

Australia

Our Place in the World

Suitable age group: 10 and older

This lesson has been designed to get students to think, discuss and write.



Students could work in small groups for the **THINKING CHALLENGE** (see Teachers Notes)

Teachers Notes

Distribute the worksheet on the following page.

Students will identify Map 1 as being correct.

Tell them that it's the map that had its origins in Europe and northern Africa more than two thousand years ago. It's been in common use since then, and Map 2 is only 'wrong' because early cartographers lived in the 'Old World' (Europe), had little-to-no knowledge of lands beyond, and came up with early versions of Map 1 ...which was the 'right way up'.

(the Earth was thought to be flat back then and nothing was known about gravity's pull on everything and *everyone* toward the centre of our planet)

We now know about gravity, we know that the world is not flatand no-one can fall off!

* Notice that the region where the first map-makers lived (Europe) is not only near the top of the map but also in the middle going west to east –it should not surprise us that world maps were drawn from the perspective of their designers, the early Europeans.

The very earliest 'world' maps were based on what had been observed by early peoples roaming through northern Africa, into Europe and western Asia, and out in primitive craft into the seas off coastlines.

Travellers venturing further afield on epic overland treks (e.g. Marco Polo from Venice to China) and the voyages of Vasco da Gama, Ferdinand Magellan and Christopher Columbus extended the boundaries of the known world to the north, the East (or Orient), added the 'New World' (the Americas) to maps, and brought knowledge of the world's vast oceans.

As the world map (Map 1) was added to and modified there was no reason to think it should be turned upside down or in any way re-orientated. It (Map 1) served as an accurate and perfectly good guide. Adventurers were able to explore and navigate with it just fine.

BUT....what if those early civilisations (with their overland explorers and great mariners) had have lived somewhere in the *southern hemisphere*, as we do in Australia?

Little, if anything, would have been known of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas and early versions of Map 2 would have arisen -with Australia and surrounding islands near the top, great seas on all sides, and hardly any more. Eventually, of course, other continents (Antarctica, Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas) would be discovered and added to Map 2.

THINKING CHALLENGE

We now know that our Earth is spherical and is one of the eight major planets in our Solar System. Also in the Solar System are the sun, the moon and asteroids.

The Solar System is part of Space (the Universe).

Question: Is there such a thing as 'up' (or 'down') in Space?

Answer: No.

Sure, we can jump up and fall down (say, on a planet) but the terms 'up' and 'down' are meaningless in the vastness of Space.

There is no absolute up and down 'out there'.

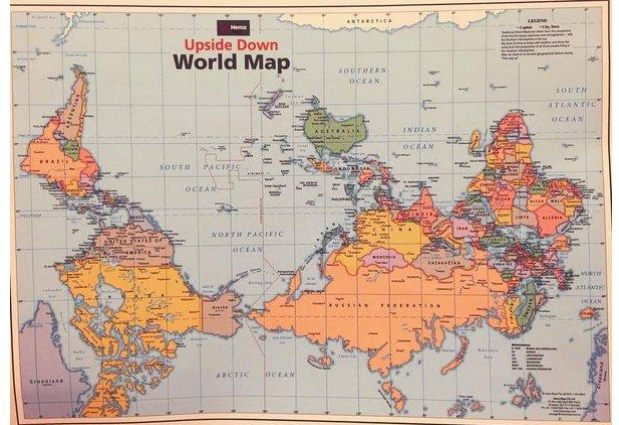
It would be just as correct to think of our planet in Space with Australia near the top rather than the way it is always depicted (with Australia near the bottom)

Where are We?

Map 1



Map 2



a) Point to Australia on each map.

b) Now, in your best words, describe the location of Australia on each map.

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c) Is Map 1 or Map 2 correct, or can they both be correct? Explain your answer.

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