

2-players/2-teams  
10-minutes  
Age 8+

# WIKI HISTORIES



## Lesson Plan: Board Game Design in one week (5 lessons.)

Objective: Students will learn board game design by playing Wiki Histories and then creating and play-testing their own Wiki History.

### 1. Whole Class—Engagement

duration: 0.25 class  
materials needed: blue/red marker and a few games to project or draw

Choose the first Wiki History entitled “*Goodbye Big Dinosaurs*”. Project or draw it on the board in front of the classroom. Do not introduce the rules in any way. Instead jump right in—asking any extroverted student to choose 1-6 strength for the blue feathered dinosaurs. Ask another student where to place it (A-H). Use the blue marker to put the indicated strength in the indicated territory.

Repeat with two other students. Explain that they are part of the mammal team. Use the red marker to put their strength in the indicated territory. Go through the whole game explaining a single rule wherever it seems natural.

Keep it fast. This is not a time for strategizing. You would really like one team to have a quick **epic fail**. Epic fails are engaging! Everyone should laugh. Nobody understood the rules! This is good pedagogy—start by getting the students engaged and end with them understanding the rules.

You should play this simple map twice.

### 2. Whole Class—Play

duration: 0.25 class  
materials needed: same

Split the class into a blue and red team. Give one student the choice between: “*Welcome to the Stone Age!*” or “*Australian Megafauna meet Modern Humans*”. Project or draw the chosen Wiki History onto the board. Describe some of the history behind the game. Play it as a whole class!

Don’t let the extroverted students dominate the decision making. Choose a different student to make each decision.

### 3. Small Group—Play

duration: 2.5 classes  
materials needed: blue/red marker for each group and a photo copy or laminated copy of some games.

Each class, introduce two or three new Wiki Histories. Tell the students a little bit about the history and the unique rules of each of the games. Split the class into groups of either 2 or 4 players. The 2-player groups will go head-to-head. The 4-player groups will be pair vs. pair. Give a student in each group a choice between the two or three Wiki Histories. Each group then gets a photocopy or laminated copy of their map. Let them play!

Some Wiki Histories have secret information and require each team to have their own map.

*Look for: students keen to advise their teammates on the best move.  
Look for: students making their own decisions.*

#### 4. Student Design

duration: 0.5 class

materials needed: pen/pencil and paper for all students

Split the class into pairs (elementary school) or threes (older students). Briefly introduce the history of the attached Wiki Histories.

Each group of students:

- Chooses one of the attached half-finished Wiki Histories.
  - Yet Another Slave War
  - Rebel Sisters
  - The Great Emu War
- Assigns a strength of 12-20 to each side in the conflict.
- Adds a unique rule to one or both sides in the conflict. This can be a strength or a weakness.

Students should try to make the game as balanced as possible. This can be difficult. If students are frustrated or unsure how to proceed, encourage them to make any reasonable choice inspired by the history and then jump into play testing.

*Look for: group discussions.*

#### 5. Play Testing—Within Your Group

duration: 0.5 classes

materials needed: blue/red markers and photocopier

Students should first play-test their games within their own group. They should ask themselves two questions:

- Was it fun? If the answer is “no” then they need to go back and come up with another idea. Some groups may like to switch maps. That’s ok to do once, but then they should stick with their choice.
- Was one side too powerful? If the answer is “yes” they need to increase the strength of the weak side and/or decrease the strength of the powerful side.

*Look for: students discussing what change should be made.*

#### 6. Play Testing—With Other Groups

duration: 1 class

materials needed: blue/red markers and photocopier

Randomly connect groups in the classroom. They will play each other’s games. When a group of students starts playing the other group’s game, they get to choose which side to play.

After a game is played, the group who designed it should be silent and listen to feedback from the other group. Feedback should be blunt and honest. It can be ignored, or it can be used to make the game better. Some questions to answer when you are giving feedback:

- Was it easy to understand the rules?
- Was it fun?
- Was my side too weak? Too powerful?

Students should be reminded to reciprocate: “If someone plays your game and gives you feedback—you should next play their game and give them feedback.”

*Look for: one group listening as another group gives them feedback.*

#### 6. Submission (optional)

I will next be working on 2500–500 BCE and 1000–1500 CE. If your class wants to submit a Wiki History, please email me ([gord@mathpickle.com](mailto:gord@mathpickle.com)) with the subject heading “Wiki History Submission”. A submission should include:

- grade level of the students
- the name of your class (example: Ms. Potter’s grade 6 class)
- your school’s name
- student names (optional)
- A Wiki History map
- some unique rules
- a grade-level appropriate mini-essay
- a grade-level appropriate sketch of a major character

All submissions become the property of MathPickle. If a submission is used in a Wiki Histories book, credit will be given. A pdf of all books will be made available for free on MathPickle.com.

## Yet Another Slave War 73–71 BCE

Spartacus had joined the Roman army as a young man on the fringe of the Empire. Whatever his motivation, he became disillusioned, and deserted—only to be captured and sold into slavery. His strength and military background made him a natural for gladiatorial school, and so he ended up as a heavyweight gladiator in Capua.

In 73 BCE he and seventy other gladiators managed a daring breakout, armed with filed-down spoons. They broke into the school's armory and weaponized, then made a run for the countryside. Along their path they liberated slaves, and their ranks swelled.

The Roman legions were far away engaged in wars, and anyway the escaped gladiatorial schoolmates were not considered a huge threat, but desperate men who have nothing to lose make fearsome adversaries. Give them a leader with charisma and guile and you get the Third Servile War.

A militia was sent out to hunt down the fugitive ex-gladiators. They found them encamped on the steep, defensible slopes of Mount Vesuvius. There was no escape, so the militia set up strong defenses and planned on starving them out. The ex-gladiators used vines to climb down a cliff, and surprised the Roman militia in their rear. Few if any survived.

News of the Roman militia's defeat spread, and slaves deserted from all over to join Spartacus. They were not all natural fighters, but a system of rigorous military drills got them ready for the Roman legions that Spartacus knew would eventually be coming after them.

And come they did. Consuls Lucius Publicola and Gnaeus Clodius were sent out at the head of two legions, each numbering just under five thousand well-trained troops. The two legions defeated one of the rebel armies, consisting of thirty thousand slaves, but then Spartacus showed up with a second similarly sized army and defeated them.

But Rome had just begun fighting, and in 71 BCE Rome's wealthiest citizen, Crassus, sent out eight full legions. Spartacus sought to escape by bribing the Cilician pirates to carry over a fraction of his army to Sicily. They accepted his money—and then sailed away into the sunset. Spartacus's remaining slaves were crushed.



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Spartacus—the escaped gladiator slave

# Yet Another Slave War 73-71 BCE

Escaped Slaves and Gladiators



Roman Soldiers



## Rebel Sisters 40-43 CE

In 111 BCE, the Han Chinese defeated the kingdom of Nanyue, which was in Southern China and Northern Vietnam. The Han rulers were fair at first, and people didn't fight back much. But then a bad governor started making people pay unfair taxes to get rich himself.

When the governor found out that some people were planning to rebel, he killed the men but spared the women. This kindness backfired, as it led to a rebellion led by women.

Two sisters, Trưng Trắc and Trưng Nhị, who were in their twenties, led the rebellion. They had learned martial arts from their father and became the leaders of the uprising. The governor was so scared that he ran away, pretending to be a servant. Trưng Trắc was made queen, and many towns and cities joined their cause. Their army grew to eighty thousand people.

The Han Chinese sent in twenty thousand warriors and a powerful navy with ships full of crossbowmen and weapons that could throw molten iron.

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Trưng Nhị and Trưng Trắc

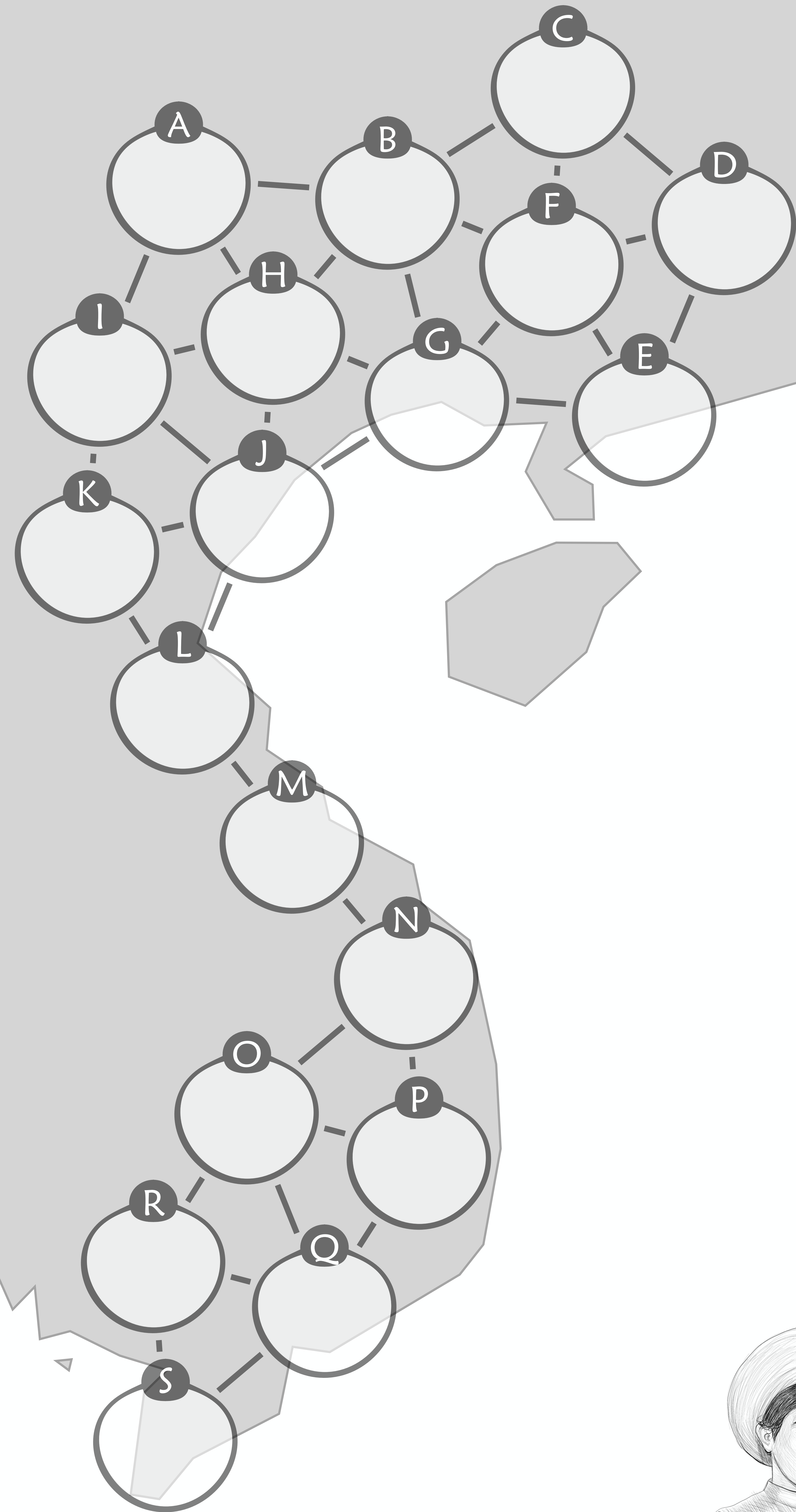


# Rebel Sisters

40-43 CE

Han Empire

Vietnamese



# The Great Emu War

## 1932–1948

We understood that replacing *Homo sapiens* as the dominant species was never going to be easy.

Their advantage? They had the Lewis machine gun. We did not.

Our advantage? God always fights on the side with better plumage.

In Western Australia, there were 20,000 of us against 430,000 humans, but they were concentrated in the cities. We dominated the rural farmland. The farmers we were up against were poor—many having returned as veterans from the First World War and forced into wheat production on the low-quality land we called home. The Great Depression hit Western Australia hard. They were dependent on global demand for wheat and wool, and when these collapsed, so did the farmers. From 1930 to 1932, unemployment in Western Australia soared to 30%.

We always had work. We always had food. And after gorging ourselves on wheat, we could trample the rest of it and break down their fences so our allies, the rabbits, could get in and finish the job.

In 1932, they brought in the army to support the farmers. That's when we first encountered our most serious foe: the Lewis machine gun. Major G.P.W. Meredith of the Royal Australian Artillery began using it in November. Despite firing approximately 2,500 rounds of ammunition, fewer than 1,000 of us were killed. They gave up. The army went home. We won!

But we became overconfident. Over the following decades, a new weapon emerged: better quality fences. Stronger, taller, more resilient than before, they keep us out of the fields.

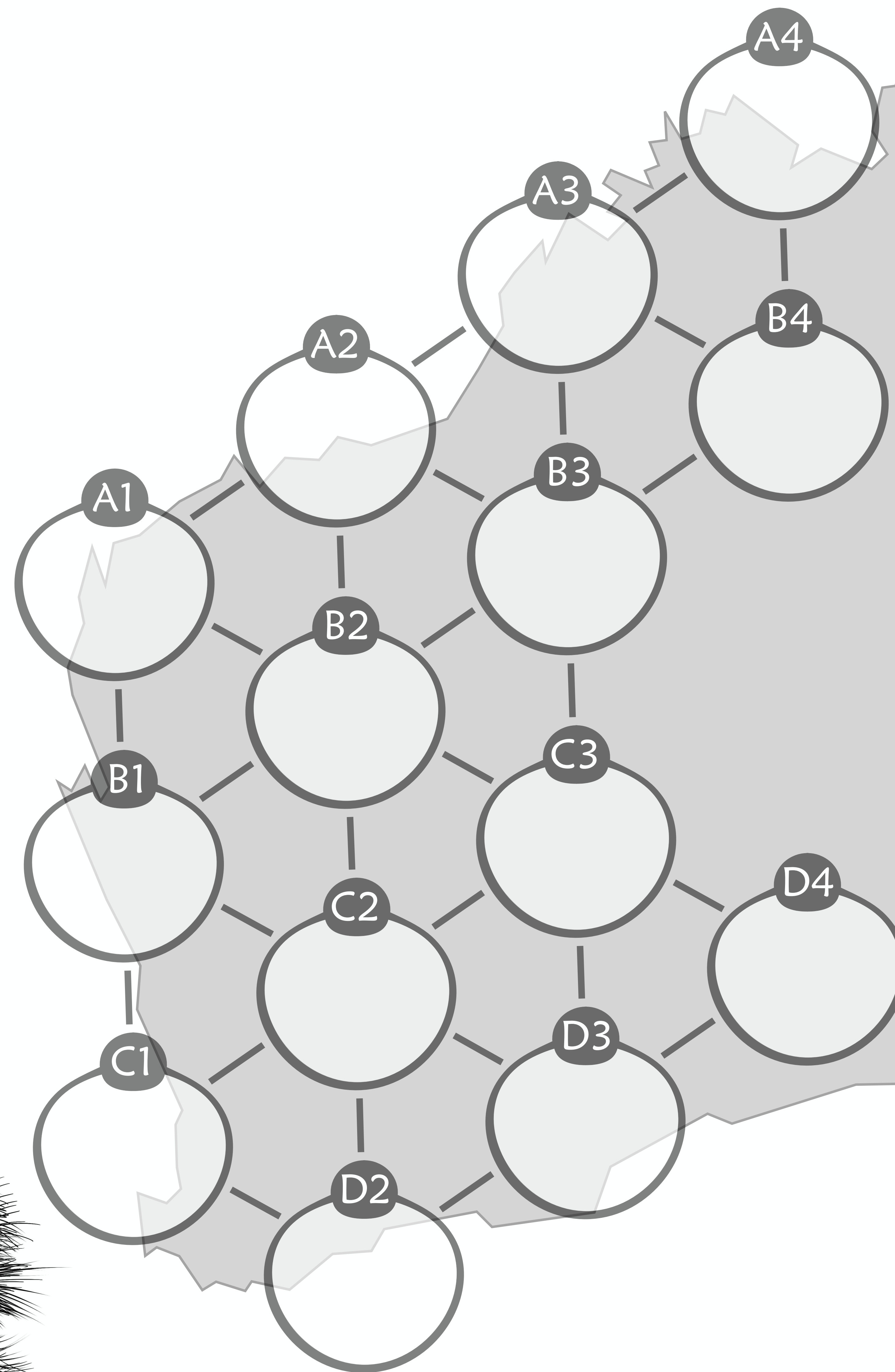
Yet, fences can rust, and *Homo sapiens* will weaken themselves with other wars among themselves. And we will be ready, biding our time. For we are the emus, rulers of the land, and we know the perfect moment to strike will come. And when it does, no fence will stand in our way.

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If you're reading this—you're the enemy



# The Great Emu War 1932-1948



Emus

Humans

