

What's the Big Idea?: Australian Inventions that Changed the World

AUTHORS

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

Australians are known for being ingenious and creative people. In fact, many of the world's most important inventions have come from Australia. *What's the Big Idea?* is an introduction to, and celebration of, Australian inventions, their creators and the ingenuity of ideas. Covering a wide range of topics and inventions – including First Nations' tools and farming practices, wi-fi, and Black-Box Flight Recorders – this fresh take on Australian inventions can be read from front to back, or as a dip in and out book.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sue Lawson writes books for children and young adults. Her young adult books are recognised for the sensitive way they explore the exciting and heartbreaking complexities of adolescence. Her books include the award-winning *Freedom Ride*, and picture books, *Respect*, *Family* and *Sharing*, co-written with Boonwurrung Elder, Auntie Fay Muir.

Find out more about Sue Lawson at www.suelawson.com.au

Karen Tayleur has worked in advertising, publishing, and the arts for over 30 years. From copywriter to typesetter, author, editor and publisher, she has had the chance to work with some incredibly talented creators over that time. (Including her co-author, Sue Lawson.)

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- As a class discuss what they know about inventions.
 - What is an invention?
 - Who can invent something?
 - What is your favourite invention?
- Look at the book before opening it and discuss the following questions:
 - What do you think this book is about?
 - What information do you think will be covered in this book?
 - What genre of book might this be?
 - Where would you expect to find it in your library?
 - What information can you learn about the book from the book's front and back cover?
- Read the blurb and then discuss the following questions:

- What does the blurb add to students' ideas about the book?
- Discuss the line 'Who knew Canberra could be so interesting.'

AFTER READING

- Ask students to share their most interesting discovery from the book. Which is their favourite invention and why?
- Did they realise about Australia's role in inventing?
- What have they discovered about inventions?
- Answer these questions after reading 'Thanks, Great Idea', on p 29:
 - Discuss why these inventions might not have been successful.
 - Why was this section included in the book?
 - How did the layout of the book affect the readability of the text? (Consider illustrations, photos, small blocks of text, bold and coloured sections of text, layout.)
- As a class, discuss Lewis Brandt and the first ute. Focus on his inspiration and how he repurposed an existing object—the car—to create the ute. Following the discussion, ask students to think of an existing item to create something new that solves a problem in their life. Ask them to illustrate and label their invention, focusing on answering the following questions:
 - What is your invention and what does it do?
 - What problem does the invention solve?
 - Who would use this invention?

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- What makes an invention successful?
- What qualities does an inventor need?
- What are the roles of the glossary and index in *What's the Big Idea?*
- Show students the Young Inventors—Behind the News segment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4xk6zAHWBs> and then answer the following questions:
 - What inspired each young inventor to create something new?
 - What is something you see a need for in the school environment? It might be playground related or something in the classroom. Collate their contributions. Choose one need and brainstorm solutions, modelling the process of active listening to all ideas.
- As a class, discuss inventions featured in *What's the Big Idea?* In pairs, select a favourite invention to research, gathering more information that is featured in the book. Things to research could include:
 - background about the inventor
 - what their motivation might be
 - a description of what the invention does
 - a description of whether the invention improved lives
 - if the invention is still used today and if still being used, how so?
- Allocate students one of the following inventors to research and then create an Inventor Profile. Include personal details including, date of birth, where they live, their career, their inspiration and new projects they may have pursued.
 - Professor Graeme Clark
 - Professor Fiona Wood
 - David Unaipon
 - Doug Waterhouse
 - Thomas Sherrin
 - Lance Hill
 - Sir Ian Kiernan
 - David Warren.

- Examine the *What's the Big Idea?* cover. Does the cover achieve the book's purpose? What would you change and why? Design an alternate cover for *What's the Big Idea?*
- Write a story about an inventor who creates something that goes terribly wrong. This could become a cartoon or illustrated story.