

## English Lesson "Origin of Names"


# Level 02

### Lesson Description

The name with which we are most intimately associated is, of course, our own. The whole name – the given and the family names; they identify us, they are our labels. They can also be whole stories about who we are.

Investigating student names can be a simple process of learning and then writing (or speaking) about the origins of one's own family and given names.

Compiling the research into a whole-of-class quiz will strongly impress on a class the diversity of the origins of names, the diversity of the meaning of names, and the complex nature of "labels".

 **The research task is to discover the meaning of at least one of a student's own given name and either the meaning or geographic origin (or both) of their family name.**

This supplied data is then compiled into a quiz – since everyone (including the teacher) supplies data, everyone will get at least one question right!

Questions, typically, will be of the "whose name means \*\*\*\* in English?", "whose name originates in \*\*\*\* part of the world?" variety.

### Lesson Aim and Objectives

This is primarily a research task that makes students aware of the complex nature of words: that even names have meaning beyond being labels, that they have origins – most usually lost to us now – making the exercise an introduction to the concept of the etymological basis of language.

The etymology of place names links to the CD-ROM at just over 5 minutes, where Ernie Dingo explains the meaning of some Aboriginal place names. The idea of basing this inquiry around the students' own names reflects their likely breadth of experience and interest at this stage, making the discovery of "meaning" more relevant.

The idea of an unexpected meaning being wrapped-up in the origin of words can be extended beyond the student names; a worksheet is supplied that sets-out a quiz which can be either delivered in class or set as a research task in which names, place names and words in common use are listed and their origins required.

### Materials Needed

Work sheet supplied; internet access and/or reference texts for research

## Worksheet Answers

1. The name Australia is derived from the Latin **Australis** meaning “of the south”
2. **Laser** (acronym: light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation)
4. **Platypus** (Greek platypous “flat-footed”)
5. **Posh** (acronym port out, starboard home – passage booked to and from India by colonials; disputed)
6. **Haversack** (German habersack, bag [sack] for oats [haber])
7. **Tasmania** (for Abel Tasman)
8. **Try** (in rugby) (originally a “try” yielded no points but earned the scoring team the right to try to kick a goal – which still lingers as the “conversion”)
9. In the period up to the 1930’s the actual area here was called Stuart, after the explorer John McDoull Stuart. By the 1930’s the name Alice or Alice Springs had become so prevalent that there was a formal change to Alice Springs. The traditional Arrernte Aboriginal name for the area which included the town is Mparntwe (which is the name of a catapillar in the dreamtime story.  
[http://abc.net.au/dimensions/dimensions\\_in\\_tim/Transcripts/s916933.htm](http://abc.net.au/dimensions/dimensions_in_tim/Transcripts/s916933.htm))
10. **Poodle** (German pudelhund, puddle dog, because originally bred as a water dog)