

Stuck on History – the story of Australia in stamps

By Chris Miles

Fascinating things you need to know are trapped in the coloured squares stuck in the corners of our letters.

Rationale

Students should use the text and other sources to complete the tasks in these teacher notes. The activities are designed to engage students and provide a creative learning experience.

How to use

Learning activities suggested in one discipline may also be applicable to another discipline.

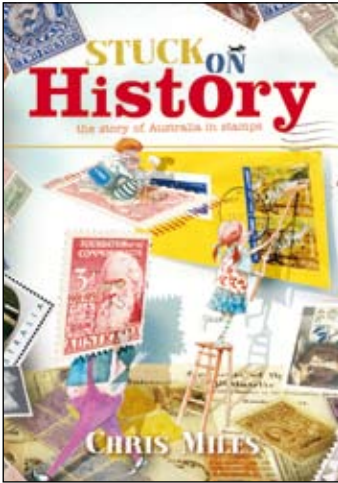
About the book

Stuck on History provides interesting information about the history of Australia presented through the stamps produced by the Australian Postal Corporation over its existence. The text uses the images produced on Australian stamps to tell the story of both Australia's history and more specifically, Australia's communication history. A clear format makes the information accessible for a range of learning levels from middle primary to middle secondary students. Interesting facts maintain reader interest.

Each stamp featured in the book is offered with its own detailed explanation of the historical significance of the image it presents. A timeline of events in Australia's history is included beginning in 1606 which follows throughout the book. A detailed glossary is also presented for difficult terms.

Contents

- Ancient tracks, southern seas and petty thieves
- Stranded settlers, sunken ships and bloody battles
- Mail routes, wool and new frontiers
- Free settlers, penny post and the rush for gold
- Steam packets, Morse code and overland journeys
- Whistles, bells and colonies united
- Royal rejects, world war and flying machines
- Wireless sets, bombs and satellites in space



Topics

- Aboriginal history
- The discovery of Australia
- European exploration and early settlement
- Convict history
- Cultural heritage
- Federation
- Australians at war
- Postal history
- Australian communication history

Classroom activities

1. Timeline of the history of communication in Australia (History)

Construct a timeline to show the history of communication (including postage) in Australia. Begin with British settlement in 1788 and finish with today and the introduction of current methods of communication. You will find the major events described throughout this book.

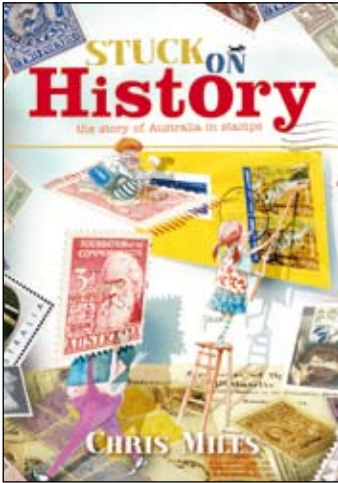
2. A debate over Terra Nullius (History/English)

In 1770 Captain Cook determined that Australia was “Terra Nullius” and declared it a British territory (page 4). This was despite the fact that he witnessed clear evidence of people inhabiting the land.

Divide the class into two groups in order to conduct a debate over the concept of Terra Nullius.. One group must discover what the term “Terra Nullius” means and provide an explanation as to why Captain Cook decided that Australia was Terra Nullius, and prepare an argument based on this information. The other group must take on the role of the aboriginal people who witnessed the arrival of Captain Cook; they must prepare an argument based on what this meant for them. The contention for the debate could be “Was it right for Captain Cook to decide Australia was Terra Nullius and claim it for the British?” Other simpler variations could also be used.

3. Living without communication (History/English)

In the first 2 years of settlement in Australia, the people were without fresh supplies or communication from Britain and life was difficult (Pg 8-10). Using the information provided, and supplemented with additional research write a diary entry as an early settler describing what life was like in New South Wales at that time. Make particular reference to what it was like to be cut off from the world for 2 whole years without any news from home. Write a second diary entry describing what it was like when the first letters arrived in 1790? Research and include reference to the major world events that would have occurred that the people in NSW wouldn't have known about.



4. Exploring the coastline (Geography)

When Australia was first settled, only small parts of the country had been mapped and explored (page 13-14). The following maps show the charting of the Australian coast by various explorers. Choose one of these maps and compare it with a modern map of the same area. What are the differences? What are the similarities? What does the old map say about the discovery of Australia at that point in time?

Map 1: Early Map of Australian coastline (much uncharted)

- <http://aotm.rohanreyniers.com.au/images/stories/aotmimages/themap.jpg>

Map 2: Australian coast of 1796

- http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/encounter/collection/B12088390_94.htm

Map 3: Matthew Flinders Map of Australia with sections of uncharted coast 1802

- http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/encounter/collection/B12985211_92.pdf

Map 4: Matthew Flinders Map of South Australian coastline 1802

- http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/encounter/collection/B12985211_152.pdf

5. Early explorers (History)

A number of explorers were responsible for opening up Australia to settlement. They included Gregory Blaxland (p. 12), William Wentworth (p.12), William Lawson (p.12), George Bass (p. 13-14), Matthew Flinders (p. 14) and John Oxley (p. 17). Choose one of these early explorers and prepare a one page profile on them including their background and details of their exploration of the country. Which settlements occurred because of them?

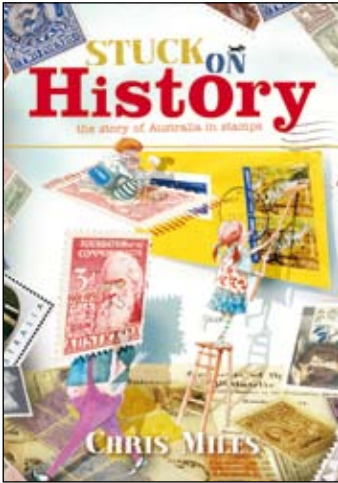
6. Settlements (History/ICT)

The settlement of each colony in Australia occurred in very unique fashion (p. 16-19). Choose one of the original colonies and prepare a PowerPoint presentation outlining the history of its settlement. Who were the important people involved? When did settlement first occur? And any other interesting facts about the settlement that made it different from the others. Your choices include:

- New South Wales
- Van Diemen's Land
- Western Australia
- South Australia
- Victoria
- Queensland
- Northern Territory

7. Gold rush (History/Numeracy)

The gold rush led to a great increase in Australia's population as well as a change to its makeup as it brought migrants from many different countries into Australia



for the first time. Using the information presented in the following website <http://sbs.com.au/sbsmain/gold/story.html?topicid=5> in order to complete the following:

- Click on "The Immigration Rush"
- Using the information here draw a graph showing the population increase of both Victoria as a colony, and the gold fields themselves.
- Calculate the percentage increase in the population over this time period for Victoria, for the goldfields and for New South Wales
- Draw a pie chart showing the place of birth of people on the gold fields in 1861

8. Australia's first stamps (History/Art/ICT)

In 1840 (p. 21) Britain introduced penny postage and stamps as a means for pre-paying for postal services. Their first stamp was the "Penny Black" which showed a portrait of Queen Victoria on it. On page 22 we learn that in 1850 the colony of NSW introduced its own stamps, with the other colonies following suit.

Using the internet research the first stamps introduced into each colony. Find a picture of each and describe the features of the stamp. Why do you think these were included? What is the visual appeal of the stamp? Present your findings in a visual format; this could be using ICT or a poster.

Resources:

- <http://blueowlsstamps.com.au/rhome1d.asp> - Australian colonies stamps
- <http://www.stampdomain.com/country/australia/display.htm> - When stamps were introduced

9. Sail power vs. steam power (Science)

Page 23 looks at the introduction of steam powered ships into the colonies.

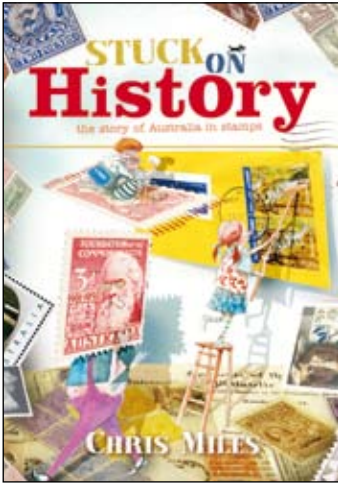
They never fully replaced sailing ships as they were very expensive. Investigate the advantages and disadvantages of steam as a method of powering ships by completing this experiment: <http://www.energyquest.ca.gov/projects/steamboat.html>

Write up your findings.

9. Morse code (Science)

Communicating via the traditional method of mail was a long and slow process (p. 24). But in 1844 Samuel Morse invented Morse code, which allowed messages to be sent via electrical current. Using this information on Morse code http://ciphers.navalspooks-ctsandcrabs.us/morse_code.html write up a message for a person in your class, when it is completed swap messages with them and decipher it.

Once you have deciphered the code, type it back into this Morse code translator <http://morsecode.scphillips.com/jtranslator.html> and listen to what it would sound like over the telegraph line.



10. The Electrical Telegraph (Science)

Morse code was sent via and Electric Telegraph line (p. 25). Research the science and history behind the electrical telegraph and create a poster showing a diagram of how an electrical telegraph works and the history behind its creation.

11. Overland telegraph line & BAT (History/Geography)

On a map of Australia show the telegraph lines that were built in Australia. Show the locations of where they began and finished, the dates in which they were built and the names of the lines. Annotate the map with profiles of the main people and companies involved in their construction.

12. Telephones in Australia (History)

On page 28 we learn that early telephone lines connected on phone to another, with calls only being able to be made between those two telephones. In order for telephones to reach other lines they must be passed through an exchange. We learn on page 29 that the first exchange was set up in Melbourne in 1880. Find out some other interesting facts about the telephone in Australia:

- What was the first telephone service installed in Australia? Who installed it, when, and where did it connect to?
- How many telephone numbers existed at the first exchange in Melbourne? Who operated the exchange?
- Who were the early subscribers mainly made up of?
- How many calls per year were handled by the Melbourne exchange? How many was this per day?
- When did the first coin operated public phones appear in Australia?

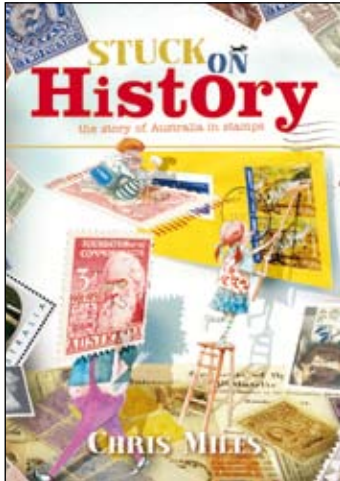
Resources to use

- <http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/tia/530.html>
- <http://www.girl.com.au/geoffrey-blainey-victorian-history.htm>
- <http://www.actewagl.com.au/Education/communications/Telephone/AustTelephoneNetworks/TelephoneHistoryAust.aspx>
- http://www.onlymelbourne.com.au/melbourne_details.php?id=3759

13. The Post Office (History)

On page 29 we learn that by 1893 all of Australia's telegraph and telephone lines were controlled by the postal departments of each colony and were often the biggest and grandest buildings in the town.

Research the history of your local Post Office, or if this is too difficult the main Post Office of your capital city. When was it built? What did it house? Who was in charge? Would you consider it to be the grandest building (of its time) in your city?



14. Federation (History/Civics & Citizenship)

Prior to 1901 and federation there existed 6 separate colonies with their own laws, their own mail routes, their own postage rates, their own stamps, telegraph and telephone lines and railways (p. 30). Federation brought the colonies together as one nation, under a constitution and saw the creation of Federal bodies such as the Postmaster-General. Using the information presented on pages 30, 31 & 32, and any other information that you research, construct a 20 question quiz on Federation. If you wish to make it interactive, make use of the free program Hot Potatoes: <http://hotpot.uvic.ca/>.

15. First official stamp – design your own (Arts)

For over 10 years after federation each of the states were still using their colonial stamps. A competition was run to design a new “Australian” stamp. On page 33 we learn about this competition and the winning stamps, one an image of the king, and the other an iconic image of Australia and a kangaroo. Read through the stamp issue policy of Australia Post, noting in particular what can and cannot be included on an Australian stamp <http://www.auspost.com.au/philatelic/stamps/sip.asp>. Using this information you are to design your own Australian stamp for issue. When presenting your design you must explain why you have chosen it and what it means. You should prepare to present your design to the class.

16. Communication during war time (History)

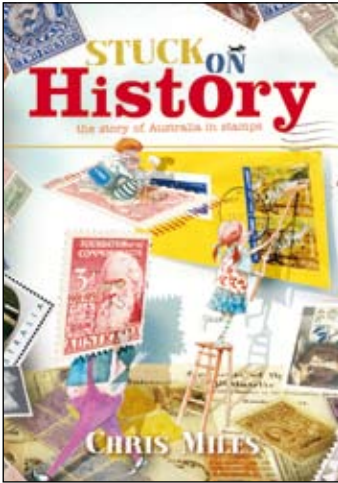
On pages 34-35 and 40-41 we learn about the role of communication during war time. The telegraph was vitally important for soldiers to communicate with home and for the armed forces to communicate with one another. Look at these primary resources showing examples of communication during the war years. What do they tell us about life at that time? How important was it for the soldiers and civilians to be able to communicate with one another? Comment in particular on the contents of these letters/telegrams

Resources:

- <http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=975&c=2503>
- <http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?a=10&c=2463&mode=singleImage>
- <http://www.wwar1.blogspot.com/>
- http://www.dadswell.id.au/stories/dadswell_henry_ww1_timeout_0107.htm
- <http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?c=5413&mode=singleImage>
- <http://www.ww2australia.gov.au/scrapiron/images/jack/letters.pdf>
- <http://www.ww2australia.gov.au/wardeclared/index.html> (click on telegrams to left of page)

17. The evolution of airmail (History)

On pages 36 & 37 we learn of the evolution of airmail in Australia. The use of planes to deliver mail occurred alongside the pioneering efforts of early



aviators. Profile an early Australian aviator who set one of the early record breaking flights, choose from those mentioned in the book.

18. Radio (History/ICT)

The age of radio came about in 1920 (p. 39) when the voice of an opera singer was broadcast 12 km's away to parliament house in Victoria. Since that time radio has had a very special place in Australian homes. Prepare your own radio show about the importance of radio in Australian lives. Research its history and the role it has today and record your show as a "Podcast" using free software such as Audacity (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>) to do so. Try uploading it to the web for other people to listen to.

19. "Populate or Perish" – Postwar Migration (History)

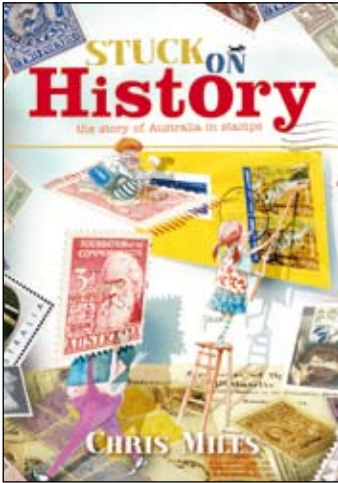
On page 41 we learn about the migration of people to Australia after World War 2. In order to grow our population to protect us from future threats, the Prime Minister used the term "Populate or perish".

Read the following stories of migrants to Australia in the post-war period:

- <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/belongings/people/benussi/>
- <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/belongings/people/peadon/>
- <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/belongings/people/kloosterman/index.shtml>
- <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/belongings/people/krain/>
- <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/belongings/people/cout-soumbes/index.shtml>
- <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/belongings/people/lee/index.shtml>
- <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/belongings/people/drexler/index.shtml>

Complete the following:

- On a map show where each migrant family originally came from and where they settled in Australia
- Identify the main reasons for migrating to Australia, was there a common reason?
- What sorts of belongings did the migrants bring for their journey? What was most important to them?
- What has their life been like in Australia? Was life for them very different to your life?



20. Australia Post and Telecom (History/Commerce)

In 1975 the Federal Government divided the Postmaster General into two separate organisations. Australia Post was created to look after postal services and Telecom was created to look after telecommunications. Why do you think that this decision was made? How have Australia Post and Telecom (now Telstra) changed since they were divided? Create a profile of each organisation outlining their history since they divided their corporate image and the communication services they provide to Australians.

21. Staying connected, portraits of our history (History/Visual Literacy/Arts)

This book provides a number of Australian stamps that show important portraits of our history as a nation. By looking at these stamps we can learn more about ourselves and our identity.

Go through the book and choose 3 stamps that you feel express Australia's identity. Explain why you have chosen them and what they say about Australia.

Locate the latest version of the Stamp Bulletin (http://www.auspost.com.au/philatelic/stamps/index.asp?link_id=2.13) and read through it. What are the stamp issue themes for this coming period? What/who do they feature? Why do you think they were chosen? What do they say about Australia's identity?

About the author

Chris Miles holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree, but soon after graduating he made the economically dubious but spiritually fulfilling decision to become a writer and not an accountant. Strangely, his first book is about money.

His favourite banknote is the \$100 note — it holds a mysterious allure for him, since he's rarely had one in his possession.

He lives in Melbourne and as well as being a writer of fiction and nonfiction is also a freelance web designer and an editor for a medical organisation.

Visit Chris's website at <http://chrismiles.com.au>