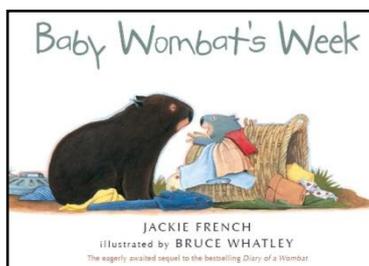


A LITERACY-BASED UNIT FOR
BABY WOMBAT'S WEEK

BY JACKIE FRENCH, ILLUSTRATED BY BRUCE WHATLEY



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Teaching notes and worksheets by Christine Sarandis

Baby Wombat's Week is the long-awaited sequel to the popular and best-selling *Diary of a Wombat*, which was published in 2002.

About the book

The star of the international bestseller *Diary of a Wombat* is back - with a new mouth to feed! Cuter, stroppier and even more determined than her mother ... meet Mothball's baby.

Like any growing family, this baby wombat and her mum are finding it hard to fit into their home.

When setting out to dig a new, bigger hole with room for them both, this little baby gets some help from a friend, causes more mayhem than Mothball ever did, and sorts things out in hilarious style.

A charming new picture book from the team who created the bestselling *Diary of a Wombat* and *Josephine Wants to Dance*. For every child ... and every parent, too.

Note: Worksheets can be found at the end of these notes

About the author

Jackie French is a full-time writer who lives near Braidwood in the Araluen Valley, NSW. In 2000, *Hitler's Daughter* was awarded the Children's Book Council of Australia Younger Readers' Award. *To the Moon and Back* won the Eve Pownall Award in 2005. Most recently, *The Camel Who Crossed Australia* was named as a Notable Book in the Younger Reader Category in the 2009 Children's Book Council of Australia Awards, and *A Rose for the Anzac Boys* was awarded Honour Book status in the Older Reader Category.

About the illustrator

Bruce Whatley is one of Australia's best-loved and most-respected author-illustrators. His books include the enormously successful and award-winning *Diary of a Wombat*, written by Jackie French, and its companion volume, *The Secret World of Wombats*, also illustrated by Bruce. The best-selling team have also collaborated on *Pete the Sheep*, *Josephine Wants to Dance*, *Emily and the Big Bad Bunyip* and *The Shaggy Gully Times*. Two of Bruce's previous books, *The Ugliest Dog in the World* and *Tails from Grandad's Attic*, were named as Notable Books by the Children's Book Council of Australia in 1993 and 1996 respectively. *Looking for Crabs* was shortlisted by the Children's Book Council in 1993 and *Detective Donut* and the *Wild Goose Chase* was named an Honour Book by the Children's Book Council in 1998. Bruce has illustrated forty books to date, including a number that he has co-written with Rosie Smith. Their latest collaboration was *Little White Dogs Can't Jump*.

Before reading the book

1. Talk about the front cover and the title and what the story might be about. Later, discuss and compare prior expectations with impressions after reading together.
2. On the front cover, ask students' opinion on why the illustrator might have placed the baby wombat inside the basket of washing.
3. What do students know about the characters in the story from other books by the author and illustrator?

After reading

1. Ask the students to brainstorm a list of all the words they can remember from the story and then discuss any word meanings they may not know. Now add words to the list to describe the story.
2. Place the previous word list in alphabetical order.
3. Ask students to choose three of the words and place each one in a sentence.
4. Wombat Word Search activity (**See worksheet – Word Search**)
5. All About Wombats activity - wombat food, wombat habitat, wombat appearance, wombat behaviour (**See worksheet – All about wombats**)
6. In the book, there are very few words to describe what is happening in baby wombat's day. As an exercise in vocabulary development, choose one double page spread and ask a number of different children to give their own interpretation of what's going on, beyond the words on the page.
7. Make a list of the things baby wombat did in a week and compare it with students' weekly activities.
8. Which adjectives from the book are used to describe how baby wombat felt about his week? Make a list of the words and ask the students to add some more to the list to describe their interpretations of the illustrations.
9. Cloze activity - Using the words from the box, fill in the gaps to make the story make sense. (**See worksheet – Cloze activity**)
10. Research and write a character profile of the author or illustrator or write to either of them, explaining your impressions of *Baby Wombat's Week*.

Talking and listening

1. On Monday, why did baby wombat's mum decide it was time to go *outside*?
2. What happened on Tuesday?
3. On Wednesday, why do you think baby wombat's mum decided it was time to make a new hole?
4. How did baby wombat and his mum spend the day on Thursday?
5. What was the GIANT hole that baby wombat found on Friday?
6. On Saturday, what had happened to the GIANT hole?

7. How did baby wombat spend his Sunday?
8. What do you think the following week's diary might look or sound like?
9. How did baby wombat spend most of his time?
10. What is baby wombat's idea of fun?
11. Why do you think baby wombat got bored?
12. Which smells and food did baby wombat like?
13. What did baby wombat think of human food?
14. At the end of the story, where did Mothball and baby wombat end up?
15. Talk about the differences between the words used in the story and what the pictures convey.
16. Which parts do you think are funny and why?
17. What do we know about Mothball from *Diary of a Wombat*?
18. Why do you think the author introduced a human baby into the story?
19. What purpose does the presence of the human baby serve in the story?
20. What and how do the expressions on Mothball's face reveal about her feelings about the baby wombat's activities?
21. How are the actions of baby wombat and his mum similar or different to that of a human baby and its mother?
22. Discuss the work of the illustrator – his style and the medium used - and ask students for their opinion on what is conveyed through the illustrations.

Additional activities

Wombats

1. What do students know about wombats and about the relationship between a baby wombat and its mother?
2. Find out about wombats' physical and other characteristics and traits and write and illustrate a report on one aspect of the life of a wombat. It could include information on one or any of the following aspects: description, habitat, lifestyle, diet, breeding, different breeds and where they are located in Australia, or any other aspect students find of interest.
3. Write a *Did you know?* article about wombats. **(See worksheet – Did you know?)**

4. Follow Jackie French's monthly newsletters for entries about the real Mothball who lives at her place. <http://www.jackiefrench.com.au/news.htm#2>

Diaries

1. The book is formatted like a diary, similar to *Diary of a Wombat*. Discuss diaries, their uses and why we use them to record things and the many different ways in which we can keep records. E.g. illustrated diaries, diaries with pictures pasted in, written diary entries etc.
2. Why did the author use the diary format in *Baby Wombat's Week* and what do we learn about baby wombat as a result?
3. Students could create a diary to describe their week and record in words and pictures what they do each day. **(See Worksheet - Diary)** Compare students' diaries.

Research

1. Research the key physical characteristics of a wombat. Make a toy wombat using fabric and stuffing. You could use the following stencil as a template or students could draw a freehand wombat.
<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/mammals/marsupial/Wombatcoloring.shtml>
2. Discuss the wombat's physical characteristics and ask students why the wombat needs sharp claws. Discuss its other features and their uses or why they have evolved with specific characteristics.
3. Wombats and humans – find out about how they co-exist and write a short report.

Drama

4. Ask the students to pretend they are wombats. Ask them to do all of the following: curl up as if asleep, eat grass, and dig with their sharp claws, demand food from humans etc.
5. Sing songs about wombats and other Australian animals (Refer to the songs of Don Spenser.)

Art and craft

6. Students could create an alternative illustration for the front cover.
7. Students choose one of the following drawing media such as charcoal, wax crayons, coloured pencils, grey lead pencils or pastels to illustrate a response to the story. Post the students' pictures on a display wall.

Cooking

8. Make wombat-shaped shortbread biscuits (using a wombat shaped cutter or hand cut shapes) and decorate with coloured icing. (See recipe below)

Shortbread

Ingredients

250g butter, softened

1 cup icing sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 cups plain flour

½ cup cornflour

Method

Line 2 baking trays with baking paper.

Using an electric mixer, cream butter, sugar and vanilla until pale. Add flour and cornflour. Stir to combine. Turn onto a floured surface. Knead gently until smooth. Divide mixture and give each child enough to make 2 biscuits.

Refrigerate for 20 minutes or until firm. Then have children cut their wombat shapes. Preheat oven to 160°C. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until light golden and firm to the touch.

Note: You can double recipe to make enough biscuits for a class of 20.

For a wide range of recipes, refer to Jackie French's website:

www.jackiefrench.com

A few other things

9. After reading some of the other stories featuring wombats listed below, compare and contrast the wombats in those stories with baby wombat and his mother, Mothball.
10. Read about real life wombats in *The Secret World of wombats*, by Jackie French, illustrated by Bruce Whatley, or some of the adventures with wombats on Jackie's web site, jackiefrench.com
11. Join The wombat Foundation, and help save endangered hairy nosed wombats from extinction. You'll get a regular newsletter about the hairy nosed wombats, too
12. How to See a Wombat - Extract taken from Jackie's website:

<http://www.jackiefrench.com/tithe.html>

Most people see wombats in zoos - dusty, sleepy animals who lumber a few steps and go to sleep again, who are used to narrow restricted lives behind the zoo walls. If you really want to meet a wombat, you have to go bush - and you have to watch them at night or in later afternoon on winter days. Watching wombats, though, is just part of the whole experience of being in the bush - watching wombats at a zoo, even in a large enclosure, can never be anything like watching free wombats, in an environment that changes with drought and flood and rain and storm. (You can't really experience the bush from watching TV either. You can't smell it, feel the moisture on your skin, watch how it changes.)

Further reading

Other books by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley

- *Diary of a Wombat*
- *The Secret World of Wombats (non-fiction)*
- *Pete the Sheep*
- *Josephine Wants to Dance*
- *Emily and the Big Bad Bunyip*
- *The Shaggy Gully Times*
- *How High Can a Kangaroo Hop?*

Jackie French's blog and website:

www.jackiefrench.com.au

www.jackiefrench.com

More about Bruce Whatley

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/cmis/eval/fiction/authors/at23.htm#whatley>

<http://www.laterallearning.com/authors/whatley.html>

For teaching notes on *Diary of a Wombat* and other titles by Jackie French, visit:

<http://www.harpercollins.com.au/resources/teachers.aspx>

Other books featuring wombats:

- *How To Scratch A Wombat: Where To Find It ... What To Feed It ... Why It Sleeps All Day* by Jackie French
- *The Wombat and the Grand Poohjam* by Jackie French (This book is also available in audio from Louis Braille Audio: www.louisbrailleaudio.com)
- *Batter up Wombat* by Helen Lester
- *Wombat goes Walkabout* by Michael Morpurgo
- *Swim, Little Wombat, Swim* and other titles in the series by Charles Fuge
- *Wombat Divine* by Mem Fox
- *One Woolly Wombat* by Kerry Argent
- *Don't Pat the Wombat* by Elizabeth Honey
- *Sometimes I Like to Curl up in a Ball* by Vicki Churchill
- *Wombats* by Barbara Triggs (CSIRO Publishing)
- *The Secret Life of Wombats* by James Woodford
- *Harry the Hairy-Nosed Wombat* by Jill Morris
- *The Wombat Who Talked to the Stars: The Journal of a Northern Hairy-Nosed Wombat* by Jill Morris

- *Wombat's Secret* by Rebecca Johnson
- *Wombat Stew* by Marcia Vaughan
- *Sebastian Lives in a Hat* by Thelma Catterwell and Kerry Argent
- *Endangered Australian Animals* by Jane Bowring
- *Johnny Wombat* by Victor Kelleher and Craig Smith
- *Wombats Can't Fly* by Michael Dugan and Jane Burrell
- *Wombat & Fox series* by Terry Denton (Also available in audio from Louis Braille Audio: www.louisbrailleaudio.com)
- *Wombat's Secret* by Rebecca Johnson
- *The Muddleheaded Wombat series* by Ruth Park, illustrated by Noela Young

Video/TV:

- *Wombats: Bulldozers of the Bush*. An Australian Broadcasting Commission video documentary on wombats has some great footage (including 'burrow cam') and some night vision footage of a very determined wombat getting under an electric fence. Produced by: ABC Natural History Unit
<http://www.abc.net.au/abcinternational/s33769.htm>
- *Australian Story: The Wombat Boy* (aired Monday, 25th March, 2002). An Australian Broadcasting Commission documentary on Peter Nicholson, who in the 1960s as a young schoolboy in Victoria, was fascinated by wombats and their burrows and explored their secret world. Peter's findings have stood the test of time, and most wombat articles refer to this teenager's explorations.
http://www.abc.net.au/austory/archives/AustoryArchivesIdx_Monday25March2002.htm

Wombats on the Web:

<http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/BHAN-53F7KJ?open>

<http://www.wombatfoundation.com.au/aboutus.html>

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/northern-hairynosed.html>

<http://www.wombania.com/wombats/wombat-facts.htm>

http://www.giftlog.com/pictures/wombat_facts.htm

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Some_wombat_facts

<http://www.australianfauna.com/wombat.php>

<http://www.wombatprotection.org.au/>

<http://www.fourthcrossingwildlife.com/>

<http://www.wombadillac.com.au/main.htm>

<http://www.wombat.echidna.id.au/wombat1.htm>

http://www.australiazoo.com.au/our-animals/amazing-animals/mammals/?mammal=wombats&animal=common_wombat

<http://www.kidcyber.com.au/topics/wombat.htm>

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WORKSHEETS

- 1. All about Wombats**
- 2. Cloze test**
- 3. Did You Know?**
- 4. Word Find (and solution)**
- 5. Diary**

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ALL ABOUT WOMBATS

Fill in the grid below using dot points beneath each of the headings.

Wombat appearance	Wombat diet
E.g. furry	E.g: native grasses
Wombat habitat	Wombat behaviour
E.g. burrow	E.g. inquisitive

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CLOZE ACTIVITY

Using the words from the box, fill in the gaps to make the story make sense.

played	baby	dig	hole
tunnel	asleep	bored	mum
morning	night	scratched	afternoon

Baby wombat spent a lot of time _____.

Baby wombat often _____ and then got _____.

Baby wombat's favourite two playmates were his _____ and the _____.

Baby wombat loved to _____ a _____ and a _____.

Baby wombat woke up in the _____,
_____ in the _____ and then got tired
at _____.

Solution:

1. asleep
2. played
3. bored
4. mum
5. baby

6. dig
7. hole
8. tunnel
9. morning
10. scratched

11. afternoon
12. night

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DID YOU KNOW?

Write four interesting facts about the wombat and include an illustration below.
Give your wombat a NAME and write it in the space above the grid.

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WORD FIND

Name _____

Date _____

W M T P E L S T H C B M Y V D
E N O R M O U S A O M B A R E
E W W R P S M D U B A C D X Y
K T U N N E L N E B M E D F A
N I I W D I C H X R H O D L L
O Y O Y Z E N M U C O N W O P
O N G I D D H G T N E B D W Y
N Y R G N U H A S I T B P E S
R G Q Z G L R T R F N E E R M
E G X T K C O F N S A K D S E
T R I D S L Q M W N I V D N L
F H U D E L A V F K G M U M L
A W O B E S T S X V I B V H H
K G T L C U A D H Q L Z K I J
N G Q G E T E O X W S K D C O

AFTERNOON
BABY
BEST
BORED
BOUNCED
DIG

ENORMOUS
FLOWERS
FRIEND
GIANT
HOLE
HUNGRY

HUNTED
MORNING
MUM
PLAYED
SCRATCHED
SLEPT

SMELL
STOLE
TUNNEL
WEEK
WOMBAT
WON

WORD FIND SOLUTION

W M T P E L S T + + B + Y + D
E N O R M O U S A O + B + + E
E + + R + + + D U B A + D + Y
K T U N N E L N E B M E + F A
N + + W + I C H + R H O D L L
O + O + + E N + U C O N W O P
O N + + D + + G T N E B + W +
N Y R G N U H A S I T + + E S
R + + + + R T R + N E + R M
E G + + + C O F + + A + D S E
T + I + S L + + + + I + + + L
F H + D E + + + + + G M U M L
A + O B E S T + + + + + + + +
+ + + L + + + + + + + + + +
+ + + + E + + + + + + + + + +

Over, Down, Direction)

AFTERNOON (1, 13, N)

BABY (10, 4, NE)

BEST (4, 13, E)

BORED (12, 7, NW)

BOUNCED (11, 1, SW)

DIG (4, 12, NW)

ENORMOUS (1, 2, E)

FLOWERS (14, 4, S)

FRIEND (8, 10, NE)

GIANT (11, 12, N)

HOLE (2, 12, SE)

HUNGRY (7, 8, W)

HUNTED (8, 5, SE)

MORNING (2, 1, SE)

MUM (14, 12, W)

PLAYED (15, 6, N)

SCRATCHED (5, 11, NE)

SLEPT (7, 1, W)

SMELL (15, 8, S)

STOLE (9, 8, SW)

TUNNEL (2, 4, E)

WEEK (1, 1, S)

WOMBAT (13, 6, NW)

WON (4, 5, SW)

