



Meerkat Christmas

Author/Illustrator:
Emily Gravett

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Synopsis

A young meerkat travels the world looking for Christmas in this festive card-packed picture book, perfect for fans of *The Jolly Christmas Postman* and the modern classic, *Meerkat Mail*.

Sunny isn't quite sure if Christmas in the desert with his meerkat family is the right sort of Christmas – there's no snow, no fir trees and no figgy pudding!

So he heads off on a journey round the world looking for the picture perfect Christmas . . . before realizing he might have left it at home after all.

From the twice winner of the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal and the creator of *Tidy*, *Cyril and Pat* and *Again!*, *Meerkat Christmas* is a witty and heartwarming celebration of festive fun and family love that shows Christmas can be whatever you want it to be.

Author Bio

Emily Gravett was born in Brighton, England, the second daughter of a printmaker and an art teacher. She left school at 16 and travelled the UK for eight years, living in a big green bus with her partner and their daughter. After returning to Brighton to take up an art degree, Emily sprang into the limelight with the ground-breaking *Wolves* in 2005, which won her the Macmillan Prize for Illustration, followed by a book deal and the first of her Kate Greenaway Medals. *Wolves* was followed by such brilliant modern classics as *Orange Pear Apple Bear*, *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears*, *Again!* and the exquisite *Tidy*.



Each book is unique and different from the last – and each features endearing, beautifully drawn characters that touch the heart and tickle the funny bone. Emily now lives in Brighton with her family. When not working in her studio, she might be found walking the dog, watering the tomatoes or driving the family's restored 1960s bus.

Curriculum Links

English Foundation

- ACELA1430** Understand that texts can take many forms, can be very short (for example an exit sign) or quite long (for example an information book or a film) and that stories and informative texts have different purposes
- ACELT1575** Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' own experiences
- ACELT1783** Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts
- ACELY1645** Identify some familiar texts and the contexts in which they are used

English Year 1

- ACELA1447** Understand that the purposes texts serve shape their structure in predictable ways
- ACELT1582** Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences
- ACELT1584** Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts.
- ACELY1660** Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning about key events, ideas and information in texts that they listen to, view and read by drawing on growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features.

HASS Foundation - History

- ACHASSK012** How they, their family and friends commemorate past events that are important to them

HASS Year 1 - Geography

- ACHASSK032** The weather and seasons of places and the ways in which different cultural groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, describe them

Science – Earth and Space Sciences Foundation

- ACSSU004** Daily and seasonal changes in our environment affect everyday life

Science – Earth and Space Sciences Year 1

- ACSSU019** Observable changes occur in the sky and landscape

Cross Curriculum Priorities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

Pre Reading

Show the cover of Meerkat Christmas to your students, reading the name of the book out loud, and ask the following:

There is a word crossed out on the front cover. What word was crossed out and what word replaces it?

There is a tag on the front cover that has a name on it. That is the name of the author, Emily Gravett. Some books have two names on the front, one for the author, and one for the illustrator. What does it mean if there's only one on the front?

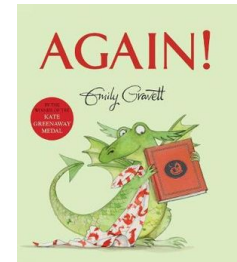
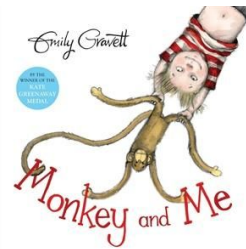
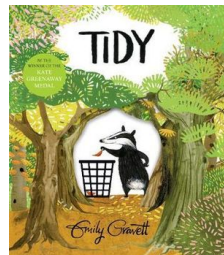
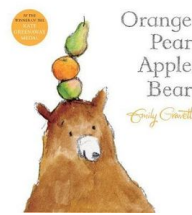
Now turn the cover over and show the back of the book to your students, reading out loud what the book will be about.

- Read through without stopping and then go back and look at each page more closely.
- Read the main text as well as the cards.
- You might want to stop when Santa is in his sleigh. Have a close look at the presents in the back.
- Is there something unusual about one of the presents? Can you read the tag on that present?

Discussion Questions

Preferences

Emily Gravett is the author and illustrator of this book. Does anyone know any other books by Emily Gravett?
 Have a selection of other books by Emily Gravett to look at. Talk about which ones you liked and which ones you didn't and why.



Perfect Christmas List (according to Perfect Magazine)

- The Perfect Weather
- The Perfect Tree
- The Perfect Presents
- The Perfect Dinner
- The Perfect Music



A Closer Look (Visual Literacy)

Sunny visits a lot of different places looking for the perfect Christmas.
 Now let's look at each double page more closely and see if we can figure out where he has visited.
 Have a map of the world, to show where Sunny has visited.

Sunny's first stop: Kev's

- What is the weather like?
- What season do you think it is?
- What country do you think he's in?
- What can you see on the page that helps you guess?

Trevor's

- This one is more tricky.
- Does anyone know where this animal comes from?
- There is another big clue at the end of the Christmas card.
- In the card, Sunny mentions that Trev is a Tarsier (Tarsier, (family Tarsiidae), any of six or more species of small leaping primates found only on various islands of Southeast Asia, including the Philippines)

Robin's

- Raining, but no snow.
- The bird is a robin red breast The European robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), It is found across Europe, east to Western Siberia and south to North Africa; it is sedentary in most of its range except the far north.
- No clues as to which exact country Sunny is in.
- Look at the map and locate Europe.

Penguin

- Very Cold.
- Snow.
- No Trees
- There are two different possibilities as to where Sunny might be.
- The North Pole or The South Pole.
- Only one of these places has penguins. Do you know where Sunny is?

Reindeer

- Cold
- Snow
- Trees
- He's at the opposite side of the globe from where he was with the penguins.

Discussion Questions

A Closer Look (Visual Literacy)

Night Before Christmas

Sunny finds somewhere perfect.

- The Perfect Weather ✓
- The Perfect Tree ✓
- The Perfect Presents ✓
- The Perfect Dinner ✓
- The Perfect Music ✓

But something is not quite right.
 What is Sunny missing? Read the postcard.

**Sunny included something in each Christmas Card he sent.
 Did you notice what that was?**

Weather Around the World

Sunny visits lots of countries to try and find the perfect Christmas.

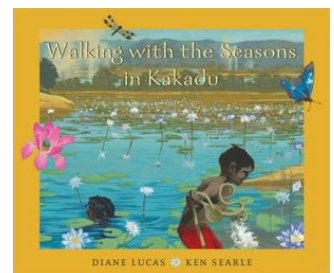
- Find the Kalahari on a globe.
- Find out what the weather would be like there at Christmas time (December)
- Find all of the different countries on the globe.
- Talk about why it can be hot in some countries and snowing in others depending where they are on the globe.



What is the weather like where you are?

- What Season is it?
- Is it always hot and sunny at Christmas time in Australia?
- Find out about the different weather in different parts of Australia.
- Find out about the six Aboriginal seasons and their characteristics.

<https://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/indigenous-seasons/10522128>



This sumptuous book invites us to closely observe the birds, plants and animals that inhabit the unique environment of Kakadu, through an understanding of the six Aboriginal seasons and their characteristics.

Text Types

Types of text features in the book:

- Instructional - (front endpapers) Recipe and a craft activity
- Magazine - An article on How To DO Christmas
- Greeting Cards - Christmas cards with messages
- Jokes - Christmas Cracker Jokes in each Christmas Card
- Postcards
- Main text - the story

Discuss the purpose of these different types of text.

Celebrations

- Does your family celebrate Christmas?
- When you think of Christmas, what are your favourite things?
- What special things do you do with your family at Christmas?
- Not everyone celebrates Christmas.
- If you don't celebrate Christmas, what other things do you celebrate?

