Australia

**8000 B.C.:**  
Aborigines invent the boomerang. This wooden weapon, which is used for hunting, returns to its thrower.

**1770 A.D.:**  
Britain claims Australia. It settles the first of six colonies in 1788.

**1850s:**  
Gold is found in southern Australia. Entire settlements are deserted as folks rush to the gold mines.

**1901:**  
The six colonies join to form the Commonwealth of Australia. It has a democratic government. Britain's royalty has only a ceremonial role.

**1927:**  
Canberra officially replaces Melbourne as the nation's capital.

**1962:**  
Aborigines are given the right to vote. Five years later, they're recognized as citizens.

**1976:**  
The Aboriginal Land Rights Act is passed. It is a legal turning point for Aborigines, giving them the right to make claims on their ancestral land in the Northern Territory. Nine years later, Uluru is returned to Aborigines.

**2000:**  
Sydney hosts the Summer Olympic Games.

**2008:**  
The Australian parliament formally apologizes for past wrongs committed against the Aboriginal people.

**New Zealand**

**600 A.D. -1300 A.D.:**  
The first inhabitants of New Zealand, the Maori, arrive from eastern Polynesia.

**1642:**  
Dutch sailor Abel Janszoon Tasman becomes the first European to reach New Zealand.

**1769:**  
English explorer Captain James Cook makes the first of his three voyages to the islands. His journals inspire other Europeans to explore New Zealand.

**1840:**  
The Maori sign the Treaty of Waitangi giving control to the British in exchange for protection and guaranteed Maori possession of their lands.

**1860:**  
A decade of land wars begins between the Maoris and European settlers.

**1861:**  
Gold is discovered in Tuapeka. This leads to a gold rush.

**1893:**  
New Zealand becomes the first country to give women the right to vote.

**1907:**  
The country becomes a dominion, or self-governing community, within the British empire.

**1947:**  
New Zealand gains independence from Great Britain.

**1953:**  
New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary becomes the first person to climb to the top of Mount Everest.

**1997:**  
Jennifer Shipley becomes the country's first female prime minister