

Year 5 General Studies

Cathy Freeman

Cathy Freeman was born in Mackay (Queensland) on 16 February, 1973. Her mother is of the Kuku Yalanji people of far north Queensland and along with Cathy's grandmother was born in the Indigenous community of Palm Island. Cathy's father was born in Woorabinda and is of the Burri Gubba people of central Queensland.

Cathy became involved in athletics at a very young age. When she won her first race at eight years old, Cathy claims that she was 'hooked' on running. At fourteen, Cathy told her vocational officer that her only career goal was to win an Olympic medal. By then, she had already won national titles in high jump, and the 100, 200 and 400 metre sprints. She won her first gold medal in the 4 by 100 metre relay at the 1990 Commonwealth Games when she was just sixteen years old.

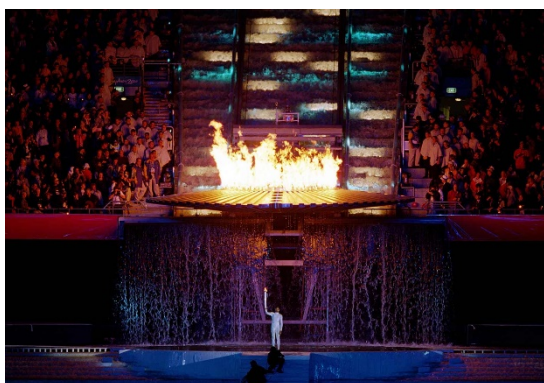
At the 1994, Commonwealth Games Cathy caused controversy by carrying the Aboriginal flag as well as the Australian national flag during her victory lap of the 200 metres sprint. At that time the flag was not recognised as an official Australian flag.

At the 2000, Olympic Games in Sydney Cathy Freeman's event was the biggest on the Sydney Olympic calendar, and organisers wanted to send a powerful signal to the world about reconciliation. When asked to light the Olympic cauldron, Cathy accepted the honour without hesitation. And when warned about the extra pressure it would bring, she replied: 'I like pressure. It's when I perform at my best.'

The 400-metre race was her best event and the main focus of the Games. She had won it at the Commonwealth Games in 1994, and at the World Championships in 1997 and 1999. After winning Olympic gold, Cathy did a victory lap in front of an ecstatic crowd of 112,000. She carried both the Aboriginal and Australian flags. She carefully picked them up at the same time, and tied their ends together, to show that they were equally important to her.



Throughout her athletic career Cathy has received numerous awards including the Olympic Order for Sportswoman of the Year in 2001, and was named Australian of the Year in 1998. Following her retirement in 2003, Cathy pursued interests important to her especially those related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. She has been involved with a number of charities and community activities including Cottage by the Sea and the Cathy Freeman Foundation.



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Questions

1. What year did Cathy Freeman win Olympic gold?

2. When was Cathy Freeman the Australian of the Year?

3. Freeman won a Commonwealth Games Gold medal when she was just sixteen years old.

True / False

4. When asked to light the Olympic cauldron and the associated pressure that came with it, Cathy replied: 'I like pressure. It's when I perform at my best.' What does she mean by this statement?

5. Cathy Freeman carried both the Aboriginal and Australian flags for her victory lap at the Sydney 2000 Olympic.

True / False

6. Sequence the following events in order. (1 to 4)

- Freeman lights the Olympic cauldron at the Sydney Olympics.
- Cathy is given the Olympic Order for Sportswoman of the Year in 2001.
- At fourteen, Cathy told her vocational officer that her only career goal was to win an Olympic medal.
- She had won the 400m at the Commonwealth Games in 1994, and at the World Championships in 1997 and 1999.