Asia 21: Australians studying Asia in the 21st century

National Asian Languages and Studies in School Program
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Asia 21: Australians studying Asia in the 21st century

Why study Asia?

In so many ways, Australia’s future lies hand in hand with that of Asia. It is therefore important for young Australians in particular to become more knowledgeable, confident and ‘fluent’ in their understanding of the Asian region. In a recent address in Houston, Texas, Australia’s ambassador to the United States, Kim Beazley (2010) observed that, “Australia’s security and our prosperity depend on the extent to which we are engaged, entrenched, enmeshed and entangled in Asia.” It doesn’t get much more up-close and personal than that. In these sentiments he echoes the ideas and ideals of a number of Australia’s recent Prime Ministers.

But just what is Asia? Where does Asia begin and end? People sometimes argue about the western ‘edge’ of Asia. It tends to be defined as that part of the landmass Eurasia that is to the east of the Ural Mountains. This is a broad definition that includes places such as Israel, but most Israelis wouldn’t consider themselves as Asians.

The southeastern boundary of Asia is also a little difficult to define. Indonesia is included in nearly all definitions of Asia. This includes the province of Papua, the western half of the island New Guinea. Most people in Papua have not considered themselves as Asians. More recently however, there has been a big influx to Papua of people from Java. Across the border, in Papua New Guinea, the people would not consider themselves to be Asian.

While most people would not consider Australia to be part of Asia, it is certainly in the Asian region. It influences and is highly influenced by the countries in the region, for reasons such as geography, history, demography and economics, as the following sections show.
Our geography

Darwin is closer to Jakarta and Brunei than it is to Sydney or Canberra.

Part of the Asian geographical influence in Australia is environmental in nature. In 1982, Mount Galunggung on Java erupted, its ash giving Australia spectacular sunsets for some months, and briefly disabling a British Airways jet en route to Australia and New Zealand. Occasionally, smoke from forest fires in Indonesia reaches northern Australia. Fortunately for cities like Darwin, most of the burning takes place during the southern hemisphere dry season, so the prevailing winds carry the smoke further north, much to Singapore’s displeasure.

As in any neighbourhood, it’s worthwhile to get to know, understand and get on with our neighbours.

Our demography

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT, 2010a), of those people who were not born in Australia, the biggest group comes from Europe (2,122,000) followed by Asia (1,210,000). So, while those born in Europe outnumber those born in Asia by almost 2:1, the number of Asian-born people in Australia is significant, almost one person in ten.

There are more than 200 languages used in Australian households. Four of the six most commonly spoken ones, excluding English, are of Asian origin. The list is: Italian, Greek, Cantonese, Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese (DFAT, 2010a). This language base is important in terms of Australia’s international competitiveness. The speakers of these languages each carry a wealth of associated cultural knowledge.
Asia figures significantly, but not overwhelmingly, in our population statistics.

According to the 2006 census (DFAT, 2010d) four of the most common countries of residents’ birth (apart from Australia itself) are Asian. As can be seen from the figure below, the most common Asian countries of origin are China, Vietnam, India and the Philippines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 United Kingdom</td>
<td>1 038 150</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 New Zealand</td>
<td>389 460</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 China</td>
<td>206 590</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Italy</td>
<td>199 120</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Vietnam</td>
<td>159 850</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 India</td>
<td>147 110</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Philippines</td>
<td>120 540</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Greece</td>
<td>109 990</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Germany</td>
<td>106 530</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 South Africa</td>
<td>104 130</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part of our demographics, of course, is the religious affiliation of Australians. ‘Eastern’ religions are among the fastest growing in Australia, but only in percentage terms, not actual numbers of people. This is because they have lower numbers to start with. The main non-Christian groups are included in the table over, which is Wikipedia’s (2010) summary of Australian Bureau of Statistics information. You can see that while Hinduism increased by more than 50 percent, this was only a 0.2 percent increase of Australia’s total population. Still, this shows a change in Australia’s religious landscape, even though the biggest change is the increase in people claiming ‘no religion’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religions</th>
<th>2006 Number</th>
<th>2006 %</th>
<th>2001 Number</th>
<th>2001 %</th>
<th>% change (relative)</th>
<th>% change (absolute)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhis</td>
<td>418753</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>357813</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>+17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>340397</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>281578</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>+20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>148123</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>95473</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>+55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>113876</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>98125</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriental Orthodox</td>
<td>40901</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>36324</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you include the Middle East as part of Asia, then Christianity, Islam and Judaism are also 'Asian religions'.

Based on the table above, if Australia had a population of 200 people, approximately:
- 128 would identify as Christian
- 37 would claim no religion
- 22 wouldn’t be telling us
- 4 would identify as Buddhist
- 3 would identify as Muslim
- 1 would identify as Hindu and
- 1 would identify as Jewish.

A couple of related questions come to mind:
- How is it that most of the time we can manage in Australia to 'live and let live' when it comes to differences of religion? (It’s probably fair to say that arguments within faiths are often as robust as arguments between them in Australia.)
- What can we do to keep it that way, or for that matter, to make it better, presuming that’s the future we would prefer?

Just as there are non-Christians in Australia, there are considerable numbers of Christians in Asia. According to the CIA (2010a), the proportion of Christians in China is between three and four percent. To make the maths easy, in a population of 1 billion people, this would mean between 30 and 40 million Christians – but the population of China is actually more than 1.3 billion. So there are more Christians in China than there are people in Australia. Christianity is the predominant religion of South Korea (with more than 25% of the population) and the Philippines (with more than 85% of the population).
Our world

Asia exerts enormous influence not just in the Australian scheme, but also on the world stage. It is home to about two-thirds of the world’s population, much of the world’s economic development, and globally influential religions and philosophies, for example.

The influence of Asia is not just a new phenomenon; the Mongol Empire, for example, covered a greater area than any other in history. This is just one of a number of empires, including some just to Australia’s north, in present-day Indonesia. For example, the kingdom of Majapahit, which centred on Java from the 13th to the 16th centuries, extended as far northwest as Thailand. China is credited with the invention of many items, such as the compass and gunpowder. The civilisations of the Indus Valley in present-day India, contributed a great deal of new knowledge to the human race, including the number system we now use.

Our economy

According to DFAT (2010b), six of Australia’s ten biggest trading partners are in Asia, including three of the top four (the third and fifth positions going to the United States and the United Kingdom respectively). Britain increasingly sees its economic future as tied up in its own region, Europe. The figures are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Percentage of all trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>44.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Education: better than gold!

Our five top exports are:

1. coal
2. iron ore
3. education
4. gold
5. tourism.

As can be seen from the list above, one of Australia’s most important export industries is education; it is worth more to us than our gold exports. The comparison with gold might seem rather shallow. It might seem somewhat unfair to make a profit from ‘selling’ education, but that’s another argument. The export of education is significant for a number of reasons:

- it brings in money that can then be used to improve educational facilities and the education of teachers.

- if English is not a student’s first language, time spent in Australia offers them the opportunity to practise and improve their English skills, even if they are not studying the language. For the time being at least, a knowledge of English is important globally. Perhaps more importantly, this is a (pardon the pun) golden opportunity for us to get to know these students and for them to get to know us better. In other words, the resulting education can be broader than just what happens in the classroom.

- in exporting education, we are exporting ideas and ideologies that many of us would agree are important for a peaceful, cooperative and sustainable world. These include values such as responsible freedom, tolerance and the like. This offers us an important opportunity, and asks of us a serious responsibility to ‘make our education count’. It is also important that our students from overseas have a positive and enjoyable experience of Australia while they are here. Hopefully, we can work hard at making our guests feel welcome.

- perhaps most importantly, exporting education shares with others a commodity that almost all of us would hold dear. For instance, if you are reading this, there are probably two assumptions that can be made about you: you see education as valuable; you have a reasonable level of expertise in English.

From this, hopefully it can be seen that education is ‘better than gold’ in so many ways.

As for the other four top exports – minerals and tourism, the advantages of having local markets is probably obvious.
Our history

In our history we have tended to overlook the Asian region. For example, for all its size, many Australians know nothing about the kingdom of Majapahit, mentioned before. School studies of Australian history have tended to concentrate on ‘Captain Cook and all that’. For some time prior to Cook’s arrival, however, Macassans from present-day Sulawesi were already trading with Aboriginal peoples in the north of Australia.

It is probably accurate to say, that in its early settlement history, Australia turned its back on Asia.

Perhaps the first significant non-European migration to Australia was that of the Chinese during the Gold Rush of the 1850s. The Chinese miners were at times treated with a mixture of fear and hostility by other prospectors. An example of this in New South Wales is the Lambing Flat riots.

One of the first acts of our Federal Parliament after Federation in 1901 was to ban immigration of non-white people. This became known as the ‘White Australia Policy’. We even had a dictation test, which could be administered in any European language, designed to exclude anyone we wanted, but to make that exclusion look fair. Nobody would be able to pass such a test.

Initial post-World War II migration extended to Europe, but still tended to exclude Asia. During this cold-war period, much of our engagement with Asia was war-related, with Australian involvement in the Korea and Vietnam wars. The prevailing rhetoric was the ‘domino theory’, in which if South Vietnam or South Korea fell to communism, the other countries to their south, in turn, would become communist and threaten Australia. These fears were perhaps understandable; memories of Japanese expansion in the Second World War were still fresh in the minds of many.

The White Australia Policy remained ‘on the books’ until the 1970s.

Maybe it was time for a new beginning.
What else does a study of Asia offer?

New worlds to explore

As mentioned in the above sections, Australia has tended to turn its back on Asia, so for many of us the study of Asia offers us new and interesting horizons. When it comes to literature, who are the Shakespeares of the east? In the eastern art world, who are the Monets, for example?

A better understanding of ourselves

Because Asian worldviews and philosophies offer different perspectives, they help us not just to understand Asian societies better, but help us to see ourselves in a new light.

A challenge to our assumptions

Seeing ourselves in a new light, as mentioned above, might help us to challenge and question the assumptions we might have about the way we have always done things.

The sealed section: What if I don’t like everything I see?

You won’t.

That’s not a misprint.

Well, you probably won’t feel comfortable with everything you encounter, in any case. Almost certainly you’ll come across things that you disagree with, or that confuse, confront or even offend you when studying Asia. It is important to move beyond the quaint. One problem with a document such as this is that it can present its topic in a squeaky-clean light. Firstly, that’s not the case; Asia has imperfections just as does Australia or any other place or set of cultures you care to mention. Secondly, a crucial part of any study of Asia or any other topic is critical reflection. It should be added, though, that while a study of Asia should invite us to question and critique what we see, as mentioned above, it should also challenge and test our assumptions of Australian cultures. Some of the confronting issues that you may encounter include:

- working conditions, and religious and political restrictions in China
- the military regime in Burma and ongoing imprisonment of Aung San Suu Kyi
- coming to terms with Cambodia’s Pol Pot regime
- Japanese occupation of other nations in the lead up to and during the Second World War
- conflicting images of Pakistan: source of terrorism or friendly cricket rival and competitor?
Tea with milk, what’s that all about?

Okay, the heading above is very trivial and superficial, but just as a number of people of Asian background might wonder why anyone would put milk in tea, there will be some things in Asian cultures that those of us from different backgrounds might find hard to fathom. Of course, some of the differences will be much more significant than tea preferences. Further complicating this, we all tend to view our own and other people’s cultures and histories selectively. American children might be taught about Pearl Harbor in World War II as if it were more or less the first Japanese-US encounter. Japanese children, on the other hand, are more likely to be taught about the ‘Black Ships’. While Americans might celebrate their own role in World War II in the Philippines and that of Douglas Macarthur, they tend to be more silent on the earlier Philippine-American war, in which Filipinos attempted to assert their independence from the USA. And, of course, it’s not just the Americans. In Australia we might justifiably celebrate our contribution to the independence of East Timor from Indonesia, but our involvement with the East Timorese during the Second World War, as well as turning a blind eye towards the original Indonesian invasion in 1975, is less worthy of celebration. Australia could be accused of assuming a stance of entitlement, as demonstrated by disagreements over access to oil resources in the Timor Gap and the use of East Timor for refugee processing. Similarly, at least some people in Vietnam might see Australia as an invading force in what they tend to call ‘The American War’. Australia’s treatment of some Indian students has been poorly viewed by at least some sections of the Indian media, and probably with some justification. What started out as a discussion about tea, developed into something more serious. We all have issues that we need to face with honesty and courage. But there’s always an opportunity for a new beginning.

We began by quoting Kim Beazley’s speech in the USA. The four words he used to describe Australia’s situation with regard to Asia were: engaged, entrenched, enmeshed and entangled. Not all of these adjectives would seem entirely positive. ‘Enmeshed’ and ‘entangled’, for example, seem messy, but that’s the way with so many relationships! Just prior to this description of Australia’s future with Asia, Mr Beazley also observed, “you might describe some past Australian policies in terms of isolationism, a brand of isolationism which combined nostalgia with myopia and wishful thinking”.

Despite, or perhaps because of these things, it is time for a better, a more understanding, informed and productive future of Australia alongside Asia. It is worth asking yourself, ‘where does Asia begin and end in my thinking?’ It is well and truly a good time for new beginnings.
The future

With improved communication, travel prospects and globalised futures, an understanding of our region is more important than ever. Moreover, acceptance of those who are different to us is a sign of our maturity as a nation. It is sad to say that our reputation internationally on such issues has not always been good.

Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is on record as wanting Australia to become the most Asia-literate nation outside Asia (The World Today, 2010). While it is difficult to quantify such things, it could reasonably be argued that Australia already holds this position, and simply needs to maintain its competitive advantage. This, of course, is where education plays a crucial role. As an example of Australia’s existing ‘Asia capital’, the NSW Higher School Certificate offers courses in about a dozen Asian languages (depending on how you define Asia), some at a number of levels, from beginner to ‘background’ ('native speaker') levels.1

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1 Languages offered for the HSC are: Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, (Classical) Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Malay, Persian, Tamil, Turkish and Vietnamese.
Mainly for teachers and principals

Asia in your local community

War memorial to Chinese Australian ex-servicemen and women, Dixon Street, Sydney

The number and variety of, to borrow a historians’ term, ‘primary sources’ for your teaching about Asia will vary enormously, depending on where you are teaching. Isolated schools may have no local resources to draw upon, and may need to liaise with other schools and communities, and use online sources. Most small towns will have a Chinese restaurant. It is possible that a local war memorial will contain the name of an Australian soldier of Chinese descent, and the local cemetery may also contain links with Asia. Your area might have some connections with the Afghani camel traders, such as in Broken Hill, which has New South Wales’ oldest mosque (DFAT, 2010c).

Of course, the larger the town or the closer you are to a major city, the more resources you are likely to be able to draw upon. As you look around the area, are there any signs in an Asian language, such as Chinese, Korean or Japanese? Why might this be? Do you ever receive advertising in the mail with links to an Asian theme, or in an Asian language? Does your local government authority distribute information in languages other than English? Does the local phone book contain any non-English text? Can you buy Asian-language newspapers locally? Are there any local organisations that have links with Asia? Is there a mosque, or Hindu or Buddhist temple. Is there an Asian grocery store?
Where do I start?

What does an Asia-literate school look like?

Building up a picture of Asia (this is probably the most important part of the document)

When considering Asia, or anything you are learning about or teaching, it is important to ask ourselves, and keep asking ourselves, some of the following questions:

- How do I build up my mental picture of Asia?
- What things influence this image, how and why?
- Am I quick to believe some things about Asia, and quick to doubt or disbelieve other things? Why might this be so?
- If I’m coming across new information about Asia, what does this information say to my mind and to my heart? In other words, how do I react to these new pieces of information? Is my reaction strong or weak, positive or negative? Most importantly, what does this teach or reveal about me, not just about Asia?

Staff

Perhaps do a personal inventory of your own Asian experience and knowledge, and ask your colleagues to do likewise:

- Have you travelled to anywhere in Asia (and did you take photos, buy artefacts, etc. that you could use in your teaching)?
- Do you speak any Asian languages (even a few words or a smattering)?
- Do you enjoy cooking (or eating!) any of the various Asian cuisines?
- Have you seen movies, documentaries or television shows, or read novels or poetry in an Asian language, set in Asia (and/or with links to Asia, such as Mao’s Last Dancer)?
- Are you familiar with any art forms of Asia, such as martial arts or Asian theatre, such as water puppetry, noh or kabuki, wood block, origami, or literature forms such as haiku, or sports, such as sumo?
- Have you visited a mosque or a Hindu temple in Australia?
- Do you have family members, friends, colleagues or neighbours who might be able to talk to you and/or your students about their experiences in Asia?
Resources

Without quality resources, your study of Asia will be impoverished, and staff will tend to abandon Asia for better-resourced topics in any case.

It is worth doing an audit and inventory of your resources.

- Are they extensive and broad-ranging?
- Are they up-to-date?
- Do they offer opportunities for your students to look deeper, into thinking and motivations behind individuals’ and groups’ behaviour?
- Are they inclusive of a variety of perspectives?
- Do they transcend stereotypes?
- Do they appear to foster a critical literacy?

If your library doesn’t already have a catalogue of children’s picture books according to topics, it might be useful to have a list of books on Asian topics. This doesn’t have to be solely the librarian’s job; all staff can contribute to this list as they encounter useful and relevant books.

Curriculum

We started by asking where does Asia start and end. Where does it start and end in your curriculum and teaching? There is a good chance that you have already included Asia in your teaching. If you made reference to the Beijing Olympics or Paralympics, or the New Delhi Commonwealth Games, then you have been including Asia in your teaching.

Some syllabus entry points:

**HSIE**

- the Gold Rush – you could investigate Chinese immigration to Australia and the Chinese miners’ treatment at the hands of Australian diggers
- Federation - the lead-up to the enactment of the White Australia Policy
- cultures – a profile of any country or comparison of any two or more countries or cultures in the Asian region would be appropriate
- religions – all five word religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, originate from Asia
- environments – why not study the Indonesian rainforests instead of, or as well as, the Amazon? Maintaining or restoring habitat for orang-utans (an Indonesian word, by the way – orang means person, hutan means forest) could be a powerful motivator for your students. Your students might also be surprised at how close to Australia you can find animals such as tigers (Sumatran tigers used to even be on Bali) and rhinoceroses (Java).
Any of the demographic, economic and other information provided in this booklet (or more updated versions) could be a good springboard for a comparative study, as could the information that follows.

In other KLAs, inclusions could include:

- in English, the study of literature ranging from children’s picture books to novels set in Asia, and/or written by Asian authors. This could also include studying biographical texts, or reading and writing haiku
- in maths, working with tangrams and Asian number notations, and the history of mathematical developments
- investigating scientific developments from Asia, such as those mentioned elsewhere in this document
- in creative arts, studying dances including Filipino tinikling, as well as other art forms referred to in this document
- in PDHPE, studying games and pastimes with strong Asian links, such as ‘hackey sack’, or typical Asian diets and their relationship with health and longevity.

Wherever possible, your study should go beyond a superficial ‘funny hats and houses’ study. It should endeavour to mix empathy with an ability to critique.
Helping me to get started – useful contacts and resources

Even if you feel like you don’t know much about Asia, there are some great resources to help you get started.

**DET resources**

The Teaching and Learning Exchange – TaLe
<www.tale.edu.au/tale/>

Curriculum and Learning Innovation
<lic.det.nsw.edu.au/>

**Curriculum resources and support**

Board of Studies NSW
<www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/>

National Asian Languages and Studies in School Program

**Support networks**

Asia Ednet Asia EdNet
<asia-ednet@edna.edu.au>

Asialink
<www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/>

Asia Education Foundation
<www.asiaeducation.edu.au/default.asp>

**Professional associations**

Asia Education Teachers Association
<www.aeta.org.au/>

Primary HSIE Teachers’ Association Contact: President, Kate Smyth,
<catethine.smyth@sydney.edu.au>

HTA NSW
<www.htansw.asn.au/>

The Social Educators’ Association of Australia
<www.seaa.org.au>

Economics and Business Educators NSW
<www.ebe.nsw.edu.au/>

GTA NSW
<www.gtansw.org.au/>

AusAID
<www.ausaid.gov.au/>

Association for Studies of Religion
<www.asr.org.au/>

Society and Culture Association of NSW
<www.scansw.com.au>
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Accessed 14 May 2010

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Accessed 14 May 2010

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Accessed 21 June 2010

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Accessed 14 May 2010

<www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2010/s2910865.htm>  
Appendix

A case study – Indonesia

Earlier we spoke of getting to know the neighbours. Let’s now take an example of one of the closest neighbours, Indonesia. Why is it worth getting to know Indonesia (and the rest of Asia)? Probably because of both the similarities and differences with Australia. Of course, any of these ideas could be modified to suit any topic related to any Asian country or region.

According to the CIA (2010b) the population of Indonesia is more than 240 million, or ten times that of Australia, in a land area about a quarter of Australia’s. About half of Indonesia’s people, 120 million, live on the island of Java. Java is just over half the size of Victoria. You might expect all of Java to look very industrial, but if you’ve been there, you’ll know that much of it is covered in green rice fields. To illustrate the comparative population densities, count out 142 grains of rice. Each grain represents 1 million people. Sprinkle 22 grains across a transparency of a map of Australia on the overhead projector (presuming you haven’t thrown away your overhead projector!). Try and fit the other 120 grains into Java.

Jakarta, the capital, is a very large city. Conservative estimates of its population put it at over 8 million people. Some estimates put Jakarta’s population at over 20 million people.

Indonesia has more Muslims than any other country, with more than 200 million (CIA, 2010b).

Some lesson ideas:

In HSIE

• A case study on any one of Indonesia’s ethnic groups, such as the Torajah in Sulawesi or the Balinese.

• Looking into Indonesia’s climate (perhaps make comparisons with Darwin, usually on Australian weather bulletins).

• Many schools have copies of Pak Yono, looking at the life of a rice farmer in Indonesia, as an example of social systems and structures. (ISBN 07313382595)

In Languages

• Teach the children how to say hello in Indonesian, or any other language terms you might happen to know. If you want to go a bit further, teach the children how to bargain in Indonesian.
In English

• Read together a book set in Indonesia such as *Imagine You are an Orang-utan*, by Karen Wallace, or a generic book that could be set in Indonesia, such as *Imagine you are a Tiger*, by the same author, and get the children to write any of the following: a report on orang-utans, or other endangered animals; a plea to the UN or similar to preserve habitat, material and plans for an education campaign on habitat loss or similar; a recount: ‘A day in the life of an orang-utan’ either in narrative or recount style; a discussion on the timber industry, or an exposition in favour or against the use of timber. A number of Allan Baillie’s novels are set in Indonesia, including *Treasure Hunters*, *Songman* and *Saving Abbie*.

In maths

• Look at, compare and perhaps graph the various population statistics such as those in this document, or at climate statistics, land areas

• Construct a comparative timeline with Australia

• Ask your students to guess the number of islands in Indonesia. Once they’ve made a ‘mental guess’, slowly write 175 on the board, then walk away. Return to the board and add a zero on the end of that number, again walking away. Then return to the board and add an eight to the end of the number. The CIA (2010b) estimate of the number of islands is 17 508. This is one way of helping your students to understand place value (and the geographic complexity of Indonesia).

In science and technology

• Show your students an image of mature bamboo perhaps as a cutaway, and then ask them to devise ways in which they could use it. Show examples from Indonesia and elsewhere

• Design a seismograph, perhaps as part of a lesson on environments in Indonesia.

In creative arts

• Devise a *wayang kulit* shadow puppet play, using the overhead projector

• Study (and perhaps perform if you have the equipment or can improvise) the gamelan orchestra or angklung bamboo music

• Perhaps make some batik.

In PDHPE

• The lesson idea below, for example, might be useful as a values clarification exercise. You could also look at popular sports in Indonesia, such as football (soccer) and badminton.

A sample lesson

One exercise you could do with your students is an investigation of Indonesia’s coat of arms, to see what Indonesians hold dear. Perhaps look for similarities with the things that Australians generally value.
Indonesia’s coat of arms

The Indonesian word for ‘eagle’ is ‘Garuda’. Its international airline is named after this bird. The garuda is of historical importance as well as religious (particularly Hindu and Buddhist) significance for Indonesia. If you count the number of feathers the garuda has, you will notice that it has 17 feathers on each wing, eight tail feathers and 45 feathers on its breast. You might like to ask your students why these numbers are important. The answer is that Indonesia gained independence on 17 August 1945, at the end of the Second World War. Perhaps you could ask your students, or at least the fast finishers to design an emblem illustrating the date of their birth.

The motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, is in Old Javanese, and is often translated as ‘Unity in Diversity’. Literally, though, it means ‘although in pieces, yet one (i.e. united)’. This makes sense when you think of Indonesia’s more than 10 000 islands. The poem from which this comes encourages religious tolerance. The motto bears some similarities to the United States’ e pluribus unum (from many, one), similarly, in an ancient language, Latin.

The shield, symbolising defence of the nation, is divided into five parts, corresponding to the five pillars or Pancasila (pronounced ‘puncher silla’) laid down in a speech by President Sukarno, Indonesia’s first president. There is a link here with the five pillars of Islam, Indonesia’s dominant religion. The expression pancasila comes from Sanskrit, an ancient language of India. If you know any Hindi, you might recognise the similarity with the word for ‘five’ in that language. The word for the drink ‘punch’ also seems to come from the same origin – it originally had five ingredients.

The star at the centre of the shield represents belief in one god. Indonesia’s constitution specifically recognises six religions, but more broadly guarantees freedom of religion. The chain on the shield could be said to represent the ‘circle of humanity’. The round links represent women and the square links represent men. Perhaps ask your students to predict which one represents which, before telling them. The many branches of the banyan tree represent Indonesia’s unity and common bonds. The bull’s head represents democracy. Apparently the Javanese bull is a social animal, and therefore represents decision-making by consensus. You might like to think of some of its other qualities: strength; willingness to work, etc. In the bottom left hand corner of the shield are rice and cotton. These are said to represent the basic necessities of life: food and clothing. They are also said to represent human labour – agriculture (rice) and industry (cotton), a bit like the former Soviet Union hammer and sickle emblem.

At this stage you might want to ask your students to revisit their own personal emblems. Are they perhaps a bit selfish? What values and ideals might they like to incorporate into their designs? Or perhaps discuss and devise this aspect before they begin their emblems. You could also compare the symbolism of the Australian Coat of Arms – and ask for students’ suggestions for modifying this?

Do note that some of the interpretations above are disputed. As you can see, though, the Indonesian Coat of Arms illustrates many of the things that we as Australians might also value highly. The sources for the above are varied, but a good starting point is the Wikipedia entry on Garuda Pancasila <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garuda_Pancasila>.