



OXFORD BIG IDEAS HUMANITIES 3

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This book is brilliantly set out, easy to use and provides much relevant material for use at Year 9 level Humanities. The book is divided into two parts: Part 1 History – Nations and Societies and Part 2 – Geography – Sustainability and Diversity. While the words are part of the current catch phrases, they are relevant to the topics covered in each section.

The first chapter looks at “First Australians” using the three big ideas of understanding, connecting and transferring. The material is relevant and draws on good examples to assist with student understanding and knowledge building. The information and tasks are sound and build in complexity as the reader moves through each chapter. The application of the ideas to another relevant case study works well as does the introduction of fresh ideas. Chapter 2 follows a similar format and uses colonial America as a sound contrasting example.

The third chapter covers national identity, and after defining the term, then looks at it through colourful and relevant material to show people, their national identity and how national

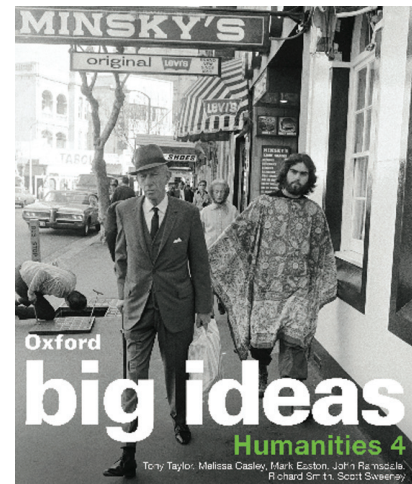
identity shapes nations. A wide range of materials including documents, paintings and journal entries are used to provide stimuli to the text. The case study of Ireland is particularly relevant given Australia’s strong Irish heritage.

Part 2 starts off with revision of geospatial skills and concepts using a case study of global population patterns to allow students to apply the material covered in the chapter. Chapter 5 follows a similar format and covers tectonic hazards and events including causes and effects on people. In this whole section the data, maps and visuals are clear and easy to read for use by both teachers and students. The case study of bushfires is particularly relevant for Australian conditions. Chapter 6 covers coastal landscapes and applies the ideas raised to a study of river landscapes very successfully. Chapter 7 looks at global pollution issues, a topic which is relevant given the amount of printed and visual materials available about global warming and its causes and effects. The concepts and ideas covered here are then applied to a case study on pest species and this works well. The final chapter covers tourism and applies the concepts and ideas covered in a case study of the sustainability of agriculture.

The glossary is well presented and the index, whilst running to four pages, is easy to use and helps the reader find materials quickly.

Overall, a very relevant book with clear, interesting and relevant material that lends itself to use by the various styles of learning. Relevant examples are used to reinforce ideas, concepts and theories raised to the main part of the chapters. The format is sound and the book would find many uses at Year 9 and 10 in Geography, History and Science.

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OXFORD BIG IDEAS HUMANITIES 4

Authors: Tony Taylor, Melissa Casley, Mark Easton, John Ramsdale, Richard Smith, Michael Spurr, Scott Sweeney
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Oxford has produced a series of “Big Ideas” books, some for specific subjects such as Geography or History, and others, like this one, based on the Humanities. The series looks at the big ideas of understanding, connecting and transferring of knowledge and skills as the key areas of development.

Humanities 4 is written for VELS Level 6. As well as including subject specific VELS for History and Geography, it also includes the domains of Thinking Processes, Communication, ICT, Interpersonal Development and Personal Learning. In terms of content, the history section has a very modern history approach and includes chapters on World War I, social history and everyday life (1920s and 1930s), World War II, social change (1945–1990) and the 1990s onwards. The Geography section of the book looks specifically at sustainability and diversity, with chapters on climate change, consumption and mega cities.

One very appealing aspect of this text is the extensive use of graphs, tables, pictures and cartoons to explain important content and concepts. This is evident in both the History and Geography sections of the text. I particularly liked the

“Big Ideas” sections at the end of each study area. Students are required to answer a number of questions based on Bloom’s Taxonomy developing from knowledge and understanding to evaluation and create tasks. The “Connecting Ideas” box on these pages also provides opportunities for extension. There are also a small number of “Fresh Ideas” boxes scattered throughout the book. These require students to focus on particular skills in History and Geography.

The book includes a CD ROM and it provides e-book technology and web support which includes interactive whiteboard resources, sample lesson plans and worksheets. A password is needed to access the web resources. This is definitely handy in the move towards more digital-based resources in the school environment.

Overall, I would recommend this text for schools that provide a History- and Geography-based Humanities course in Year 10. It does appear that the text is aimed at providing content and skills for VCE History, International Politics and Geography. I did find the Geography section lacking in an emphasis on spatial concepts, an important element for VCE Geography. However, other skills such as topographic mapping and the description of trend data were included. Overall, it is a very good text for use in the Humanities classroom.

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