

# Diary of a Wombat

by Jackie French

## VOCABULARY

reach	itchy	resistant	Wednesday	easily
found	perfect	source	invading	against
territory	major	hole	creature	energetic
delicious	appeared	constantly	scratched	instead
response	discovered	curiously	decided	message
quite	request	chewed	night	oats

## GRAMMAR & SPELLING

- Several words from the text are **homonyms**. Write their partners.

hole            ate            night            morning            won            more            no            some  
new            source            rained            pair            one            flower            nose            paws

- Adjectives** describe nouns and make our writing more interesting by painting a vivid image in our minds. List the nouns from the text and describe them by writing appropriate adjectives.

- Write the **meaning** for these underlined words.

- 'Discovered flat, hairy creature invading my territory.'  
- 'Tried yesterday's hole. Curiously resistant to my paws.'  
- 'Also discovered a new source of carrots.'

- Diary of a Wombat is written in the **past tense**. Discuss the reason for this. Write the past tense for these verbs.

sleep    eat    scratch    decide    flap    fight    win    make    chew    discover    try  
begin    dig    work    move    know    feel    amaze    get    bash    arrive    demand

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## READING & VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1. Revise the construction of information reports. Using factual texts, research wombats. In pairs or individually, jointly construct an information report. **Worksheet 1**
2. Using the students' completed information reports, delete key words to create a cloze passage. Students complete cloze exercises drawing on their research and comprehension skills.
3. Rewrite the story as a timeline or a story map, showing the main ideas and events for each day of Mothball's diary.
4. Using words from the vocabulary list, students create own word search puzzle. Students then swap puzzles to complete.  
**Worksheet 2**
5. Mothball is somewhat destructive around the place. Drawing on her antics, what solutions could prevent Mothball from destroying the garden and the house?
6. Explore opposing viewpoints. Consider & describe the same event from two points of view. [Mothball vs. family members] Discuss the use of visual text as a way of enhancing meaning.
7. *Diary of a Wombat* is a humorous text. Identify the various devices Jackie French & Bruce Whatley have used to make this book entertaining.
8. In literary texts, dialogue plays an important role in character development. However, there is no dialogue in *Diary of a Wombat* (from Mothball). Analyse the text to glean information about Mothball. How has Jackie French developed Mothball's character without the use of dialogue?
9. Complete a crossword puzzle. **Worksheet 3**

## WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. List words that describe Mothball's physical appearance. Using Bruce Whatley's illustrations, write a physical description of Mothball.  
**Worksheet 4**
2. Select appropriate words to describe Mothball's character. Write a description that reveals her personality. **Worksheet 4**
3. Mothball is adorable but she can be difficult to live with! Imagine you are trying to find a new home for Mothball. Write an advertisement for the local paper that will entice a new carer to look after one very stropy wombat. REMEMBER: Wombats can't be kept without a license, and it's cruel to keep them confined. They need to be kept safe from dogs and cars too!
4. Discuss the carers' feelings portrayed through Bruce Whatley's illustrations. How must they feel about the shredded doormat? The perfect dustbath? The hole in the door? Rewrite the diary from the family's point of view. Try to keep the events unchanged. Choose an appropriate title.
5. Write an instruction kit on how to care for a wombat. The kit could include a booklet, poster and a list of DOS and DON'TS. What local groups in your area care for injured or orphaned native animals? Contact one of these groups and ask if someone can come and talk to your class about caring for native animals.
6. Examine the sentence structure of a diary. Discuss the use of first person. How is it different to third person? Write the events of the diary as a third person narrative. Identify the differences in sentence structure between the two.
7. Mothball is a wombat that resides on Jackie French's property. At the time of publication of *Diary of a Wombat* [November 2002], Mothball was carrying a baby in her pouch. Read the extract from Jackie's October newsletter. **Worksheet 5** Write a sequel to *Diary of a Wombat*. Now that she is a mum, how will Mothball's days be different? What pranks might she and her baby get up to now?

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## TALKING & LISTENING ACTIVITIES

1. The wombat in this story has a likeable personality. She is ‘a wombat with attitude.’ What does this mean?
2. Wombats are often hurt by dogs and cars and so sometimes people look after them until they are better. It’s illegal in Australia to keep a native animal like a wombat as a pet without a license. Discuss the different pets people keep and what they need. How does this differ from the needs of native animals? Are there any circumstances where native animals might be happy as pets? How can you keep them safe?
3. In groups, discuss the need for ‘Beware of the Dog’ signs. Why are they necessary? At Jackie’s place there are signs saying ‘Warning: Wombats on the Track’ and ‘Warning: Sunbathing Water Dragons on the Road’. Design and make a sign forewarning visitors that wish to enter Mothball’s territory.
4. Some events cause other events to happen. This is called ‘cause & effect.’ Identify & discuss the events from the text that caused something else to happen.
5. ‘FOR PETE’S SAKE, GIVE HER SOME CARROTS!’ This line is written in grey. Why?
6. Discuss visual literacy. Bruce Whatley’s illustrations tell a different story to the text. Examine the family’s facial expressions. What emotions are they expressing? Wombats don’t pay any attention to human’s facial expressions, and they don’t understand human words either – even Mothball doesn’t recognise her name. Wombats communicate with sounds – a sharp screech seems to mean ‘Go away!’; a softer grunt may mean ‘Here I am!’ – and recognise each other and humans by smell. What things does Mothball need to tell the humans and any other wombats? How do you think she might do this?

## OTHER KEY LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. ‘Discovered flat, hairy creature invading my territory.’ Wombats are territorial animals, although several wombats may share a territory and various wombat holes. Draw an aerial view (map) of Mothball’s territory. Label each of the main features from the book. Be sure to include the garden setting, the clothes line, the house, the barbeque, etc. Feel free to add your own landmarks, even if they are not mentioned in the book.
2. Draw *Diary of a Wombat* as a cartoon. Compress the events into 8 frames, each frame referring to the 8 days in Mothball’s diary. Remember to include: speech bubbles, thought bubbles, sound effects, action and captions summarising the action along the bottom of the frames. **Worksheet 6**
3. Aboriginal Art is unique and often features animals. Primitive paintings of animals are usually drawn with their bones and internal organs showing. This is referred to as ‘x-ray’ art. The Aboriginal people used dots to decorate their paintings. Paints were ground from the earth around them and came in colours of rich reds, browns and yellow ochre. Examine Aboriginal paintings done in this fashion. Using the same method and colours, design an Aboriginal painting of a wombat.
4. Visit Jackie French’s website at [www.jackiefrench.com](http://www.jackiefrench.com) or visit [www.harpercollins.com.au/jackiefrench](http://www.harpercollins.com.au/jackiefrench) to receive the free monthly newsletter, which has all the latest information about new books, Mothball and lots, lots more.
