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English IV

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The Coming of Age for Modern Day Australia

Australia, officially known as the Commonwealth of Australia, is a very young country in the civilized world, yet the majority of the world's empires knew about Australia's existence for quite a long time. Theorists suggest that a number of relics are evidence that the Portuguese were the first explorers to reach Australia, although the first recorded exploration was conducted by the Dutch. The Dutch first explored the land in 1606 after a Dutch East India Company fleet had blown off course, however, it was first colonized by the British not too long ago. The British efforts to colonize Australia is significant because it led to much more than a colony.

Australia has been inhabited for centuries, but there are many reasons Britain was the catalyst for the changing of cultures and the creation of a recognized nation (Anglo Australians). "For over 40,000 years, the aboriginal people had lived in harmony with their environment. However, when England first settled Australia in 1788, and made it a penal colony for its overcrowded prison population, all that was to change" (Anglo Australians). Recent evidence indicates that Australian aboriginals are descendants of the first people to cross the land-bridges from Africa to Asia around 70,000 years ago; and arrived in mainland Australia 50,000 years ago. Instruments and tools that were unearthed in the 1970's, indicate that humans may have lived in Australia for over 100,000 years. The Chinese or middle-eastern Asians may have been the first to see Australia, although the proof remains undocumented. The Portuguese may have discovered the West Coast in the sixteenth century. The Spanish found land in the same area but

did not go through with a creation of a colony. In 1615, a Dutch explorer reached modern day Cape York, the northernmost point on the Australian continent, but didn't connect it with Spanish or Portuguese discoveries. It was on April 29, 1770, British naval captain, Captain James Cook and his crew first, set foot in Australia.

The establishment of multiple colonies throughout Australia proved to be a great success, although, many might agree it was detrimental to the indigenous. (Captain Cook Arrives in Australia) "In 1766 the Royal Society of London convinced King George III (1738–1820) to sponsor an expedition to view the transit of the planet Venus across the sun." (Captain Cook Arrives in Australia, The Event). With the obsession of expanding their empire for world domination, the British Royal Society decided it was best to establish a southern colony. When the British were able to construct ships that could endure long trips, crews were sent on adverse quests to explore the East Indies and Southeast Asia and gain hold of the land. The region was rich with resources, and raw materials that the British needed for any hopes of expanding an empire. They opened new trade routes around their newfound region. Australia became an expansive resource of the British Empire. Captain Cook first named the area in which he established hold of the land, Sting Ray Harbor, because of the large number of sting rays he caught there; but when the two botanists of the crew, Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, went to shore, they were astonished at the plethora of new species of plants and flowers they found. They brought botanical samples to England, and the name was changed to Botany Bay. After Cook's first voyage, Australia was no longer an unknown landmass. Australia was now understood not to be an archipelago, but a continent. He illustrated the first accurate map of the coast of Australia; outlining the shore with few mistakes. Captain Cook's exploration was a great success for him and Great Britain, greatly expanding the British Empire. Following the losses of colonial

America, in 1783, the British Government sent the “First Fleet” of ships, under Captain Arthur Phillip’s command, to establish a main penal colony in the state of New South Wales known as Sydney Cove. Other Australian penal colonies included Norfolk Island, Tasmania, and Queensland. On 26 January, 1788, a camp was built and the flag raised at Sydney Cove. Today that date is known as “Australia Day”, although, the British penal Colony of Sydney Cove was not officially recognized until 7 February, 1788. The first settlement led to the establishment of present day Sydney. Other factors that lead to a civilized society followed, such as farming, trade and business; and the colonization of other regions. Supporters of Irish Home Rule or Trade Unionism were often deported to these Australian colonies. Without the availability of prisoner labor, agricultural and construction jobs required to sustain a community, the colonization of Australia may not have been conceivable, however, The results of colonization were disastrous for the indigenous people. In just a couple of weeks, the diseases brought by the British settlers would attack the the natives. Similar to other colonies established by Britain, the diseases spread rapidly, devastating the indigenous population.

With the great effort and time put into the colonization of Australia, it was soon to be a self-governing nation. “Australia is formally governed by a constitutional monarchy headed by the monarch of the United Kingdom . . . National administration is carried out through a federal parliamentary democracy. The government combines elements of the U.S. model of governance—the concept of federalism and the separation of powers—and the Westminster system of parliamentary conventions used in the United Kingdom.” (Commonwealth of Australia, Government Structure). The Australian Constitution was drafted after a multitude of constitutional conventions in the late 1800’s. British Parliament passed the proposal as part of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act of 1900, which was made effective on 1

January 1901. Australia is divided into six states. New South Wales, Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, and Tasmania; along with two great contiguous territories, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Australia has the lowest population-land mass ratio. Almost all of Australia's population resides in coastal towns because the climate of the Outback is hellish with heat. Australians identify themselves with European Culture; because of this, they have attained a high standard of living; and have put themselves as part of the industrialized world. During conflicts in the 1970s and 1980s, many Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees, fled to Australia. This allowed for many innocent families to start their lives over. This was imperative for such a young country because made way for greater diversity across the land; and new opportunities for many. However, there is still mistreatment of the indigenous. Many Aboriginals have trouble receiving healthcare. The Aboriginals who are fortunate enough to receive healthcare, often find themselves lost with the small amount of doctors and hospitals who will accept their policy; along with finding quality care for illnesses and ailments.

Henry Lawson is among the most notable Australian writers. Many agree that he earned the title as Australia's "Greatest Short-Story Writer". His short-story "The Union Buries Its Dead" is among that list of great short-stories:

The departed was a "Roman", and half the town were otherwise-but the unionism is stronger than creed. Drink, however, is stronger than unionism; and, when the hearse presently arrived, more than two-thirds of the funeral were unable to follow. They were too drunk . . . On the way to the cemetery we passed three shearers sitting on the shady side of a fence. One was drunk-very drunk. The other two covered their right ears with their hats, out of respect for the departed-

whoever he might have been- and one of them kicked the drunk and muttered something to him. (Lawson 1 & 2)

The plot of the story was the narrator attending a funeral for a squatter named James Tyson; whom drowned while trying to cross a billabong. Great elements of this story include how stereotypical the people of the community are. The Stereotypical Australian is as follows: a unionist, republican and advocate of egalitarianism. Although, with this stereotype was also the habitual drinking and gambling, little involvement with family, dissatisfaction with religion, and an emphasis of physical strengths over intellectual pursuits, as well as a strong regard for male bonding. The unique aspect to this story is the respect for the deceased that the characters portray. The characters only seem to know the victim's name, yet most of the town attends the funeral to show respect to the family and for the dead. This reinforces the idea of mateship and egalitarianism. Everyone was seen as equal and males held their respect for each other in their highest regard.

Today, Australia is home to over 23 million people and counting. It continues to govern the whole continent, along with the outlying islands. In a relatively short amount of time, Australia has been able to develop into first world economy. Australia also has one of the most magnificent economies in the world; which continues to thrive in a competitive global market. Australia is a major exporter of products, such as wheat and wool; along with iron, coal, gold and natural gas. In recent years, Australia has put emphasis on improving communal infrastructure, including education, healthcare and public transportation. In all, Great Britain's previous agenda to colonize Australia has proven to be unparalleled.

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