



## **Oxford big ideas Geography Level 6.**

**By Mark Easton, Marianne Ward, John Ramsdale and Kirsty Leahy. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2010, 278 pages, pbk., ISBN 9780195566314.**

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*Oxford Big Ideas* has been produced to meet Geography Level 6 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) which covers Years 9 and 10.

The book is divided into four parts which cover the Geospatial skills and Geographic knowledge and understanding dimensions of the VELS Geography curriculum for these year levels.

Part One: skills and concepts is followed by Part Two: natural systems which covers tectonic hazards, bushfires, coasts and river landscapes. Part Three: human interactions with the natural environment includes pollution, pest species, climate change and desertification; and Part Four: development considers resource consumption, urbanisation and megacities, mining, tourism and agriculture.

Some of these topics are covered in considerable depth, while others devote a double-page spread to the issue. The text also addresses a number of the other VELS domains, namely Thinking Processes, Communication, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Interpersonal Development, and Personal Learning. Sustainability and diversity are threads that weave their way throughout the text, with all sections of the text placed within the context of these overarching concepts.

The authors have clearly aimed to create a textbook that is engaging for Year 9 and 10 students and fosters deep understanding of the big ideas in Geography. The content of each topic is comprehensive and pitched appropriately to students of these year levels, and the suggested activities are varied and cover the range of abilities teachers can expect across these year levels.

It is a beautifully produced and visually appealing text. It is rich in large, visual images, including the stunning cover image of Greenland, contains a number of annotated double-page artwork spreads, as well as an array of photographs, diagrams, aerial images, maps and graphs.

Many additional features will appeal to teachers. The text throughout the book is regularly punctuated by questions to scaffold the learning process and foster an inquiry-based approach, whilst what do you know about . . . questions provide an opportunity for students to reflect upon the content and consolidate learning.

The introductory chapter covers many of the skills and concepts that underpin Level 6 Geography, including the spatial concepts. Other skills and concepts are also integrated within topics in subsequent chapters.

Some ICT examples that have become fundamental to the teaching of Geography, including the use of Google Earth and geographic information systems, are briefly explained. There are also suggestions on fieldwork activities for some of the topics. Many chapters include case studies. The chapter on tectonic hazards, for example, contains case studies on earthquakes in Australia, China's Sichuan Province, and Gujarat in India, the volcanic eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz in Colombia, and Australia's tsunami warning system.

The format of the text encourages students to make connections between ideas and to transfer knowledge and skills to new contexts. Each chapter concludes with a big ideas activity block, which categorises student activities under these different thinking processes: remember, understand, apply, analyse, create and evaluate.

The book is accompanied by a CD-ROM which contains editable question blocks and search navigation tools. It is also supported by online material from the Oxford University Press website, including lesson plans, electronic whiteboard resources, suggested classroom activities, editable worksheets and solutions, and assessment rubrics, which are signposted within the book.

The format and approach of the Oxford Big Ideas series is clearly informed by current pedagogy on fostering deep understanding and student engagement. It has many features which will appeal to Geography students and their teachers. It is highly recommended, as the format, content and suggested activities have been carefully considered to provide a rigorous yet engaging textbook for students of Geography in Years 9 and 10.

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