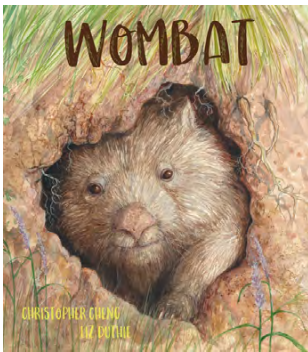# Walker Books
Classroom Ideas

Wombat

Author: Christopher Cheng
Illustrator: Liz Duthie
ISBN: 9781760651374
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Outline:

Far underground, where dirt and tree roots mesh, are tunnels that lead to a burrow, and in this burrow Wombat's day begins.

A story about the life of a wombat, looking at the interesting way these animals build their homes, look after their family and protect themselves from predators. *Wombat* is a new addition to the Nature Storybooks series, which feature a lyrical narrative and engaging nonfiction combined with stunning artwork to pique the curiosity of young minds.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Within the old (and new) walls of an inner-city Sydney terrace dwells Christopher Cheng. He is the author of many children's books including his previous Nature storybook title *Python* (illus. Mark Jackson) which was shortlisted for the 2013 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year awards. Passionate about animals, particularly those native to Australia, it's fitting that he established the Zoomobile and taught at Taronga Zoo in Sydney for many years, celebrating his background in education.
He has always loved to write (he mostly always carries his notebook and pens) but he never thought he would be a full-time children's author.

Liz Duthie is an illustrator and visual artist based in Central Victoria. She trained in Fine Art and Special Education at La Trobe University and revels in using traditional mediums such as water colour, gouache, ink and acrylic paint – often all mixed together!

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:	Key Learning Areas:	Example of:	Themes/Ideas:
• Primary 1-5 • Ages 5-10	• English • Science	• Picture Books • Non-fiction • Narrative Non-fiction	• Australian Wildlife • Nature • Habitats • Geography • Science

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Discussion Questions and Activities:

Before Reading
View the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:
- The title
- The author
- The illustrator
- The publisher
- The blurb.

Look at the front cover and read the blurb on the back. Try to predict some of the events that might happen in the story.

As a class, brainstorm what you know about wombats then use this information to create a mind-map. Use subheadings to help organise the information.

Write down 5 adjectives you would use to describe wombats. Come up with a list of questions about wombats. Look for the answers to these as you read the book, then use any unanswered questions to guide further research.

Exploring the Text
Revisit the list of adjectives you wrote to describe wombats. Cross off any which you think no longer apply and add 3 new words.

Is *Wombat* an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? Is it a combination of more than one of these types of texts? How can you tell? Who do you think the book was created for? If you were a librarian, what section of the library would you put the book in?

The text in this book is presented in two styles. Identify the formats. Why do you think the book is designed this way? Read the book using each format separately and then discuss how the different formats change the purpose and alter the perception of *Wombat*. Which writing style do you prefer: the descriptive storytelling style or the informative factual style? In what types of texts would each of these writing styles usually be used? For example: novels, short stories, newspaper articles and reference books.

Consider the spreads on pages 8-9 and 10-11. What techniques have the author and illustrator used to express Wombat's burrowing movements?

Choose a spread and write a short paragraph about how you think Wombat is feeling and why, using the text and illustrations to support your opinion.

What threats does Wombat face in the book, and how does she respond? Research other threats to wombats, and discuss ways your class could help protect them.

Reread pages 19 to 23, when Dingo is hunting Wombat. What strategies have the author and illustrator used to build tension and suspense?

Wombat includes an index at the back of the book. What is the purpose of an index? How do you use it? In what kind of books would you normally find an index? Using the index as a starting point, collect any other words from the book that you don't know the meaning of and create a wombat dictionary. You can also collect words and phrases from any further research to add to your dictionary. Illustrate some of the entries to help further explain their meaning.

Compare *Wombat* to a fiction picture book. How is the language different in each? Why have the authors of these texts chosen this language?

Exploring the Illustrations
Look at the colours the illustrator, Liz Duthie, has used in *Wombat*. Why do you think she chose to use these colours? Do they accurately represent the environment that wombats live in?

What other Australian animals can you spot in the art of *Wombat*?

Discuss how the illustrator has used the following on each page:
- Colour
- Line
- Positioning/Layout
- Framing Angle
- Gaze

Further Activities
Return to the mind-map you created before reading the book. Cross out or edit any incorrect information then add in anything new that you've learnt.

What do wombats eat? Use the text and illustrations for clues, and check your answers in the "Information About Wombats" note at the back of the book. Add to your list as you do further research.

Research more about wombats on the internet, using the list of questions you came up with before reading the book as a guide. Create a multimedia presentation and present it to the class.

Make a list of websites which are useful for learning about wombats. Make sure you consider whether the information each site provides is reliable, who wrote or manages it and how up-to-date it is.

In what areas might you find wombats? Shade a map of Australia to indicate where wombats live.

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Discussion Questions and Activities:

Wombats use burrows for different purposes. What are they? Are there 'burrows' that you use in your house?

Wombats are marsupials. Create a multimedia presentation of other marsupials with names and images.

Create a matching puzzle using the names and images, and test the puzzle with your classmates.

Throughout the book Wombat displays many actions., eg: lying in the sun, digging a burrow etc. Identify all the actions displayed in *Wombat*, then have the whole group take part in a class activity. Call out an action, and all the students pretend to be wombats and perform each action!

Using *Wombat* as a guide, create a timeline of a typical wombat day. In small groups, students could present their timeline as a multimedia presentation, or role play a typical wombat day.

What impact have humans had on wombats over the past few years? Investigate ways humans help injured wombats, and compile a list of organisations that support them. Choose one of these organisations, and write a letter of encouragement to them.

Create a poster showing how to care for injured wombats.

Most animals have a common name and a scientific name. The wombat portrayed in this book is a Common Wombat. What is the scientific name for this animal?

Investigate other species of living wombats. Find out their common and scientific names, and compare and contrast how they're similar or different to a Common Wombat. Draw a picture of a wombat and label its main parts. Also write a brief description of what each part is for.

What other wombats do you know from books, television or movies? Write a paragraph comparing a fictional wombat to what you know from *Wombat* and your research.

In small groups, create a diorama in a cardboard box to represent the wombat's habitat. Try to incorporate materials from the natural environment into your display.

Write a book review of *Wombat* stating what you liked and disliked about it, who you think would enjoy it the most and whether you think the information provided is credible. Use persuasive language to make the reader understand your opinion.

Do you think a wombat is a good animal for a pet? Why or why not? Hold a class discussion.

Wombats are nocturnal, which means they're most active at night. What effect does this have on their day to day life? What other animals do you know that are nocturnal?

Find the dedication. Why do you think authors and illustrators do this? Who might the people in the dedication be? If you were writing a book, who would you dedicate it to?

Compare *Wombat* with another book from the "Nature Storybooks" series. How are they similar and different?

Create a soundscape for the book using either recorded sounds found online, or sounds that you create yourself. Choose sounds that capture the mood of the story.

Create a new front cover for the book using a different illustration style. You may like to look at other books in the "Nature Storybooks" series for inspiration, including *Python*, also by Christopher Cheng.

Choose an animal/subject to research then write your own story about it, in the style of the "Nature Storybooks" series.

You can use this outline of Wombat as a colouring sheet, collage base, or for a writing activity!

Name: _____

Class: _____