



Teacher Resource

The Dismissal Anniversary

Focus Questions

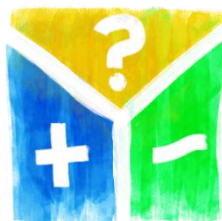
Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. How many Prime Ministers have been sacked in Australia?
2. What were some of Gough Whitlam's achievements? Name two.
3. Explain the events that led to Gough Whitlam getting sacked on November 11th 1975.
4. How did people react to the dismissal of the Whitlam government?
5. What surprised you have about the story?

Activity: Note taking

Students will practise their note-taking skills while watching the BTN Dismissal Anniversary story. After watching the story, ask students to reflect on and organise the information into three categories. What information in the story was...?

- Positive
- Negative or
- Interesting



Activity: Discuss

After watching the BTN Dismissal Anniversary story students discuss the story in pairs, using the following questions to guide the discussion:

- What events led to Gough Whitlam's dismissal?
- Who were the key people involved in the dismissal?
- How did people react to the dismissal of the Whitlam government?



EPISODE 32

11 November 2025

KEY LEARNING

Students will learn about the dismissal of the Whitlam government and the role of the Governor-General.

CURRICULUM

HASS – Year 6

Significant individuals, events and ideas that led to Australia's Federation, the Constitution and democratic system of government.

The key institutions of Australia's system of government, how it is based on the Westminster system, and the key values and beliefs of Western democracies.

Develop questions to investigate people, events, developments, places and systems.

Activity: Key words

Students will brainstorm a list of key words that relate to the BTN Dismissal Anniversary story. Here are some words to get them started.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL	HEAD OF STATE	CONSTITUTION
DOUBLE DISSOLUTION	LOWER HOUSE	SENATE

Ask students to write what they think is the meaning of each word (including unfamiliar words). They will swap definitions with a partner and ask them to add to or change the definition. Check these against the dictionary definition.

Activity: Whitlam Dismissal Research

Discuss the information raised in the BTN Dismissal Anniversary story. What questions were raised in the discussion and what are the gaps in students' knowledge? Students will develop their own question/s to research or choose one or more of the questions below

Research

- What events led to Whitlam's dismissal on 11 November 1975?
- What role did the Governor-General, John Kerr, play in Gough Whitlam's dismissal?
- What are 'reserve powers'? When can the Governor-General use them?
- How did Australians react to Whitlam's dismissal?
- Why was Whitlam's dismissal a significant event in Australian history?
- What did the dismissal mean for politics and democracy in Australia?
- Could the dismissal happen again? Does the Governor-General still have the power to dismiss the government?

Activity: Whitlam's Dismissal Speech

Students watch [Gough Whitlam's dismissal speech](#) then respond to the following questions:

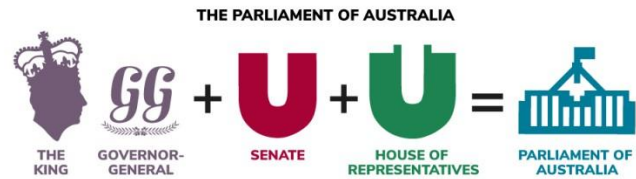
- What words would you use to describe Whitlam's speech?
- What did Whitlam mean when he said *"Well may we say 'God save the Queen', because nothing will save the Governor-General"*?
- What do you think Gough Whitlam wanted Australians to remember from the speech?



Activity: Role of the Governor-General

Students will investigate the role of Australia's Governor-General. Below are some research questions:

- Who does the Governor-General represent?
- What is the role of the Governor-General?
- Who is our current Governor-General?
- Why was it controversial for the Governor-General to sack Gough Whitlam as Prime Minister in 1975?



Activity: Biography

Students will research and write a biography of Gough Whitlam exploring his life, career, achievements, and impact. Before they begin their biographies, discuss what students already know about biographies. What type of information is included in a biography and what do they tell us about a person.

Class Discussion

Use the questions below to get a class discussion started with your students about biographical writing.

- What does a biography tell us about a person?
- Where can you look to find information for your biographical writing? Why is it important to use more than one source of information?
- What makes a biography interesting? For example, key information and facts, a timeline of events, photographs, illustrations and quotes.



Create your Biography

Using the biography worksheet at the end of this activity, students will research and record information. Some possible areas of research include:

- When and where was Gough Whitlam born? Describe his family life growing up.
- What were some of his achievements? Choose one to explore in more detail.
- What inspired him to enter politics?
- What were some challenges that he faced?
- What contributions did he make to Australian society? What do you think is Gough Whitlam's legacy?
- Interesting facts about him.



[Source of image](#)

Further Investigation

- Imagine you could sit down and talk to Gough Whitlam. What questions would you ask about him? Do you have any questions about the dismissal?
- In pairs, students can role play the interview – one taking on the role of interviewer, the other, as the person.
- Create a timeline of important events in their life.
- What are some of the key events in his life? Write a summary for one key event, which answers the 5 W's – Who, What, Where, When and Why?

Useful Websites

- [Whitlam dismissal](#) – National Museum Australia
- [The Whitlam dismissal](#) – Parliamentary Education Office
- [Whitlam Legacy](#) – BTN
- [Why was Whitlam sacked and not just a double dissolution called:](#) - Parliamentary Education Office
- [‘We’ve been sacked’: The 1975 Whitlam government dismissal](#) – MoAD
- [Governor-General](#) – Parliamentary Education Office

BIOGRAPHY

Name

Born

Family

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