

Commonwealth Day provides a good opportunity for posing questions about the Commonwealth - questions of fact and questions of value.

ACTIVITY 1



Level: Primary/secondary

A Commonwealth quiz

Teachers (or a group of students) can compose a quiz based on the map provided in the flap of this book and the information provided in Section 7, 'Commonwealth briefing'. Below are examples of the kinds of questions that could be set:

- 1 From the information given on the map, name the countries which lie in:
 - the Caribbean region
 - the African region
 - the Indian Ocean
 - the Asian region
 - the Australasian and South Pacific region
 - the North American region
 - the European region including the Mediterranean
- 2 From the information given on the map:
 - which countries have populations of over 100,000,000?
 - which countries have populations of 100,000 or less?
- 3 From the information given on the map, name the countries of which the following towns and cities are the capitals:
 - Port Louis
 - Tarawa
 - Castries
 - Valletta
 - Lusaka
- 4 From the information given on the map how many countries became members of the Commonwealth:
 - between 1931 or before?
 - between 1932 and 1959?
 - between 1960 and 1969?
 - between 1970 and 1979?
 - since 1980?

ACTIVITY 1: CONTINUED

- 5 From the information provided in the 'Commonwealth briefing' name:
 - four kinds of meeting that take place at government level in the Commonwealth;
 - four types of professional organisation that link Commonwealth countries.
- 6 From the information given in the 'Commonwealth briefing' and elsewhere in the handbook identify:
 - four types of assistance to developing countries provided by the CFTC;
 - four types of work undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

ACTIVITY 2



Debates and essays on the Commonwealth

Commonwealth Day and the period of classroom work leading up to it should include plenty of opportunity, at least for the upper secondary level, to examine critically the Commonwealth's record. It is important for students to form their own opinions and to be confronted with attitudes and values different from their own.

Here are a few questions and statements to discuss in essay form or to debate:

'It is the inequalities among the members of the Commonwealth which are striking: the assumption of equality is a convenient fiction'. (Paul Taylor, in *The Commonwealth in the 80s*).

President Nehru of India spoke of the Commonwealth being able to bring 'a touch of healing' to a sick world. How far has his hope been fulfilled?

'Speaking English is a Commonwealth fact; it is not part of any Commonwealth ideology; it is one channel for easy communication, and a precious one in functional terms. It is not a badge of identity.' (Shridath Ramphal). What do you think about the use of English in the Commonwealth and do you agree with Ramphal's view?

'I am convinced that the Commonwealth can play ... a more effective role by strengthening the link between dialogue and co-operative action in four major areas – those of politics; of development; of promotion of good governance and of human resource development' (Chief Emeka Anyaoku). Is this a realistic agenda for the Commonwealth in the 1990s?

Is the principle of consensus, adopted at Heads of Government meetings, a realistic one? How should dissent be accommodated? Consider this problem in the light of recent Commonwealth summits.

Discuss the statement 'The Commonwealth is more widely known today for its conferences than for its achievements'.

The last question is taken from an essay competition run by the Commonwealth Trust. Schools should be able to find out about this annual competition through the Commonwealth Desk Officer in their country's Ministry of Education or they can write to the Commonwealth Trust in London (see page 81). An example of a recent prize winners work is shown on the opposite page.

My name is Alkis Psaltis. I am named after my maternal grandfather Alkivradis - Alkis for short. Grandfathers are wonderful, caring people who have so much patience, knowledge and understanding. My grandfather, or papou as I loved calling him, was no exception. When I was little he used to exercise my limbs daily as I was born premature, and had excessive laxity of my joints. Papou was always there when I needed him. His warm, gentle, smiling face always cheered me up when I was feeling low. Those loving arms that would hold me tight are no longer there for me anymore. You see, my papou had a severe heart attack fifty days ago and he died. The world is a sad and lonely place for me now. Most of the time I try to be strong for my grandmother and my mother who also miss him dearly but there are times I can't hold back the tears. Why do people have to die?

Often I would visit my grand father. In summer, we would sit together in his hammock beneath his vines. As we munch-ed on the juicy sultana grapes he would tell me about his childhood and about the suffering in the world today. We talked about World Wars I and II, about the countless people who died in the name of peace and the millions who will die if there's a World War III.

There is so much suffering in the world we live in. People like Mother Theresa try to bring some comfort to the suffering people in the Third World Countries, but daily there are millions

of people around the world facing death from hunger, disease, wars and violence.

Nowadays, I often think back to those long talks I had with my papou. When I watch the news on T.V., I miss my grandfather, for I would often interpret the news to him, as he could not speak English. Nothing has changed, however - violence, greed, drug-trafficking and suffering still go on in the world today.

Yesterday, after my papou's memorial service, my grandmother opened a little wooden box, belonging to my papou and presented each of her three grandsons, with a small memento to remember our grandfather by. Mine was a ring which my papou always wore on his little finger. As I held it, my eyes brimmed with tears and the ring seemed to glisten and sparkle as it never had done so before.

"Oh papou," I said softly, "if only you could hear me and grant me three wishes through this ring, how happy I would be!"

- My first wish would be to have you back with us again.
- My second would be to eliminate suffering and death in the world and my final wish would be for world peace and equality amongst all people regardless of their colour, race and cultural background.

As I finished making my wishes, my grandfather's ring seemed to glow in my hand. I felt my papou was watching over me. If only this ring has magic powers and could grant my wishes.

Prize winning essay from Alkis Psaltis, aged 12, from South Australia

On Commonwealth Day

- Any particularly interesting essay could be displayed on a school noticeboard.
- A debate could take place in front of (and involving the participation of) an audience of students, parents and visitors.