

Study Guide for the Australian Collaboration Fact and Issue Sheet

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETAL VALUES

FOR REVIEW

1 Values and rights

- 1a. What are values?
- 1b. What are the two categories of social values? Give an example from each category.
- 1c. Why is it difficult to reach agreement about shared values?
- 1d. What was the motivation for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948?
- 1e. What makes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a good example of agreement about a common set of values?

2 The evolution of Australian social values

- 2a. What are some of the main events and/or factors that have influenced the development of shared values in Australia?
- 2b. What sparked off debate about Australian values in recent years and prompted former Prime Minister John Howard to make pronouncements about Australian values?
- 2c. Two dominant narratives within Australian history relate to i) place and ii) social compacts. Give examples of values that have been shaped by each of these two main narratives.
- 2d.
 - i) What is reconciliation?
 - ii) What social values are embedded in the notion of reconciliation?

3 Statements of Australian social values

- 3a.
 - i) Name three organisations that have provided recent statements of current Australian values.
 - ii) What sorts of organisations are they, and how are they different from one another?

iii) Do you think the differences between these organisations shape the way they articulate Australian values? For example, how does a government department differ from a community organisation in the way it describes values?

- 3b. What are four shared values that are common to all of the 'statements' outlined in the final section of the Fact and Issue Sheet?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Question for general discussion:

Can you think of a recent example (in your school, in your local community or within the broader Australian community) where an Australian value was threatened or broken?

- i) What was the social value that was threatened or broken?
- ii) What were the consequences of breaking this value?
- iii) How could this value be better preserved in the future?

2. Question for use with a 'Think/Pair/Share' activity and a 'Diamond ranking strategy':

What are your values and what are the values of your classmates?

- i) Spend some time examining what your own core values are. Make a list of the eight values that are most important to you. In naming your values, you might find that you are influenced by family, community or religious beliefs. Where do you stand in relation to the values that have been part of your upbringing?
- ii) Share your list with a partner. Discuss what has influenced you in identifying your values.
- iii) Place your eight values into a diamond. Put the value you regard as most important at the top of the diamond. Put the value you regard as least important at the bottom of the diamond. Allocate the remaining six values according to where they belong in your diamond.

iv) Share your 'value diamond' with the class. Are there any surprises in the similarities or differences you notice between your diamond and those of your classmates?

v) Work with the class to arrange the highest ranking individual values into one large diamond to get a sense of the core values on which the class might agree?

3. Question for an advanced class debate:

Should political leaders *reflect* or *lead* the formation of social values in Australia?

i) Begin by working out the difference between reflecting and leading in this context.

ii) Think of some examples, both on the macro level of national politics and the micro level of your school or local community where leaders spoke out about core values. Were they leading or reflecting the values of the communities they represent?

iii) Given that the defining quality of a democracy is that a community elects leaders to represent it, how can leaders best tread the delicate balance between reflecting and leading their community's values?

FOR RESEARCH

1. Read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the United Nations website: <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

- Have a look through some of the supplementary materials from different countries around the world, including pictorial and audio versions of the Declaration:
- <http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/materials/index.htm>
- Why do you think it is important that the Declaration is available in different forms? Do you think the Declaration is very well known in Australia? Why or why not might this be the case? Is it important to Australian society that individuals are aware of the Declaration?

2. Australia is the only western country without a national charter or bill of human rights. Should Australia have its own Bill of Rights? What would it mean for Australia? Why do you think campaigns for an Australian Bill of Rights have not been answered by politicians to date (with the exception of the ACT and Victoria)? You can start your research at New Matilda or the New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties:

<http://www.humanrightsact.com.au/>

http://www.nswccl.org.au/issues/bill_of_rights/australia.php

3. For advanced students:

Use the internet to download a copy of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's address to the Australian Parliament in which he formally apologised to the stolen generations on behalf of the Australian Government on the 13th of February 2008. Transcripts of all Parliamentary proceedings are freely available at <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard>. Rudd's speech can also be found at in The Australian newspaper online at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23207256-5013172,00.html>

- i) What Australian values are represented in Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's speech?
- ii) What relationships can you find between the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the values represented in his speech?
- iii) What role does Prime Minister Kevin Rudd think history plays in the formation of current values?