



Australia

Ancient Australia

The pages that follow contain printable exercises for students in the middle to later years of schooling.

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for research, discussion and/or writing

Pangaea and Gondwana



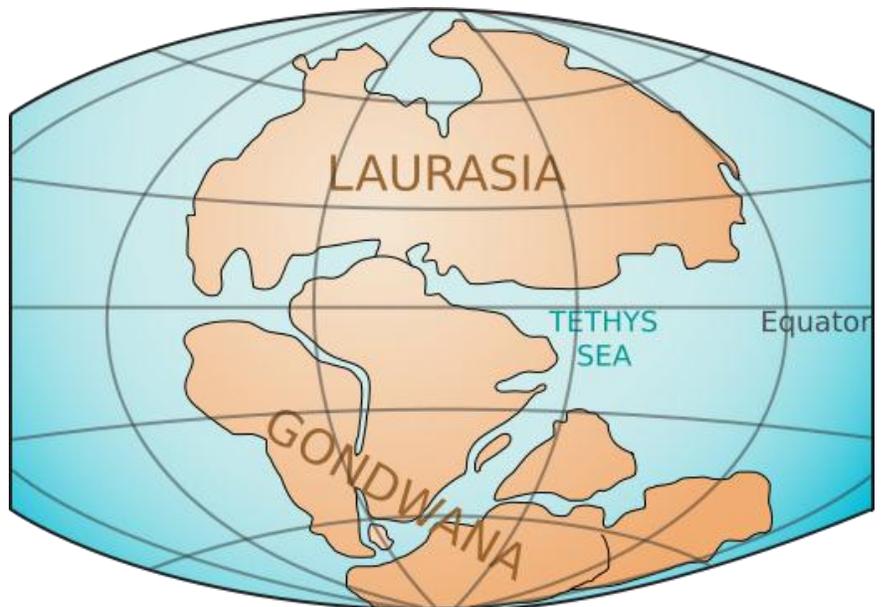
Long, long ago there was no Australia.

Going back in time more than 200 million years there was just one continent on Earth, a supercontinent scientists call Pangaea.

Then, in the Triassic Period, Pangaea broke into two, Gondwana in the south and Laurasia in the north.

The great land mass Gondwana consisted of South America, Antarctica, Africa, Madagascar, India and Australia.

About 184 million years ago South America began to drift slowly westward from Africa and, at about the same time, Madagascar began moving away from Africa to the east, Antarctica drifted south while India moved northward.



TRIASSIC
200 million years ago

Part of Antarctica broke away around 100 million years ago; this became New Zealand. Australia began to separate from Antarctica soon after. Over the years Australia moved further and further north, its shape gradually changing into what it is today.

If ever you visit Albany at the southern tip of Western Australia you can see a sign set amid an outcrop of granite rock at the coast. The sign mentions that the rocks and general geology of this area is of the same type and same age as that along the northern coast of Antarctica.

Talk about or Write about

- 1) What is interesting about the shapes of the east coast of South America and the west coast of Africa?
- 2) What caused Pangaea and then Gondwana to break apart?
- 3) There was life on Earth at the time of Gondwana. What kinds of life were there?
- 4) Imagine that Australia and all the other continents miraculously came back together again -with no calamities- and everyone on Earth lived on a single continent, similar to Pangaea. How would things be different? (some key words to get you started: *travel, communication, nationalism, wars, climate, trade, ...*).

