protocols for flying the Australian National Flag?
3. Do you think most Australians know what the protocols are?



Step 2 – Explore the Objectives

Help students successfully achieve the lesson objectives by providing explicit instruction, inclusive discussion and deeper explanation of the key concepts.

UNDERSTAND

Understand the history of the Australian National Flag.

- Examine the key events in the history of the Australian National Flag.
- Display or distribute copies of the [history of the Anthem](#) or [watch the animated video](#).
- Revise understanding of the British settlement of Australia and use of the Union Jack Flag.
- Discuss the significance of having the design of a new flag on the same date as federation.
- Conduct a poll in the class to see who would vote to change the Australian National Flag. Discuss the pros and cons of making this change.

APPLY

Apply knowledge of the protocols for use to a new situation.

- Explore the [protocols](#) guiding the use of the Australian National Flag.
- Revise the meaning of a protocol and how it differs from a rule or law.
- Discuss the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizenship and how this is reflected in our respect for the flag.
- Devise a set of guidelines for using the Australian National Flag and other official flags at school or for a special event.
- Evaluate your school's current use and handling of the flags.
- Discuss why some people might be disrespectful towards flags.

EVALUATE

Evaluate the existence of multiple flags.

- Revise understanding of the symbolism of each of the elements of the Australian National Flag.
- Evaluate each element and its relevance to all Australians.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Australian National Flag in representing all Australians.
- Examine the other flags listed in the *Flags Act 1953* and the use and purpose of each one.
- Discuss why the government has endorsed so many official flags. Compare this with other countries.

Step 3 – Practise

INTERACTIVE LESSON

Complete the interactive lesson as a whole class, or on individual or shared devices.

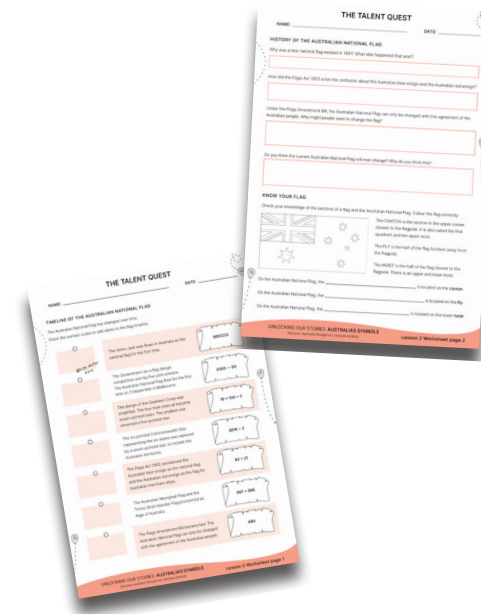
- The interactive lesson reinforces the learning from the story.
- Students learn facts and answer the interactive questions.
- The questions are self-correcting.
- No login details are required.
- Students can complete the lesson multiple times.

STUDENT WORKSHEET

The student worksheet can be used to further reinforce the students' knowledge and understanding of the Australian National Flag.

The worksheet explores:

- Key events in the history of the Australian National Flag.
- The role of parliamentary process in making changes to Australian flags.
- Knowledge of the parts of the Australian National Flag.
- The protocols for flying and handling the Australian National Flag.



Go Further: *English*



VEXILLOLOGICAL VOCAB

Create a glossary for the keywords needed to describe flags and any other words you have learnt in this lesson.

Build an alphabetised glossary or other preferred vocabulary tool to explore the meanings and correct use of each word in the context of flags.

Recommended words are: fly, hoist, canton, quadrant, ensign, precedence, protocol.

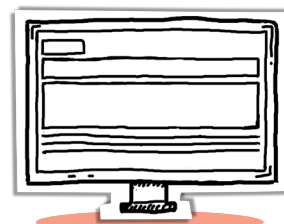


MY ENTRY

Research and discuss the five winners in the quest to design a new national flag.

Find out about 14-year old Ivor Evans, who was the youngest of the joint winners.

Encourage students to imagine they are Ivor and write the description of his design and why he chose each colour and symbol.

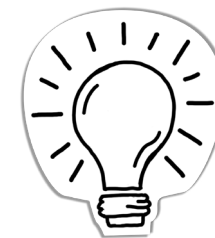


PODCAST PLEASE

Arrange for students to interview a teacher at your school about their knowledge of the Australian National Flag.

How much do they know about its symbolism, history and protocols? What do they like and dislike about the flag?

Provide the resources for students to create a podcast episode to share their findings with the class.



NUMBAT NEWS

Explain the structure and language of a newspaper report. Start with a lead that includes all the key details. Follow this with other information from most important to least important.

Students write a newspaper report about the drama that unfolded at the naval base in the story.

Encourage them to include eyewitness quotes and insights. Take the opportunity to explore direct and reported speech.

Go Further: *Maths and Science*



FIRST FLAG FACTS

The first Australian National Flag was 5.5 metres by 11 metres.

What is the area of the original flag?

Mark it out in the playground.

Compare it with your school's flag.

How many times bigger was the original?



STAR GEOMETRY

The Commonwealth Star is a seven-pointed star.

Ask students to draw a seven-pointed star.

Explore the angles between each point using a protractor.

Allow students to experiment with geometric equipment to create a more accurate version of the star.

Try using computer software to create a seven-pointed star.



FLAG SEMAPHORE

Research how to use semaphore flags to send messages.

Discuss the choice of semaphore flag colours for land and sea and why they were chosen.

Allow students to interpret instructions for signalling each letter.

Try to learn enough letters to send a message by semaphore.



BE PRECISE

Examine the guidelines on this [template](#) for accurately creating the Australian National Flag.

Using the guide, geometric tools or a digital program, create an accurate image of the flag.

Challenge: there are lots of fractions!

Go Further: *The Arts*



CROSSES ON CROSSES

Discuss the use of the Union Jack as the national flag prior to 1901.

The Union Jack is made up of three crosses laid over each other.

Research the three crosses to understand their history and meaning.

Draw each one and cut them out. Use them to recreate the Union Jack.

DHARI DESIGN

The Torres Strait Islander Flag features a Dhari.

Find out about the significance of the Dhari and how it is traditionally made with materials found in the Torres Strait Islands.

Draw or create a Dhari based on what you learn.

RED, BLACK & YELLOW

These three colours are used in many Indigenous artworks as well as on the Australian Aboriginal Flag.

Discuss why these colours are so prevalent.

Invite an Indigenous artist from the local community to speak to the class about local art techniques and colours.

Or search for Indigenous art that uses these three colours.

RADIO PLAY

Before television was invented, children listened to dramatised stories on the radio. Characters used voices and sound effects.

Provide copies of *The Talent Quest* story for students to create a radio play.

Record the play on a digital device and share it with the class.

Evaluate the performance and how it compares to the experience of watching television.

Go Further: *Research Tasks*



BILLS TO LAWS

The *Flags Act 1953* started as a Bill then became a law.

Teach or revise knowledge of the process of creating a law.

Check student understanding by asking them to create a diagram or flowchart to show how the process works.



STATE FLAGS

The flags of the states and territories are listed as other official flags of Australia in the *Flags Act 1953*.

Research the symbols on the state flags.

How were they chosen? What do they represent?

Create a digital presentation or an online quiz to share with the class.



THE SEVENTH POINT

The Commonwealth Star was originally a six-pointed star representing the six states that came together at Federation.

The seventh point on the Commonwealth Star was added to represent the Australian territories.

Research the territories and locate them on a map. Label the map using the facts you discover.



FEDERATION

The joining of the states (then colonies) to form a nation was a big moment in Australia's history and spurred the need for a national flag.

It changed the way Australia was governed.

Use a Venn diagram to create a before and after chart to show how Federation changed life and law in Australia.

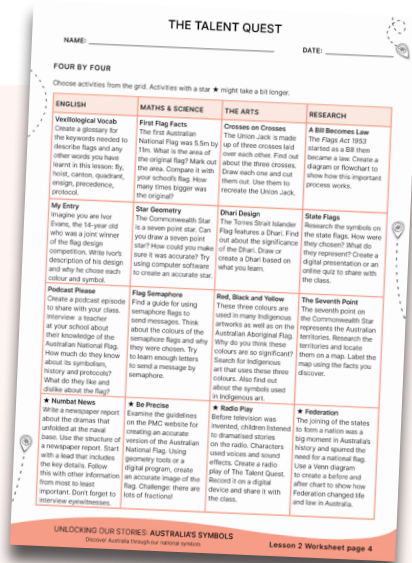
Go Further: *Independent Tasks*

FOUR BY FOUR GRID

The final page of the student worksheet provides student-focused instructions for all 16 activities so they can be completed independently, in small groups or as homework tasks.

DIFFERENTIATION

As students move down each column, the activities become more complex. The activities with a star ★ are most difficult or will take longer to complete. Teachers may wish to guide students to activities that are best suited to their individual needs.



WORKSHEET ANSWERS

Timeline of the Australian National Flag

1801, 1901, 1903, 1908, 1953, 1995, 1998

History of the Australian National Flag

1. A new flag was needed to coincide with Federation. (Answers will vary.)
2. The *Flags Act 1953* made it clear that the Australian blue ensign was to be used as the Australian National Flag and that the Australian red ensign would be used for Australian merchant ships. (Answers will vary.)
3. People might want to change the flag so that ... (Answers will vary.)
4. I do/don't think the flag will change because ... (Answers will vary.)

Know Your Flag

Union Jack, Southern Cross, Commonwealth Star

Greek Square Cipher

lie, faded, precedence, smaller, briskly, silent, light, night, same, distress



In the next lesson ...

Neville is still creating havoc across the city. This time some of the other treasured symbols of Australia are his target. Again, it's up to Laleh and Aidan to crack the codes and save the day. Time is running out and it looks like none of them will make it back to the talent quest in time.

