

A scuba diver has the time of her life at the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. (JonMilnes/Shutterstock)

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LAND DOWN UNDER

If you look for it on a globe, you will see that Australia is surrounded on all sides by water. This makes it an island, right?

Wrong, actually.

A long time ago, geographers decided that Australia is too big to be an island. It is a continent.

Australia is known as the “land down under” because it is located “under” the equator. Australia is also the smallest continent. It consists almost entirely of one country, that being the country of Australia.

The outback and the reef

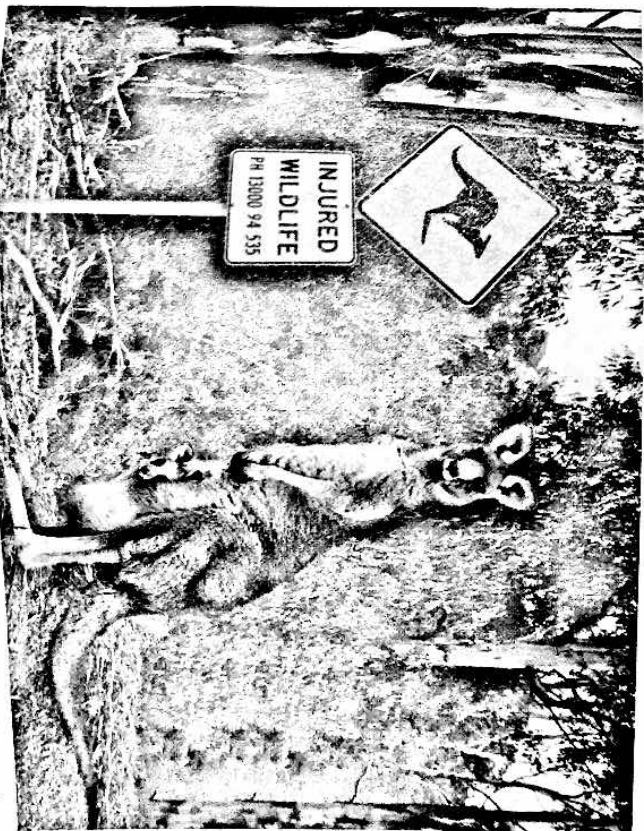
When people think of Australia, they think of a dry place and a wet place.

The dry place is the outback, a desert-like place that covers most of the continent. If you journey through the outback, make sure you bring a large supply of water and a camera. You might see kangaroos, koala bears and dingoes (wild dogs).

Just off the northeastern coast of Australia is the Great Barrier Reef. Coral reefs look like rocks, but they are actually piles of very tiny animals that grow in shallow oceans or seas.

Reefs are beautiful places. Many people love to scuba dive near reefs.

The Great Barrier Reef of Australia is about 1,400 miles long. Parts of it are underwater and parts of it have created islands.



A kangaroo with a baby kangaroo (joey) in her pouch (Shutterstock)

Much in common

Australia and the United States have a lot in common.

English is the main language of both nations.

Both were colonies of Great Britain. However, Australia gained its independence in 1901, more than 100 years after the United States.

Here is something else the U.S. has in common

As you can see from this photo taken from space, most of Australia is dry. (NASA image)



At the Waradah Aboriginal Centre in Australia, you can learn a lot about the Aborigines. (Waradah Aboriginal Centre)

TRUE OR FALSE? The longest fence in the world is in Australia. (Answer on page 96)

with Australia: When colonists arrived in America, they encountered tribes of American Indians who were already living here. As the colonists multiplied and moved west, they pushed these American Indians aside in a process that we must remember.

Today, in most parts of the United States, you have to look hard to find traces of American Indian culture.

In Australia, the native peoples are called **Aboriginals**. The story of the Aboriginal people in Australia is similar to the story of the American Indians in the United States. 🌟

QUESTIONS

- 1) Why is Australia known as the "land down under"?
- 2) Most of Australia consists of a dry, flat area known as the _____.
- 3) In what way is Australia similar to the United States?
- 4) By what name do Australians refer to their native people?