An Australian Perspective on Wilderness


Class Discussion/Analytical Questions

1) Robin explains that the American national parks model was implemented in Australia, but that the idea of wilderness never caught on. What reasons does she give for this?

2) What benefits are there from allowing people to inhabit national parks? What benefits are there from excluding people from living in national parks? Which does Robin allude to as being the better policy, particularly in regards to the Australian bush? Why?

3) Explain what Robin means when she states, “wilderness was not so much an idea as a description of places in need of management in Australia.”

4) How does understanding environmental history help nature? How does understanding environmental history benefit human society?

Activities

1. Wilderness vs. Country Word Clouds

Split the class into small groups. Instruct each group to define the American ideal of wilderness, briefly explaining the cultural and political baggage that accompanies the concept of wilderness. Once the groups have finished, have each group share their respective definitions for wilderness. Take note of how often similar words are used in the different definitions. Create a word cloud using an online site like TagCloud or Wordle based upon your findings. Repeat this process with the Australian understanding of “Country.” Then lead a class discussion comparing and contrasting your word clouds on wilderness and country.

2. Australian Park Diversity PowerPoints

Robin explains that Australian states maintained most of their managerial roles after the states coalesced into a nation, “especially in relation to land management and natural resources.” Break the class into seven groups, assigning each group a different Australian state or territory (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Southern Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory). Explain that each group has five tasks to complete.
Tasks

1) Find out which agency administers national parks in your state or territory and locate their official website. What is this agency’s mission? How do they propose to fulfill this?

2) Research 2 national parks in your respective Australian state or territory, and try and find out how your agency has created and maintained them.

3) Based upon your findings, analyze your state or territory’s actions in regard to its impact on the environment and local people in your national parks.

4) Create a PowerPoint or other form of presentation explaining your findings.

5) Present your findings to the class.

3. Value Clouds

Using an online word cloud generator such as Wordle (other options can be found here), compare and contrast the language found on the national park websites researched by different groups in the previous activity. Lead a discussion, based upon your findings, explaining what values each national park seems to prioritize.

Questions to Prompt Active Engagement

1) What similarities exist between parks located in the same state or territory? What does this say about the influence Australian states and territories have over their own land?

2) Which states or territories seem to present similar information regarding the national parks they oversee?

3) Do a majority of national parks seem to prioritize similar values? Which ones?

4) Do any of the national parks not fit the national mold? Why might this be?