

A World of Opposites

"I left Atlanta in warm weather, just as the first signs of autumn were beginning to appear. However, here in Sydney, September meant it was early spring. I quickly tried to adjust my thinking. In the Northern Hemisphere, we would consider this a typical March day.

At home it would have been nearly time to go to bed, but in Australia it was early morning. The seasons and the time of day are exactly the opposite of ours.

As we began to walk through the airport, I noticed that everyone was walking on the left. This in itself was an adjustment, as "normal" for me was to walk on the right. Next, as I was walking across the road to the carpark (parking lot), I almost got hit by an oncoming car. I had looked in the wrong direction before crossing the road! When we finally got to the car, I walked around to the right hand side of the car to get in. I had forgotten that the passenger side of the car was on the left, not the right. Adjusting my automatic responses in this world of opposites was more difficult than I had imagined!

In Australia, a toll-free phone number begins with 008, the opposite of the American 800."

The reason the seasons of the year and the time of day are the opposite of the United States is due to natural phenomena: the tilt of the earth's axis and its rotation on its axis and revolution around the sun. The other opposites, however, are due to cultural differences.

1. Several automatic responses are described above. Automatic responses are things we do without even thinking about it. Make a list of 10 automatic responses you have. When might some of these not be the correct thing to do? Why?

2. Write a story about living in a land of opposites. You can include some of the opposites you would find in Australia, but use your imagination to think of many more.

3. Write a list of 20 words. With a partner brainstorm as many opposites as you can think of for each word.

4. Which of the opposites in the description would be the most difficult for you to adjust to? Why?

Challenge

Find out why Australians drive on the left hand side of the road and Americans drive on the right hand side. Which other countries drive on the left? on the right? Write a proposal for standardizing driving habits all over the world by the year 2010. Give reasons to defend your proposal.