

BAT VS POSS

Alexa Moses

illustrated by
Anil Tortop

TEACHERS RESOURCES

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WRITTEN BY ALEXA MOSES
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INTRODUCTION

Meek the possum and her three sisters are perfectly happy and contented sharing their paperbark tree with a horde of other creatures – until the day Squabbles the bat moves in. His noisiness and unsociable behaviour initially drives them all away. But they refuse to abandon their idyllic habitat and so hatch a plan to foil the bat at his own game.

This is a lively and entertaining story for young children about the joys of sharing and making friends. Illustrated in animated style by Anil Tortop, whose images perfectly match the effervescent rhyming text written by Alexa Moses.

Children will enjoy the cunningly detailed images in which various creatures provide a cacophony of action and sound. Set in an inner city street where the tree is adjacent to neighbouring terrace houses, this book also suggests that animals and human beings can happily live in proximity to each other. It is a celebration of community, and by the end of the story everyone in it is deliriously happy to share both the tree and each other's company!



THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes are covered in this book which might be related to the Australian Curriculum, including:

STUDY OF HISTORY, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

- **Natural environment – Possums, bats and other Australian creatures**

ACTIVITY: Fruit bats are also known as 'megabats' or 'old world fruit bats'. They belong to the Pteropodidae family. Research these creatures.

ACTIVITY: Possums are endearing creatures but students might be surprised to hear that possums are also regarded as pests in some domestic settings, just as this bat is in the book! Research possums and their habitats.

ACTIVITY: Apart from possums and fruit bats, many Australian creatures are mentioned in this text: birds such as kookaburras, magpies, miner birds, and reptiles such as blue-tongued lizards. What other creatures did your students find in these pages? Invite them to conduct research on an animal of their choosing. [See also **Worksheet 4.**]

- **Friends and friendship**

DISCUSSION POINT: These possums are obviously very friendly with their neighbours. What signs of that friendliness can students identify in these images and in their actions?

DISCUSSION POINT: What aspects of friendship are explored in this text?

DISCUSSION POINT: Invite students to write a short piece about why friends are important and to share their thoughts by collecting all their pieces of writing on a notice board.

- **Sharing**

DISCUSSION POINT: Squabbles the bat finally learns the lesson that sharing is more fun than keeping things selfishly to himself. Do the possums and other creatures learn anything from their encounter with Squabbles?

ACTIVITY: Discuss sharing with students and how this has made their lives more enjoyable. What things have they shared? For example, what feelings do they have when they share a favourite book or toy with someone else? What feelings do they have when someone refuses to share things with them?

- **English language and literacy**

ACTIVITY: Examine the use of **rhyming language** in this text. Have fun writing another verse for this book.

ACTIVITY: Write an acrostic poem using the letters in 'possum'. Write a haiku or tetractys poem on the theme of refugees. [See **Worksheet 2.**]

ACTIVITY: Test your students' comprehension by asking them questions about the written and visual text.

- **Visual literacy**

The visual text of a book combines with the written text to tell the story using the various parts of the book's design and illustrations, as explored below:

ACTIVITY: The cover of a book is an important part of its message. What artistic techniques does the artist use to convey the meaning of the book in this cover image, and on the title page?

DISCUSSION POINT: The format of the book is portrait in design. How does the layout of the storyboard and the design of the book influence your reading of it?

ACTIVITY: The endpapers are illustrated in 'silhouette'. Study this technique and then draw a picture of the night sky using this technique but depict some other creature in your image.

ACTIVITY: Anil Tortop describes her working process and the medium used in the books as follows: *'First I created a storyboard to see the visual story flow. Then, with feedback from my editor, we decided what we should have on each page. I made a little three-dimensional model of the possums out of wires and yarn. I wanted to make sure I could draw the three from different angles, without having any consistency issues. (It didn't work very well but I tried anyway.) After the model, I made sketches using a drawing tablet. The final artwork was done digitally using Photoshop. I used three different digital brushes to colour the illustrations.'* Anil Tortop has worked in animation, so her style is influenced by those experiences. Discuss her working process and examine the resulting detail in these images. Create a simple storyboard for this story.

ACTIVITY: There are many small details in these images which children will enjoy discovering. For example, in the opening page there is a row of cockatoos asleep on a branch; two birds kissing, a frog swinging on a swing; and a lantern, party lights and bunting decorating the tree in which the possums are living. Encourage students to examine each double page spread to discover the details within it.

ACTIVITY: Anil Tortop illustrates the various images from a range of different viewpoints. Encourage students to discuss the use of 'longshots', close focus, and other techniques in these pictures.

ACTIVITY: Invite students to draw an image of the tree depicted in this book, but then to add some quirky animals and details of their own to it. [See also **Worksheet 1.**]

ACTIVITY: Create a graphic novel/comic version of a scene in this book. [See **Bibliography.**] [See also **Worksheet 3.**]

- **Creative arts**

There are many creative activities suggested by this text:

1. Create a diorama of the tree with all the creatures in it.
2. Invite students to write a script and dramatise the scenes in this book.
3. Create a cartoon in which possum and bat are speaking to each other.
4. Create a poster to advertise this book. [See **Worksheet 4.**]
5. Create a Book Trailer to promote this book. [See **Bibliography.**]

- **Learning technologies**

ACTIVITY: Research the themes listed above online.

ACTIVITY: Research the author's and illustrator's work online. [See **Bibliography.**]

Further Topics for Discussion and Research

- Research the work of Alexa Moses.
- Research the work of Anil Tortop.
- Students might research the themes explored in this book by reading other books and websites listed in the **Bibliography.**
- Investigate any other topic not covered in these notes which you consider is suggested by this picture book.

Conclusion

This is a highly engaging story for teachers to read to young school children and one which could become a nightly favourite in their homes as well. It is a joyous celebration of sharing the places we live in and making friends with our neighbours. It is infused with wacky humour and celebrates the madcap antics of a cast of entertaining animal characters. Meek and Squabbles start out as enemies and then learn that it's much more fun to become friends instead!

About the Author

Alexa Moses has a masters degree in screenwriting from the Australian Film Television and Radio school, and has written for children's television including *hoopla doopla!*, *The Woodlies*, *Gasp the Goldfish* and *The Davincibles*. She also worked as a journalist at the *Sydney Morning Herald* for six years. Alexa won the Varuna HarperCollins fellowship for her first manuscript, and has had two middle-grade novels published by HarperCollins. When she's not reading and writing, Alexa spends her time knitting, cooking, watching sitcoms and listening to maudlin pop music.

Further Information is available here: <http://www.alexamoses.com.au/>

About the Illustrator

Anil Tortop was born and raised in Turkey. She moved to Australia in early 2011 and has been trying to get used to the local eight-legged house intruders and slithering visitors to her garden ever since. Anil has illustrated 16 children's books and also works as an animator and character/concept designer. Nowadays, Anil lives in Brisbane with her husband.

Further Information is available here: <https://aniltortop.com/>



WORKSHEETS

WORKSHEET 1. PORTRAIT OF SQUABBLES

Paint a humorous portrait of Squabbles inside this frame.



WORKSHEET 2. POSSUM POEMS

A. Write an acrostic poem:

P	
O	
S	
S	
U	
M	

B. Write a haiku poem:

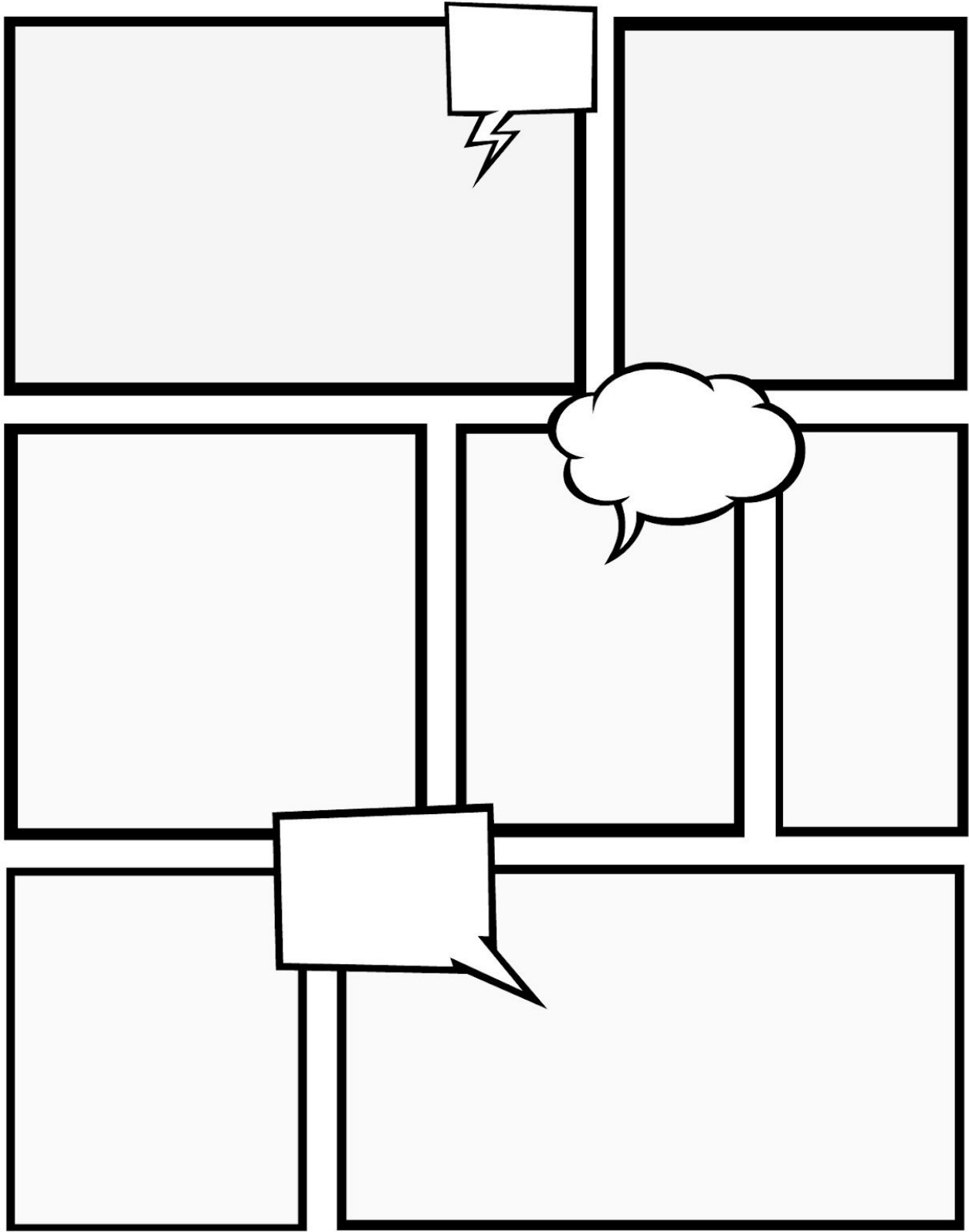
5 syllables	
7 syllables	
5 syllables	

C. Write a teractys poem:

1 syllable	
2 syllables	
3 syllables	
4 syllables	
10 syllables	




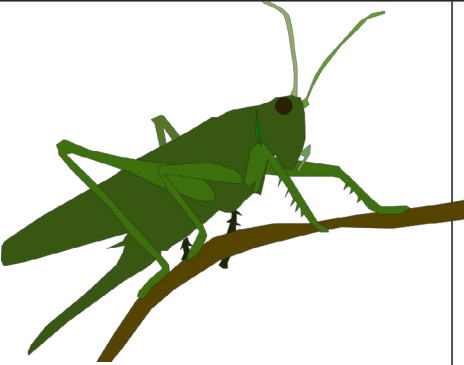





WORKSHEET 3. GRAPHIC STORYTELLING

Create a graphic novel/comic interpretation of one of the scenes in this book. Use the layout below as the storyboard for your comic. Enlarge on a photocopier to give you more space.



Free} Graphic Novel (Comic Book) Templates Mr Mosley's Creations for Graphic Novel Template Pdf from <<http://www.researchpaperspot.com/graphic-novel-template-pdf/free-graphic-novel-comic-book-templatesmr-mosleys-creations-for-graphic-novel-template-pdf/>>

WORKSHEET 4 IDENTIFY THESE IMAGES

		
1.	2.	3.
	 <p>Image courtesy of Andrew Mercer, commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=34467516</p>	
4.	5.	6.
		
7.	8.	9.

ANSWERS: 1. Bat 2. Lady Beetle. 3. Magpie. 4. Grasshopper. 5. Possum. 6. Cockatoo. 7. Kookaburra. 8. Blue tongued lizard. 9. Tortoise.

Bibliography

Picture Books about Australian Animals

- Baker, Jeannie *Circle* Walker Books, 2016.
- Bancroft, Bronwyn *An Australian ABC of Animals* Little Hare Books, 2018, 2012. [Board book.]
- Bancroft, Bronwyn *An Australian 123 of Australian Animals* Little Hare Books, 2018, 2012. [Board book.]
- Base, Graeme *Animalia* Penguin, 1986.
- Bunting, Philip *Mopoke* Scholastic, 2017.
- Cooté, Maree *Alphabet City Zoo* Melbournestyle Books, 2016, 2014.
- Dreise, Gregg *Kookoo Kookaburra* Magabala Books, 2015.
- Dreise, Gregg *Mad Magpie* Magabala Books, 2016.
- Dreise, Gregg *Silly Birds* Magabala Books, 2014.
- French, Jackie *The Hairy-Nosed Wombats Find a New Home* Ill. by Sue deGennaro. HarperCollins, 2015.
- Houston, Bronwyn *Animals in my Garden* Magabala Books, 2016.
- Knowles, Sheena *Edward the Emu* Ill. by Rod Clement. Angus & Robertson, 2011, 1988.
- Lessac, Frané *A is for Australian Animals* Walker Books, 2017.
- Miller, David *First Flight* Working Title Press, 2014.
- Morris, Jill *Australian Bats* Ill. by Lynne Tracey (Muir). Greater Glider Productions, 1992.
- Oliver, Narelle *Sand Swimmers*. Walker Classics, 2013, 1995.
- Wilson, Mark *Migaloo, the White Whale* Hachette, 2015.
- Wild, Margaret *The Dream of the Thylacine* Ill. by Ron Brooks. Allen & Unwin, 2011.
- Worthington, Michelle *Possum Games* Ill. by Sandra Temple. Wombat Books, 2014.

Junior Non-Fiction

- Encourage students to locate non-fiction in the library relating to any of the animals in this book. Consult texts such as the following:
- All about Australia: Australian Animals* Australian Geographic, 2011.
- Cossins, Jennifer *A-Z of Australian Animals* Hachette, 2018.
- Cronin, Leonard *The Australian Animal Atlas* Ill. by Marion Westmacott. Allen & Unwin, 2017.

Non-Fiction for Teachers

'Book Trailers - Resources: Ipswich District Teacher Librarian Network'
<<http://idtl.net.au/book-trailers.php>>

'Book Trailers for Readers' by Michelle Harclerode
<<http://www.booktrailersforreaders>>

Chinn, Mike, *Writing and Illustrating the Graphic Novel: everything you need to know to Create Great Graphic Works*. London, New Burlington Books, 2004, 2006.

Tokley, Rod and Naylor, Dillon, *Zap! Splat! Ka-Pow! Make Your Own Comic*. Omnibus Books, 1999.

'Poetry Glossary – Poetry Types' *Young Writers*
<<https://www.youngwriters.co.uk/glossary-poetry-types>>

Websites

A-Z List of Native Australian Animals with Pictures
<<https://animalsake.com/a-z-list-of-native-australian-animals-with-pictures>>

'Fun Possum Facts for Kids' *Brisbane Kids*
<<https://www.brisbanekids.com.au/fun-possum-facts-kids/>>

'Megabats'
<<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Megabat>>

'Possums and Gliders' *Wild Care Australia*
<<https://wildcare.org.au/species-information/possums-gliders/>>

About the Author of the Notes

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award.

