

Our cultural environment

Continuing ideas for exploring the environment in all its meanings by Jeanie Clark

Have you heard of Harmony Day? Like Australia Day, it's a day about our multi-cultural society, our cultural environment – without the public holiday! While people often only think of nature for their environments, it also has a broader meaning: all the surroundings. This article will suggest activities [with Learning Areas identified] to explore your cultural environment with your children. Spoiler: examples from Scottish culture.

The stimulus of special days. [English]

Jan 26 is a national public holiday “Australia Day”. March 21 is Harmony Day. Their similarities are shown in these statements:

Australia Day is “a celebration ... that reflects the nation's diverse people” National Australia Day Council, <<https://www.australiaday.org.au/about-australia-day/>>.

“Harmony Day celebrates Australia's cultural diversity.” Australian Government Department of Social Services <<https://www.harmony.gov.au/>>

You can find out more about the focus of these days from the websites above.

One of the aims of last year's IY of Sustainable Tourism for Development was to increase global tolerance as tourists learn about visited cultures. But what about the cultural influences in one's own life? Can it be a part of your home education? Several Learning Areas can be covered in exploring family history, linked family objects or activities, and local cultural diversity.

Where do we come from? [Humanities, Maths]

Most Australian families have more than one culture, or sub-culture, in their background, especially once you go back a couple of generations. Have you done a family tree with your children? A simple base is available at <<http://www.clipartbest.com/cliparts/4ib/ogM/4ibogMe6T.jpg>>. To emphasise cultural backgrounds, you could colour code the different nationalities or cultures of these ancestors. An atlas could be used to find where these countries are and, using the same colour codes, a map, could be used to mark who came from where, e.g. the base one at the right.

What about the area you live in - can you find out its multicultural make-up? The Australian Census is done every five years, so you can even see how it changes over time. The data is at the Australian Bureau of Statistics website <www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/Home/2016%20search%20by%20geography> . Choose *date* (e.g. 2016), *area* (e.g. town or suburb or state) and ‘*quick stats*’. When the area comes up, scroll down the page to find aspects of our population of interest. The ABS is full of numbers and percentages ready for use.

For cultural diversity, consider the *people-cultural and language diversity* tables e.g. ‘*ancestry*’ or *country of birth*. To make an *ancestry* pictograph from this data, create a symbol for 1% e.g. a face with a hat, colour coded for each different nation. Draw a chart with a heading and labelled axis for nation and percent. Put as many repeats of the 1% symbol as needed for each nation. The photo below shows part of one with two of its nations.



How much has your cultural environment changed over time? Some of Victoria's *Ancestry* data is shown in the table below. Anything surprising? Find out about changing ‘waves’ of migration to Australia to explain the changes.

Ancestry of Victoria 1911 and 2011 by countries in %

	Aust.	Eng	Germ.	Austria	Fr	Ire	Scot	India
1911	84.4	6.5	0.5			3.2	2.0	0.1
2011	68.6	3.2	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.6	2.1

WHERE MY FAMILY COMES FROM



KEY to birthplaces					
		Grandparents		Great grandparents	
Mine		My father's mother			
Mum's		My mother's mother			
		My father's father			
Dad's		My mother's father			



Migration contributes to the development of the country in many ways. The Scots have had a big impact being 1/5th of the population in the mid 19thC. Many important leaders have been Scottish or had Scottish background e.g. Hunter, the second governor of NSW. Most well-known is probably Sir Robert Menzies (left), a grandson of Scottish grandparents who migrated to Ballarat's Goldfields. He began school at Jeparit and became PM of Australia. His values of 'doing one's

best' in education and business reflected his Scottish origins.

The Arts [Arts, Humanities, English, Maths]



What is in your home environment that links you to your cultural heritage? At Christmas, I put out a tartan towel. It links me to Scottish heritage, coming from my grandmother, who received it from her Scottish cousin. Can you create an art activity to connect to your heritage? This example is for making a tartan pattern.



You'll need a ruler, blank sheet of paper and two to four colour pencils. Make a series of fat columns on the paper using one colour. Turn it and repeat this column pattern. With a second colour, in the same way, make a thin column pattern - be sure to repeat them in the same position and width from each fat column. Repeat with fat or thin columns for the remaining colours.



What about music and dance? Is there a reason for a particular musical strength in your family? What style and taste in music does your family pass on to your children? For example, in mine, there is a long history of piano players and trained singers. This interest has been passed down from parent to child, possibly a legacy of the Methodist love of music and singing. In the wider

Scottish culture, why are bagpipe bands common?

Do you ever sing "Auld Lang Syne"? From what culture does it come? 18th C, Scotland, Robbie Burns. Yet it has gained global status. Why? The Scots migrated a lot, but it is also has universal sentiments. This video audio is in Scottish, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hm1hwxc92Mo>> while the screen shows words in both Scottish and the English translation. The history of this now global song is found at <<http://www.scotland.org/features/the-history-and-words-of-auld-lang-syne>> You may like to explore other 'global' songs e.g. *Amazing Grace*.

Do you know the history of *Advance Australia Fair*? Peter Dodds McCormick came to Australia in the

Gold Rushes from Glasgow, Scotland. But he stayed in Sydney as a teacher, choir leader and composer. He wrote this patriotic song in 1878. In 1901, a choir of 10,000 sung it at the celebration of Federation. In 1984 two of the five original verses become our national anthem. Why? Look at the original, e.g. at <<http://www.hamilton.net.au/advance.html>> then consider the cultural changes over the century that made some verses no longer appropriate.

Stories [English/ Humanities]

What sorts of stories do you share with your children? Do you consider where stories you share come from? Possibly not, but it is worth considering sometimes for their cultural background. For example, do you know what these story characters have in common? :

- Dr Jekyll, Mr Hyde
- Long John Silver, Jim Hawkins
- Sherlock Holmes, Dr Watson
- Mr Toad, Badger
- Peter Pan, Wendy, Tinkerbell

If stuck, google them, the stories they are in, their authors, their time-period and then which country those authors were born in. They are all classic Scottish 'inventions'. What window on the culture of their writing time comes from their stories? You can do the same with the setting of dramas e.g. *Macbeth*, *Braveheart*, *Highlander* and *Outlander*. (All are set in historic Scotland.)

Poetry can also be a source of historic or geographic cultural awareness, or to see what we have in common with other cultures. Consider "Wee Willie Winkie". This poem about things done by a child to avoid going to bed, went 'viral'. From the Scottish in 1842, translated into English in 1844 and then other languages, it has a universal theme – even for today. What about other Scottish 19thC poems like Stevenson's *the Swing* and *My Shadow*?

Food [Technology, Humanities]

There is just so much to this, not only cooking skills for foods of our cultural heritage, but also knowing what foods are part of our culture, and which have been adopted from another culture, e.g. Shortbread- originally a Scottish New Year treat, now a global one, especially for Christmas

"Everyone belongs" Happy Harmony Day!

I think learning about our cultural heritage is important to help children know who they are and to understand why their family does what they do. Developing awareness of other cultures around us, and recognising what we may have adopted from them, can help develop a base for harmonious living as adults. Our multi-cultural families and society has lots to explore in it!



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