



**RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA
READING GUIDES**

***Airborne Australia* Kevin Patrick & Doug Holgate**

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Reading Level: for independent readers 8+

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COVER BLURB

Did you know that Australians designed and built some of the world's first aircraft, allowing our fearless pilots to smash flying records, bring aid to outback communities and defend our shores?

Find out more about what a boomerang and an aeroplane wing have in common, how jet engines work and the amazing inventions that first dared to defy gravity. From bombers and hot-air balloons to choppers and gliders, Australian aviation has serious altitude.

Brain-Buster Puzzles! Learn to draw planes! Schematics, amazing facts and more!

ABOUT THE BOOK

Airborne Australia is the second book in a series called *Amazing Australia* by Australian author Kevin Patrick and illustrator Douglas Holgate. The series focuses in on exciting Australian topics including our own dinosaurs and prehistoric beasts (*Prehistoric Australia*), and our aviation history (*Airborne Australia*).

Perfect for readers aged 8 to 13 – and especially for boys – the books contain an amazing amount of information and facts, but they're divided into short, sharp sections that are sure to keep readers entertained.

Kevin and Douglas have thought of all the little extras that kids will love – 'Brain-Buster' quizzes and puzzles, detailed 'How it works' diagrams for

readers who like detailed technical or scientific information, plus information on 'Record-breakers', 'Uniquely Australian' aviation achievements, and biographies of 'Amazing Australians' and 'Pioneers'.

Readers will find out how Australians designed and built some of the world's first aircraft, and played an important part in the golden age of flight. Fearless pilots like Kingsford Smith, Hinkler and Hawker made history as they set – and smashed – new flying records around the world. Aircraft helped change the face of Australia, bringing aid to remote outback communities and linking our cities. Combat aircraft of all shapes and sizes, many built in Australia, helped defend our shores during World War II. The history of aviation in Australia is an exciting story, full of triumph, heroism and tragedy.

For readers who would like to find out more, there are 'Webclicks', icons that tip readers off to check out related webpages, 'Bookmarks', a list of further reading, and 'Destinations', a list of places to visit, including museums and aero clubs.

And of course the special feature of this series is the full-colour comic strip section, 'Target: Darwin', which introduces readers to the action and drama of the moment when Darwin was hit by an enemy Japanese air raid during World War II. Douglas Holgate is a professional cartoon and comic illustrator so he was passionate about including a comic strip as part of the Amazing Australia books.

As Douglas Holgate says, 'Kids love facts, they love adventure, dinosaurs, comics and big old-fashioned WWII aircraft.'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kevin Patrick is a freelance writer and magazine editor/publisher, who has written for such magazines as *Internet.au*, *Collectormania*, *Australian Aviation* and *Good Reading* magazine, to name but a few. He was the founding editor of *Netweek* (1999–2001) and publisher of a popular comic book, *The Panther* (2001–2002).

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Douglas Holgate is an internationally published commercial illustrator and comic artist, whose work has appeared in such diverse publications as *The New Yorker*, *Mad Magazine* and *Image Comics*. He has also illustrated several children's book series for Random House (Australia & USA) and Simon & Schuster (USA).

ON WRITING AIRBORNE AUSTRALIA

Author Kevin Patrick talks about how *Airborne Australia* came about, how he wrote and researched the book, and how he collaborated with Douglas Holgate to create the book.

Amazing Australia – the concept

'There's a common perception that Australian history is, well, a bit boring. Captain Cook, merino sheep, a few bushrangers, then the Gallipoli campaign – for most people, this is Australia's history in 25 words or less! The reality, of course, couldn't be further from the truth. For a society that has existed for a little over two centuries of recorded history, and boasts around 20 million

inhabitants – making it one of the youngest, and least populated nations on Earth – Australia and its people have written for themselves a remarkable history, spanning all fields of human endeavour, from politics and science, to sports and the arts.

'The purpose of the Amazing Australia series was tell the story of Australia's history, in a way that's never been done before. By breaking away from the "traditional" textbook format, Amazing Australia invites readers to look at Australia's history with fresh eyes, through telling the story of Australia's past in new ways, such as biographical snapshots of our unsung heroes, comic strips, puzzles and activities.

'We want readers to turn each page, exclaiming "I didn't know *that!*", or "How come we never heard about this before?". Because that's what it's been like for both myself and Doug Holgate as we researched and wrote these books. We used to think we knew a fair bit about Aussie history ourselves, but as we worked on each book, we realised just how little we knew sometimes!

'In short, if we got excited about some new historical discovery we'd made, then we put it in the book – because we knew our readers would enjoy them, too.'

Writing *Airborne Australia*

'Because both Doug and myself are self-confessed aeroplane geeks, we figured that producing *Airborne Australia* would be a piece of cake. Boy, were we in for a shock!

'Writing *Airborne Australia* was one of the hardest, yet most satisfying, assignments of my life. The more I delved into Australia's aviation history, the more I realised that I could find enough material to fill two – no, make that *three* books on the topic.

'So, deciding what went into *Airborne Australia* – and what got left out – was an especially hard choice for me. I wanted to make sure that we covered all the key historical points about the history of flight in Australia (such as pioneering flights, record-breaking journeys, etc), yet I wanted to touch on the various political, economic and technological factors that have influenced the development of Australian aviation.

'Perhaps an even bigger challenge was trying to convey these often quite complex themes and ideas in such a way that were readily understood by a younger readership – without sending them to sleep through boredom!

'I've forgotten how many versions of the book's overall outline I went through before finally settling on the final version (I think my document/file numbers were in double digits by the time I finished.) I wanted to avoid the 'easy' chronological pathway ("Start in 1851, finish in 2007"), by grouping together thematic clusters, such as those sequences devoted to airlines, the RAAF in war and peace, or sports and utility aircraft. Yet within each of these loosely defined clusters, I also wanted (occasionally) to jump back and forth in time, or encourage readers to refer to other sections of the book for further insights. Keep 'em on their toes, I say!'

Researching the subject

'The great thing about writing *Airborne Australia* was that I now had a justifiable reason to spend more time – and money! – in bookshops, libraries and museums than I normally do. Because all of these places were great sources of inspiration, and information, about the kind of things I wanted to include in this book.

'Some books, such as Stanley Brogden's *History of Australian Aviation*, were especially invaluable, as they helped "set the scene" for the evolution of manned flight in Australia, from the colonial era through to the late 1950s. Filling in the gaps for the next 47 years of aviation history was, however, down to me!

'Using such texts as my springboard, I was able to start identifying the events, people and organisations that played their part in shaping Australia's aviation history. Being able to isolate these key moments in time allowed me to narrow the focus of my research, so I didn't waste time absorbing more irrelevant (yet fascinating) information than I knew what to do with.

'Other resources, such as magazine articles, online databases and the internet were invaluable research tools, as they often yielded surprising facts, comments or insights that were sometimes overlooked in historical texts, but that helped "flesh out" the stories we wanted to tell.'

Collaborating with illustrator Douglas Holgate

'The great thing about working with Doug is that he is such an amazingly diversified illustrator. He can shift gears effortlessly, from drawing technically precise renditions of aircraft, to spot-on portraits of real-life Australian aviators, before turning his brush to a fast-paced comic strip. I am, of course, insanely jealous of his talent.

'In most cases, I would supply Doug with as much visual reference material as I could lay my hands on – magazine clippings, photocopied book pages and countless archival photos of aircraft and people downloaded from the internet. This was not only to ensure the historical accuracy of the subjects we were depicting, but also to give Doug as many "visual options" as possible, so he wasn't restricted to a single view of a specific subject.

'Doug and I would discuss the overall "look" of each individual page, which he would then proceed to illustrate. Sometimes Doug might follow my suggestions to the letter, but more often than not, he would strike out on a different tangent altogether, and come back to me with a completely unexpected, yet nonetheless stunning, visual treatment of the pages we'd discussed. Have I already mentioned that I am insanely jealous of this guy?'

DISCUSSION POINTS AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Airborne Australia is relevant to a number of curriculum areas. Here are some suggestions for questions and activities:

Science

- What keeps a plane in the air?
- Investigate how the shape of a plane affects its speed. What is the difference between the shape and speed of commercial planes, small planes and military planes?
- Have a competition to see who can make the paper plane that flies the longest distance.
— Then investigate the science of flying. Start with studying the diagrams on 'How an Aircraft Flies' (page 18), 'How Gliders Fly' (page 21), 'How Jet Engines Work' (pages 56–57) and 'How Helicopters Fly' (pages 58–59).

— Does what you've learnt change how you would design your paper plane? For instance, do you need more lift, more thrust, less weight or less drag?

- What other unmanned aerial vehicles are used around the world? (See pages 100–101.) What possible uses are there for unmanned aircraft?
- Look at how aircraft have changed in one hundred years. What will planes look like in the future?
- What are the dangers of flying? Why are so many people afraid of flying? Investigate the statistics of planes that have crashed and learn how low the risk of accident really is.
- What is the sound barrier? What happens when a plane breaks the sound barrier?

History

- When was the 'golden age' of flight? Why was it called that?
- Who were Australia's aviation pioneers? Why are they important to our history?
- What historical factors have contributed to developments in aviation over the last one hundred years? (For instance: war, the growing number of people wanting to travel for holidays or business, the need for aircraft for medical services and agriculture.)
- Why have so many Australian airlines collapsed or been merged into other companies? For instance, see 'Australian National Airways' (page 46), 'The TAA Challenge' (page 66) and 'The Ansett Collapse' (page 88). What are the costs involved with maintaining an airline?
- Imagine you were a newspaper reporter watching one of the first flights (such as Defries or Houdini, pages 14–15). How would you describe what you were seeing?

Geography / Environment

- How has Australia's environment affected our history of aircraft? For instance, consider how we require a Royal Flying Doctor Service (page 36) to provide medical services to remote parts of Australia.
- How have aircraft allowed us to develop our economy and infrastructure – and affected how we live today? For instance, consider how today we can easily fly between cities that would take days to travel between by car or train.
- Why are there so many aviation pioneers in Australia's history? Is it because we have such a huge country to explore?

Art/design

- Inspired by the 'Target: Darwin' comic strip? Try your hand at writing your own comic strip based on one of the other adventures in the

book – try the 'Kookaburra Mystery' on pages 34–35, or 'Smithy's Last Flight' on pages 42–43.

- 'Draw a Jabiru' – see page 94. Professional illustrator Douglas Holgate gives step-by-step tips on how to draw a plane. Try the Jabiru, and then see if you can draw other planes featured in *Airborne Australia*.
- Imagine that you are asked to design 'the aircraft of the future'. What would it look like? Draw or paint a futuristic plane.
- Design an advertisement for your own Australian airline. What aircraft would you choose? What images would you show? What would your advertising slogan be?

Excursions

- Visit one of Australia's aviation museums to see some of these amazing aircraft up close. There's a list on pages 106–107.

General activities

- See Brain-Buster puzzles and quizzes on pages 38, 44, 70, 75 and 98.
- 'Become a Planespotter' – see page 86. With the help of binoculars, an aircraft recognition guide and an exercise book, anyone can become a planespotter.
- Follow the Webclicks to find out more about particular subjects. Research projects that students could undertake include:
 - Write a biography of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith.
 - What aircraft were used by Australian forces in World War II?
 - What aircraft does the Royal Australian Air Force use today?
 - Write a history of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Australia
 - Find out more about the life of Harry Houdini.
 - Who are some aviation pioneers from other countries?
- What kind of jobs could you do if you worked for an airline?
- Interview someone you know (e.g. parents of a friend, a neighbour) who flies, or owns their own aircraft. Ask them what it's like to fly, why they enjoy flying and what they must do to keep their pilot's licence.
- What sort of aerial vehicles are being tested at the Woomera Instrument Range in South Australia today? Who is testing them – and why?

Visit www.randomhouse.com.au/readingguides for information on other Random House Australia books for children.

Visit the Amazing Australia blog at <http://amazing-australia.blogspot.com/> where Kevin and Douglas post all the latest dinosaur finds and aviation news!