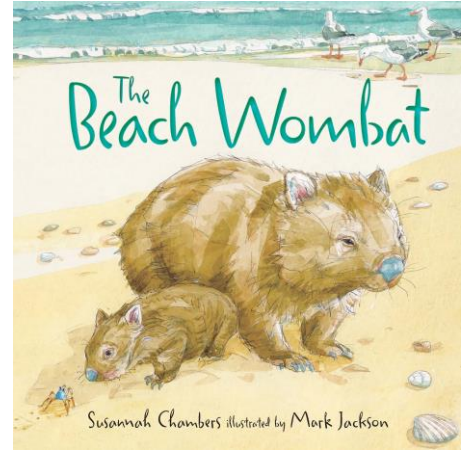


# The Beach Wombat

By Susannah Chambers,  
illustrated by Mark Jackson



December 2019 ISBN 9781760631857  
Hardcover  
Recommended for 3-6-year-olds

## Summary

*Sun on the squeaky sand*

*Sun on the roo*

*Sun on the riverland*

*Sun on me and...YOU!*

The beach is a fascinating place for a little wombat...until the rain comes!

A heart-warming story inspired by one of Australia's most loved national parks, Wilsons Promontory.



As with the best stories for young children, Susannah Chambers writes in short, poetic sentences, liberally using repetition and alliteration to help readers guess what will happen next. Rhymes can be guessed and confirmed by turning the page to find the exuberant correct answer!

Mark Jackson's soft gouache and pencil style features lots of whites, yellows and blues, and beautifully captures the mood of a classic Australian beach in the wilderness. In its companion volume, *The Snow Wombat*, he included one perfect snowflake when an exclamation mark appeared, and here he includes beautiful butterflies, sticky sand and swirling smoke.

## Use in the curriculum

In pre-school and kindergarten, Prep and Grade 1, *The Beach Wombat* is an excellent book for reading aloud for pleasure and for looking at beautiful realistic illustrations of Australian fauna and flora. Features which offer teaching opportunities are:

- rhyme as a strong and fun element of the reading experience;
- the journey of the story is 'plotted' on a map on the endpapers, introducing basic map-reading;
- with its companion book, *The Snow Wombat*, Australian geography, flora and fauna and the changing seasons can be explored;
- telling stories about what we can see and do 'at the beach';
- discussing bushfires.

Visit <https://www.allenandunwin.com/resources/for-teachers> for free down-loadable teachers notes, reviews by teachers, extracts and more. And sign up to the Allen & Unwin e-newsletter to receive monthly updates on new resources!

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## Themes

- wombats
- beach
- Australian animals
- Wilsons Promontory / Australian coastal bush
- bushfire
- daily activities
- mother and baby animals
- care for babies

## Suggestions for use in the classroom

- Before reading the story to your class cover the book's title but show the rest of the front cover. Ask questions such as:
  - What sort of animal do you think this story will be about?
  - Why might one of these animals be much smaller than the other?
  - Where do you think the story is going to be set? [*Hint: what place has waves and sand?*]
  - What other creatures can you see on the cover that are typically found in this place?
- Now reveal the book's title to see if students guessed correctly. Encourage a general discussion about wombats and what students already know about them. Prompt discussion with questions about where they live, what they eat and how fast they travel.
- Open the front cover and show students the front endpapers (the image across the inside front cover and the first page). Point out that this image is called a map and that it is special because it shows the journey that the two wombats on the cover will take in the story ahead.
  - Ask students if they can tell where the wombats start off from? [*Answer: from their burrow, where they live, on the far left.*]
  - Where do they end their journey? [*Answer: on a grassy knoll where they can have a bite to eat on the far right*]
  - Point out the compass in the top right-hand corner. Explain that compasses are useful for journeys because they can tell us how to find our way around by knowing which way is north, south, east and west.
  - Follow the dotted red path and ask students to name as many creatures and places they think the beach wombats are going to meet on their journey.
- Read the story slowly to students, making sure to point out all the creatures making an appearance. (Some are in images but not mentioned in the text.) After finishing, close the book and ask the following questions:
  - What creatures do the wombats meet on their journey?
  - Name as many places as you can remember that they travel through to get to dinner.
  - Why do wombats have to travel all that way from their burrow to get dinner? [*Answer: they live in a burrow on the beach so they need to travel all the way over the sand to get to grasses they can eat.*]
- Open the book and read it again, this time putting extra emphasis on the rhymes. Explain to students that the pairs of words *roo* and *you*, *blur* and *fur*, *sky* and *eyes*, *ash* and *splash*, and *spinner* and *dinner* all rhyme, that is to say they share the same



## In the classroom...

sound-endings. Give a few examples of other words that rhyme with *roo*, such as *goo*, *poo* and *flu*.

- As you read the story through again, ask students to point out the rhymes when they appear.
- Now see if students can come up with their own rhymes for simple words such as: smock, get, meet, orange [*Note: the last word here is the most famous example of a word in the English language that does **not** have a rhyme!*].
- Explain that sometimes the way a word looks on a page can also tell us a lot about how the word should be read out loud or what the subject of the story is feeling. Compare the appearance of the words *YOU!*, *FUR! EYES!*, *SPLASH* and *DINNER!* with the other words that appear in the book.
- A good way to talk to very young kids about how authors and illustrators go about expressing emotions in words and images is to compare images where the subject is feeling very different emotions. Try this with the double page spread where the wombats are escaping the bush fire and the later spread where the baby wombat is splashing in the water. In the former, the two wombats look worried and in the latter the baby wombat looks very happy.
  - What in the picture or words tells us how they are feeling in both examples?
- Return to the spread showing the wombats, roos and birds fleeing from the bushfire and explain that although our wombats escape with only stinging eyes, lots of animals die in bushfires. Talk about how some bushfires are caused by humans and encourage students to come up with ways we all can minimise the chance of bushfires. [*Hint: not light fires in the bush when it is very hot and dry and not leave flammable garbage behind when we go camping.*]
- Ask students what in the story and illustrations tell us that their journey took quite some time? [*Answer: it is daytime at the start and the moon has risen in the night sky by the end. And they are eating DINNER!*]

### Author's inspiration

'When Mark Jackson signed a copy of *The Snow Wombat* for me, he sketched our lovely wombat on the title page...followed by the most gorgeous little baby wombat. So then of course the mama and baby had to have a story all their own.

'We don't always think of wombats inhabiting coastal regions, but they do! I have seen them most often on Squeaky Beach down at Wilson's Promontory in Victoria. Mark has beautifully captured the distinctive granite rocks and sweeping beaches of Prom country, as well as the trees, plants and animals – both native and introduced. There is so much to find in each illustration!

'A significant portion of the Prom was burned in the Black Saturday fires of 2009, and there was another fire right in the heart of the national park in early 2019. Bushfires are part of life right across Australia, and their effects are only going to get more extreme as the climate swiftly changes. The wombats in our book escaped the bushfire with nothing more than some smoke in their eyes—they were very lucky. If new generations of humans and wombats are to go on enjoying and surviving in our wild places, we must elect governments who are willing, able and excited to make radical change, for the future of our environment and ourselves.'

— Susannah Chambers



## The author

Susannah Chambers is a publisher of children's books at Allen & Unwin. She lives in Melbourne, but regularly dreams of the beach.

## The illustrator

Mark Jackson is an illustrator based in Melbourne. He has co-illustrated several books with his wife, Heather Potter, and their work has been featured in several exhibitions.

Mark's books, including *The Snow Wombat* (written by Susannah Chambers), *Waves* (written by Donna Rawlins and co-illustrated by Heather Potter), *Platypus* (written by Sue Whiting), *Bilby Secrets* (written by Edel Wignell) and *Stuck!* (written by Charlotte Calder) have been shortlisted for multiple awards, including the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards and the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards.

