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Foreword

There are few sights more impressive than a sea of waving green rice. Pictures of stepped rice paddies or people working in the paddy fields have become synonymous with Asia, and, for many Australians, bring back pleasant memories of holidays overseas.

Most people are aware that rice is the staple food for a great percentage of the population of the Asian continent, yet the first response to the idea that 2004 is the International Year of Rice is usually a rather surprised, 'What?'. This is probably because rice is such an insignificant thing in Australia; it is just one of many foods available. And yet, the facts of the matter are that rice is grown in Australia; we have some of the most productive rice fields in the world; rice is one of Australia's top ten agricultural exports; and, thanks to changing demographics and an innovative advertising campaign, the Australian public consume 17 per cent more rice than they did ten years ago.

As an international year, it also seems that the subject of rice must be of global significance – and it is. Beyond the miracle increases brought about during the green revolution of the sixties, there now loom further challenges as the population increases faster than the rate of food production. With the average intake of rice in Asian nations being between 150 and 200 kilograms per person per year, and with the pressures of decreasing amounts of available land and labour, many Asian countries are facing significant challenges to feed their populations in future years.

These are issues that are relevant to our students as a generation that will face these problems. The international year focus is a great opportunity to develop an understanding of global concerns.

Provided in this book is a range of activities related to the English, science and society and environment curricula. Each unit can be studied as a whole, or you might choose just a particular section. The activities use tools for a thinking-oriented curriculum such as mind maps, graphic organisers and creative problem-solving. Most activities are open ended and many of the issues and problems studied have a much wider application. A list of useful references and websites has also been included for a quick start to further research.

Enjoy.

Unit 1

Introduction

Activity 1: Word swamp

Word swamps are a great introductory activity. They engage the students as they grapple with finding a heading to unite all the words. Don't be surprised at some of the suggestions you may get.

This activity usually takes about ten minutes and can be done in groups or independently. **Whatever you do, don't let the students know what they will be studying before giving them this collection of words!**

Aims

- To engage students in making connections
- To introduce vocabulary related to the topic
- To explore how word meanings are affected by context
- To anticipate the subject of the unit

Preparation

- Photocopy worksheet (page 7)

Activity 2: To know and to learn

A KWL is a graphic organiser that charts

- **K** What students already know about rice
- **W** What students want to learn about rice
- **L** What students have learnt about rice by the end of the activity.

Columns **K** and **W** can be filled in after students have completed the word swamp and the topic has been introduced. It is worthwhile to have students complete these charts independently, although they may be done in pairs. The word swamp can give them some ideas about what they might want to know, particularly if there are words that they don't understand. This helps students anticipate learning. At the end of the unit you can assess students by getting them to fill in the third column.

Aims

- To establish what students already know about the topic
- To link knowledge with new learning using a graphic organiser

Preparation

- Teach students about KWL
- Photocopy graphic organisers (page 8) or have students rule them up in their workbooks

Activity 3: The international years of the United Nations

This is a research task based on Bloom's taxonomy of thinking (revised). Students use the Internet to find the information and then work through the six cards to develop an understanding of the topic. Answers may be presented as written responses, or in another format appropriate to the class. A list of references should be handed in with the work. Students may work in groups or independently.

Aims

- To understand the concept of an international year
- To acquire and work with knowledge from Internet sources

Preparation

- Organise access to computers
- Decide whether students will work in groups.
- Photocopy worksheet (page 9) for students