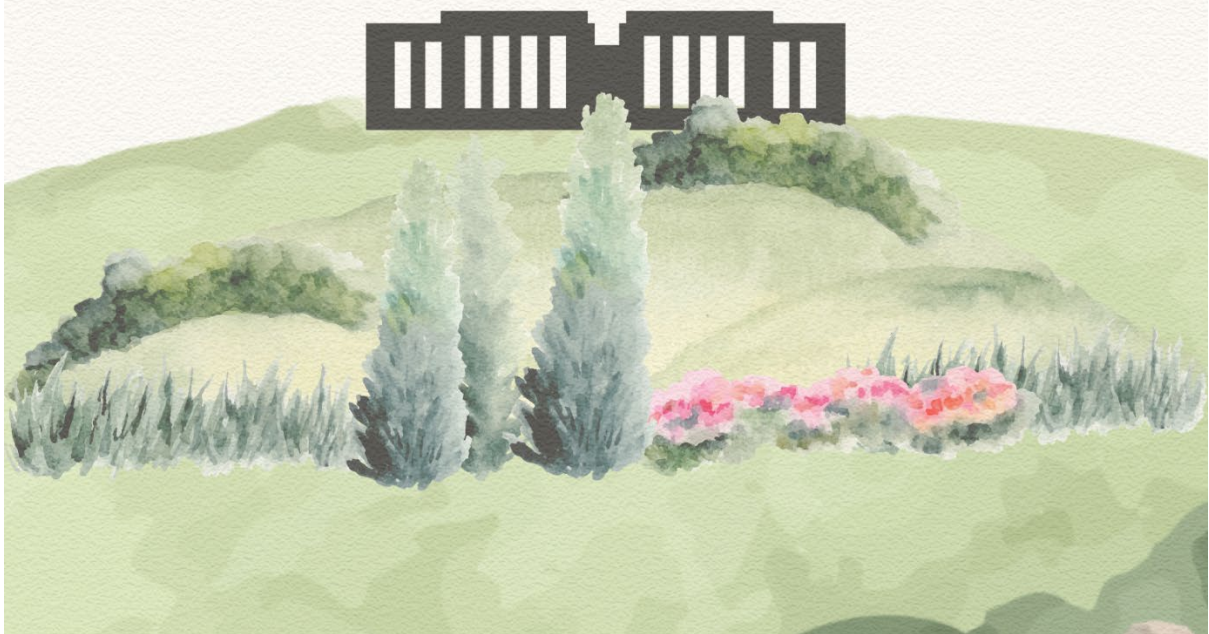


Prime Ministers
OF AUSTRALIA

History Makers Year 6A



Prime Ministers of Australia: History Makers 6A

1st Edition

By Michelle Morrow

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FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS



In Year Six at My Homeschool, we have prepared a feast of modern history resources and historical fiction that focuses on Australian and World history. We hope at the end of this year you will have a deeper understanding of the ideologies and events that have helped shape Australia and the world in the 20th Century.

History Makers of Australia: Short Biographies of Australia's Prime Ministers has three companion resources. There are 16 chapters in Part One of this resource, eight chapters will be covered each term. At the end of each term there will be an optional examination on the content you have learnt. The examination questions are provided in the Virtual Cupboard of your Year Six course.

Each week you will read one chapter of this book and then write up a notebooking page about what you have learnt. The complementary links provided in *PM Links* include some interesting videos and interesting facts and are recommended if want to learn more about a particular prime minister.

You can also record dates of when a prime minister comes into office in your **Book of Centuries**. This will also help you compare what was happening in Australia with what was happening on the world stage.

Part One includes the period from Federation in 1901 to the end of the Menzies Era in 1966. There are 16 Prime Ministers during this time. The other Prime Ministers will be covered in Part Two.

Chapters 14 and 15 cover two Prime Ministers because one Prime Minister only governed briefly. We have only provided scant details on the short term prime ministers but if you want to discover more about them you can look in the *PM Links*.

1.

HOW TO MAKE A PRIME MINISTER



Learning about Australia's Prime Ministers is fascinating. Not only do we learn the history of Australia and its development we also learn about the backgrounds of the men and one woman who rose to the highest office in Australia.

Our Prime Ministers, or PMs, as Aussies like to call them, come from all walks of life. Some left school as young as ten years old and worked in the coal mines and their early life struggles led them to want to see change for the ordinary Australian, others came from wealthy political families where their pathway into politics was smooth. All worked to make Australia a better place.

Three-quarters of Australia's 31 prime ministers were born in Australia. Of those born overseas, all but one came from the United Kingdom (England, Scotland or Wales). The only non-British overseas-born Prime Minister was Chris Watson, who was born in Chile and raised in New Zealand. Of those born in Australia, the majority were born in either Victoria (9) or New South Wales (10). One prime minister was Tasmanian, one was from Western Australia, and four were from Queensland. To date, there have been no South Australian, Northern Territory, or Canberra-born prime ministers.

Our shortest serving prime minister was in office for 8 days, our longest served for more than 18 years. The youngest prime minister was 37, and the oldest was 71. Three prime ministers have died in office but one of those deaths was very mysterious.

Except for three of the Prime Ministers, most reported to be Christian, however only a few regularly attended Church and all of them said religion was a private matter and they didn't discuss their faith publicly.

The Make-Up of Parliament

Members of parliament are elected to either, the **House of Representatives** (also called the **Lower House**) or the **Senate** (also called the **Upper House**). These two houses make the decisions and laws of the country. The process of governance is done according to the **Constitution** which you will hear about in the next chapter. The high court interprets the laws and makes rulings on interpretations of the Constitution.

The whole of Australia is divided into electorates based on their population and each electorate gets one **federal member of parliament** (MP) to represent them. These MPs form the Lower House. An MP is meant to represent the interests of their electorate, but this is often not what happens because the needs of a community are diverse, and some parties, for example the Labor Party, requires its members to vote with the party on all matters or risk expulsion.

The Upper House members are called **senators**. They are elected according to their state and each state has an equal amount of senate positions and a smaller number of positions are allocated to the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory. The Upper House approves the laws that are made in the Lower House.

A **political party** is formed around ideas or **ideologies**. These ideas are the driving force for decisions about how money is spent, laws are made, and people are helped. When an election is held, these ideas are presented to the electorate – that's the people who are eligible to vote. The people vote on whose ideas they like the best.

The party members choose who their leader will be. It is commonly thought that when you go to an election you are voting for a prime minister. However, when you vote it is the MPs you will vote for, who then can choose the PM. This is quite different from the American Presidential elections where the people vote directly for the president i.e., the individual candidate.

To select a Prime Minister a party must have more than half of the Lower House members on its side. They can then form a government and elect a leader which then becomes the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister then selects a few members of his party to be in his **Cabinet** which is a small working group of members of parliament who have specific oversight over different responsibilities of

government. The members of Cabinet are given the title of **Minister**, (this name has nothing to do with the church). All other elected party members are called **Backbenchers** because they don't have much influence over policy making. A Minister is given an area to oversee, this is called a **Portfolio**. Areas such as health, money, defence and education are big Portfolios. All the rest of the members are referred to as the **Opposition, Minor Parties** or Independents.

Most members of parliament belong to a political party. Although some do not, and we call these members **Independents** because they can vote independently from a party. These independents sit in the **crossbenches** between the two major parties. Most of the time independents have little power in government but if a Party doesn't have enough members to rule, then it will call upon Independents to help them pass laws or form government. When a government is formed with Independents, we call it a **Minority Government**.

In the early days of Federation there were multiple political parties. Prime Ministers often needed the support of their party plus other parties. This was called a **coalition**. Some prime ministers lost their prime ministership not by an election defeat but rather by the breakdown of the coalition or loss of their party's support.

Today there are two major political parties, the Labor Party and Liberal and National Parties which have formed a coalition. The Greens are a minor party that has gained greater support in the last few elections.

Activity: Make a notebooking entry and check out the optional PM Links.