

# First Grade: Australia & Italy

*Global Week 2022 // Lower School*

## Australia

First-graders traveled with Mrs. Raser across the globe to Australia. We experienced song, dance, literature, poetry, arts, crafts, games, food, and other cultural aspects from the land down under. All of our language arts, math, science, and social studies activities had a cultural focus on Australia.

We learned of the many wondrous physical features of the continent, met the Aborigine people via literature, and studied some very unique animals of the country by reading fiction and expository text. Creating an animal riddle book helped students distinguish between amazing Australian animals. They also made their own versions of the Aborigine paintings using a dot technique to fill in patterns. Following Grandma Hush's and Poss' journey in *Possum Magic*, students completed a mapping exercise of the island continent and sampled pavlova, scones, chocolate biscuits (more like a cookie), and lamingtons, a delicious cake dipped in chocolate and coconut throughout the week. After comparing our standing long jumps with a kangaroo's hops, students re-fueled their bodies with Kangaroo Pita Pockets.

We also focused on the eucalyptus forest and the Great Barrier Reef habitats. Students were amazed to find that the koala bear drinks little water and obtains all its nourishment from eucalyptus leaves. The children enjoyed making their own eucalyptus trees, complete with their marsupial friend. Building on their knowledge of polygons, they discovered a hidden friend as they shaded in various shapes. While studying the Great Barrier Reef, students discovered the symbiotic relationship between the clownfish and the sea anemone then used pipe cleaners and Styrofoam to create this dynamic duo.

Mentor texts such as Koala Lou, Edward the Emu, Edwina the Emu, and Wombat Stew (just to name a few) anchored our literature discussions and provided great examples of story elements and opportunities to strengthen sequencing, cause and effect, and summarizing/retelling skills. The students also enjoyed selecting their own reading comprehension passages during partner reading with Australian Animal Pick and Flip cards. The children were excited to learn that they could see many of the animals we encountered during the unit at Brookfield Zoo's Australia Habitat.

## Italy

Wow what an amazing Global Week we had! Mrs. Gray's first-graders thoroughly enjoyed our trip to Italy. They learned so many fun facts about this wonderful country. We began the week with a bit of sightseeing, first, stopping to see some of the beautiful Italian Landmarks. Our first stop was the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The students learned that this bell tower has 590 steps total and tilts to one side because it was built on soft ground. They were happy to learn that tourists are still able to go inside, but also discovered that you must be 8 years old. Many of our first graders expressed that they hope to make this trip when they are old enough. Next, we visited the Colosseum in Rome, where the students discovered that this amphitheater was used as a giant stadium. However, rather than football games and concerts, the Romans watched gladiators fight. The students were fascinated by how large the amphitheater is and were thrilled to see the videos showing the inside.

The students were also fascinated to learn that on a map Italy is shaped like a high heeled boot and that the Italian Island of Sicily looks like a ball being kicked by the toe of the boot. They also discovered that many things in our everyday lives were created in the country of Italy, from yummy pasta and pizza to the invention of concrete. Some of our main highlights were learning how to say some Italian phrases (hello, good-bye, please, and thank you) and counting to the number 10 in Italian. They also had a fun time learning how to do the national folk dance, Tarantella.

Throughout the week we enjoyed many fiction and nonfiction stories as we learned facts about this amazing country. We incorporated many aspects of literacy into each day. The students loved our author study of Tommie DePaola and reading Italian Folktales especially Strega Nona the story of a magic pot. The best part was writing their own recipe for pasta complete with ingredients and all the steps. The real highlight was using yarn to make the pasta.

We made sure to visit the city of Venice, where the students learned about how people travel along the canals on a flat boat called a Gondola. They were particularly interested in the fact that there are no cars in Venice and that water buses, water taxis or Gondolas are the best way to get from one place to another. Before heading to our next stop we created our own Gondolas. The Venice Carnival also takes place in Venice. This annual festival is famous for its elaborate masks which people wore to protect their identity. The students were thrilled to create their own masks and parade down the first floor of Barker Hall to see if they would be recognized.

Of course our visit to Italy would not be complete without learning about Italian foods and deserts such as Cannoli and Gelato. Snacking on Pizzelle, Italian Waffle Cookies and going to the Maker Space to make our own mini-pizzas was a real treat! Our week was certainly filled with many adventures and lots of discovery!