

Teacher's Notes



Wombats! Go Camping.
Written and illustrated by Maddie Frost
Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

6+ aged readers (grades 2-4)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - AC9E2LA08
 - AC9E2LY05
 - AC9E3LY05
 - AC9E4LY04
 - AC9E4LE03

THEMES

- Camping
- Nature
- Discovery
- Friendship
- Adventure
- Fear

SYNOPSIS

Pickles can't wait to go camping. He's packed light, and is looking forward to swimming, eating by the fire and relaxing under the stars. But when he arrives in the forest, expecting to find a luxury cabin with a jacuzzi, Pickles is horrified to discover that he has to sleep in a tent (*after* he figures out how to put it up)!

Bert tries to reassure Pickles, telling him that nature is full of wonderful things to smell and see. But Pickles feels deflated, until he discovers an adorable baby koala who won't let him go! Bert insists that they look for its mother, but they need to be careful – the forest is full of signs warning about a Woolly Moon Beast. They say the Woolly Moon Beast has big claws, red glowing eyes and sharp teeth. But baby koala seems to think that Woolly Moon beast is its mum!

When baby koala leads them to a dark scary cave on the other side of a deep, scary river, Pickles is drawn into way more adventure than he bargained for. Although, there could be a happy surprise waiting for him on the other side ...

Wombats! Go Camping is a wonderfully silly story about finding wonder in nature and overcoming our fears.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Maddie Frost is a children's author-illustrator from Massachusetts. Her books focus on funny characters and are packed with heart. Most of Maddie's ideas come from emotional and personal places that are spun into a hilarious story. She uses her anxious and worried brain to make art and relate to readers of all ages. When Maddie is not making books, she's hanging out with her two pups, Mozzy and Remy.

THEMES

Nature:

Bert tells Pickle's that being in nature is 'a gift'. *Wombats* explores the different ways that people respond to being in nature – some people see it as beautiful, and others see it as being full of unfamiliar and frightening sounds, smells and experiences. What's it like for you? Discuss the way that Pickles changes his mind about nature based on his experiences in the book.

Discovery:

Pickles is forced to discover many things for the first time, like how to put up a tent and how to use a compass. He even discovers a baby koala after losing his jar of pickles in a puddle! Each discovery comes with a range of emotions – fear, apprehension, excitement, joy. Invite students to share their own experiences of discovery, and to reflect on the way discovering new things makes them feel.

Fear:

What are you afraid of? Pickles discovers that he's afraid of lots of things – bugs, caves and the Woolly Moon Beast. Pickles is so afraid that when baby koala first starts crossing the bridge towards the cave, he tells him that he won't be able to help. What helps him to overcome his fear? What is his reward for this?

WRITING STYLE

As a graphic novel/comic, this book is written entirely in dialogue. Compare this to a novel that students have read and discuss the way that the other details of the story are captured in the images. Experiment with retelling familiar stories entirely in dialogue – how does dialogue change the way we respond to characters in a story?

Does the dialogue always match what is happening in the pictures? Why/why not?

How does the writer use the speech bubbles to show differences in speech, like thought or excitement?

COMPREHENSION

- What does Pickles think camping will be like? What is it really like?
- Describe some of the things Bert loves about camping.
- How does Pickles feel when he realises that camping is all about staying outside? How do the illustrations show this feeling?
- Where does Pickles find the baby koala? What is his first reaction to the discovery? What changes his mind?
- Why is Platters hiding in the shrubs?



- What kind of animal is Platters? Why is he so offended when Baby Koala calls him a duck?
- Why doesn't Pickles want to take the baby koala across the bridge? What ends up convincing him?
- What is so special about the hat that Pickles is wearing? What other situations might a hat like this come in useful?
- How does Pickles overcome his fears of the outback? Do you think he'll go camping again?
- Why is Sheila so determined to stay hidden?
- Discuss your favourite part of the book. How would you describe the story to a friend?

WRITING EXERCISE

Write one of the scenes from the book as prose. What information do you need to include from the images, and how will you translate this into words? Consider the emotion, the characters and the setting.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Pickles gets confused a *lot* during the story, with some pretty funny consequences. Discuss the different meanings in various scenes where the illustrations show one meaning and the words describe another. What happens as a result of some of these misunderstandings? Have you ever pictured something one way but discovered that the reality is completely different?

Discuss the way that frames are used in comics to break up the story. Why are some frames larger than others? Explore the way that some pictures go beyond the frame, or the way that sometimes something will happen out of frame. Why might the illustrator make these decisions? Draw your own eight-frame story using pictures to illustrate a simple process.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- On her YouTube channel, Maddie Frost teaches you to draw your own cool animals (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Fxfy4xnHpU>). Watch the video and draw a new character that Bert and Pickles might meet on their next adventure. Give your character a name.
- Design a brochure advertising a camping weekend away in Australia. Where would you go? What should you pack? What might you see? Is there anything people should be warned about before going?
- Platters comes up with some pretty wild plans to get the baby koala home. Come up with your own plan to get the baby koala across the river.
- Use the descriptions of the Woolly Moon Beast on p50 to draw a picture of what you think it looks like. What are some other terrifying features you could give it?
- When Bert and Pickles do finally get the baby koala home, they're rewarded with a night in Pickles' dream camping house. Draw a picture of your dream getaway house.



RELATED READING

Narwhal and Jelly

By Ben Clanton

Baloney and Friends

By Greg Pizzoli

Hello Twigs

By Andrew McDonald

Illustrated by Ben Wood

Chippy Chasers: Chippy Jackpot

By Sam Cotton

Cranky Chicken

By Katherine Battersby

