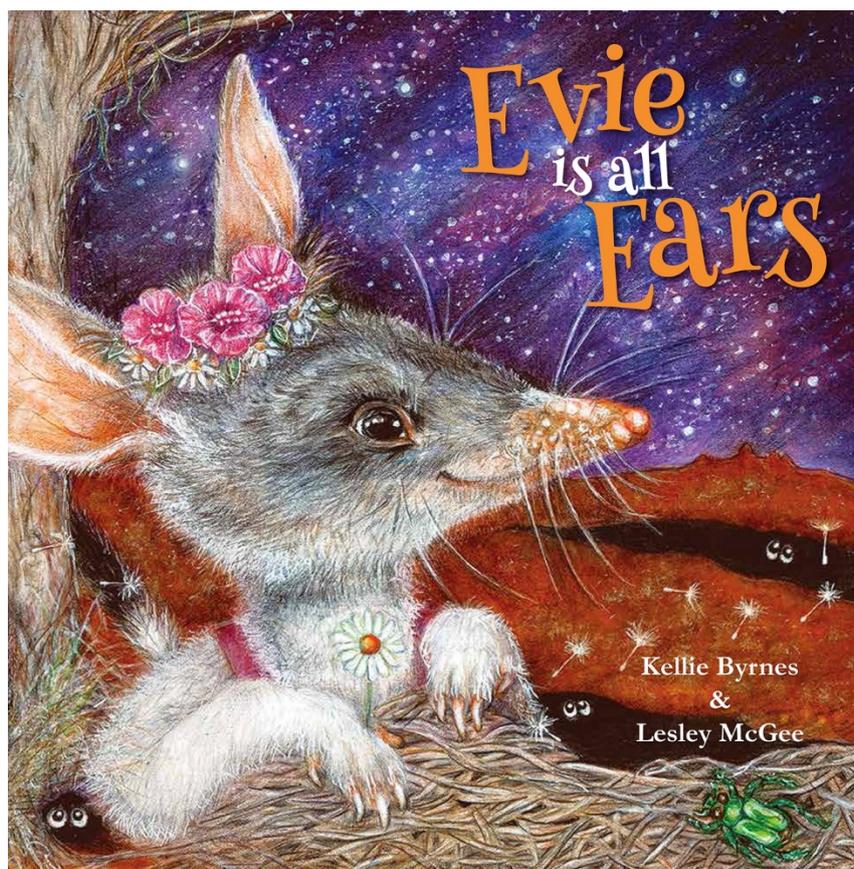


EVIE IS ALL EARS Picture Book – TEACHER NOTES



Title: *Evie is all Ears*

Author: Kellie Byrnes

Illustrator: Lesley McGee

Publisher: Little Pink Dog Books

Price: \$24.99

ISBN: 978-0-6486528-2-3

Publication Date: October 2020

Prime Audience Age: 4-9

Key Curriculum Areas: English, Language, Literacy, Science, Humanities, Health, Social Sciences, Arts

Synopsis

Evie loves school. She loves seeing her friends, using her long snout to sniff out food, and digging with sharp claws through fresh dirt. But unlike her classmates, Evie can't hear the teacher's instructions, whispers with friends on the playground, or the sounds of a predator's approach...no matter how hard she tries. When a way for Evie to be "all ears" arrives, is this little bilby willing to accept the help?

This sweet, gentle picture book pairs the exploration of a real and relevant issue with a look at the lifestyle of one of Australia's most endangered mammals. With stunning illustrations that highlight the wonders yet harshness of the Australian bush, this is a picture book to prompt both discussions and understanding.

Themes

Evie is all Ears contains a variety of topical themes. These include:

- Belonging
- Acceptance
- Dealing with fear
- Self-love
- Coping with change
- Diversity
- Disabilities
- Family and friendship
- Resilience
- Animal conservation

Key Points of Interest/Curriculum Links

Evie is all Ears introduces and touches on numerous factors relevant to the curriculum, including:

- Living things and their basic needs
- Australian animals (particularly marsupials) and their biology, defining features, habitats, lifestyles, survival skills, predators, and other strengths and weaknesses
- Nocturnal lifestyles
- Endangered animals, conservation, protection of wildlife, human impacts, etc.
- Australian landscapes and native flowers
- Deafness, hearing, the human body, medicine, technological aids
- Acknowledging and dealing with emotions, such as fear and anxiety
- Messages of tolerance, acceptance, resilience, empathy, understanding, compassion, and connection
- Drawing connections between personal experiences and ideas and characters depicted in texts
- Disabilities, diversity
- Values, family, friendship
- Visual literacy
- Use of language, creative writing techniques
- Creative arts
- Mathematics (e.g., count the animals and flowers)

Illustrator Information

When I first began to work on *Evie's* story, I read a lot about the characters of the story and where they live. I learned that *Evie*, a rare and special Australian animal, lives in a very different world to ours. *Evie* and her friends live in a very hot, dry desert and many of them only come out of their burrows and homes at night.

Once I did this research, I was able to see pictures in my mind which helped me to create *Evie's* special world on the pages of the book.

The Australian outback is very bright and colourful, with reddish, orange sands and dark purple night skies filled with stars. *Evie's* home is the perfect place for me to use my favourite bright inks and coloured pencils to bring her story to life.

A fun thing I like to do in my illustrations, is to hide a few special characters.

As you read *Evie's* story, look carefully and see if you can find the special friends who share her home. ;)

Activities

Whole-Class Reading

Before reading: Show students the cover, and ask them what they can tell about the book and Evie from the images and text. Have them make predictions.

Do the same for the back cover, and read out the blurb. How does this information add to what they know?

Discuss the roles of the author and the illustrator.

During reading: Discuss the flowers/seeds on the endpapers.

Ask students to identify the time of day when the story takes place.

Look at where Evie and the other bilbies live. Discuss their habitat.

Have students identify other animals shown in the illustrations.

Ask students to identify which elements of the text and the illustrations might be realistic, and which ones are “creative license”.

Discuss how the images, particularly facial expressions and other body language, help to convey emotion.

Ask students to suggest how Evie might be feeling at different points in the story.

After reading: What do the students think the story is about? Is this different from what they originally thought?

Who is the main character? Where is the story set?

How can readers tell that this is an Australian book?

Have students discuss how they might feel if they were in Evie’s position. Children can talk about similar experiences they’ve had when they’ve had to face uncertainties, challenges, and new situations. Acknowledge that the point of view and experiences depicted in stories may be quite different from students’ experiences in their lives.

Talk about how Evie might be feeling at different points throughout the book.

Ask children if they liked the story’s ending. Why or why not?

Have students discuss their favourite pages in the book, and get them to identify what made them like these particular spreads.

Mention predators and survival skills.

Discuss what it might be like to live in the desert, and the differences between this kind of landscape and other landscapes found around Australia.

Have children comment on the illustrations – for example, chat about the colours used, and if the pictures seem realistic or cartoony. Create a list of anything else of particular interest that the students noticed about the artwork and the illustrator’s choices.

See if students can notice characters who appear on more than one page. Also, have children look for ways in which the illustrator has differentiated bilby characters from each other.

Ask students to pick up on any recurring themes/motifs throughout the book.

Other Activities:

1. Bilbies are marsupials. Have students create a list of other Australian marsupials, and consider how the animals are similar and different from each other. (They can use online resources to develop their learning technology skills, or explore other books, magazines, etc.)
2. In the story, the bilbies had to watch out for foxes. Discuss the concept of predators and have children investigate some of the biggest predators in Australia. What about humans? Where do we fit into the food chain?
3. Have students investigate what caused one of the two bilby species to go extinct. They can also find out why the Greater Bilby is endangered now.
4. Ask students to create a poster or short video that persuades an audience to contribute towards helping to save the Greater Bilby and protect other vulnerable and endangered Australian creatures.
5. Have students investigate other endangered animals in Australia or overseas, and learn the different reasons why creatures become threatened.
6. Easter Bilbies are becoming increasingly popular. They're designed to help highlight the plight of the bilby and contribute funds to their protection. Have students come up with another product that could help to promote bilby conservation, and develop an advertisement for this product.
7. Bilbies have some defining features. For example, they have very different ears to humans. Research the differences and discuss the five senses.
8. Some animals have "secret weapons" and other special skills. Talk about what bilbies have to help them survive and get children to research other incredible animal features and feats.
9. Students are used to attending school during the day. But what might it be like if they were nocturnal, like Evie and her friends and family? How might school be different if they attended at night time, and underground? Have students create a Rule Book for their imagined "Night School".
10. Perform a sequencing activity – have children describe the events of the story in order, or have them rearrange cut-out sentences to create the correct order.
11. Bilby burrows often spiral down. Discuss how spirals work and have students investigate where else spirals are found in nature.

12. Bilby burrows can be up to 2m deep. Discuss how much dirt bilbies might have to dig out to get to this depth.
13. Get students to retell the story or act it out in small groups.
14. Have them examine other books about bilbies, and compare and contrast to see how the authors and illustrators have made similar or different choices.
15. Make a mobile of Australian marsupials.
16. Create a bilby mask and colour it in.
17. Get students to create their own painting or drawing of a bilby. They could choose one or two of their favourite colours used in the book's artwork for this exercise.
18. Ask students to identify various language techniques used in the text. For example, alliteration, metaphors, similes, and onomatopoeia.
19. Have students write a creative short story about a bilby or another Australian marsupial.
20. Ask students to identify the point of view in the story. What would the impact be of writing the story in First person? Get children to try writing some of the text in this way.
21. How might students describe the events of the story to a friend or family member if they were writing them a letter? Have children write a letter as Evie.
22. Have students write a song about hearing or about the five senses.
23. Ask students to write an acrostic poem using the word Bilby, Marsupial, or Evie.
24. Have students find the verbs in the story. Once complete, direct them to develop a story of their own using these same verbs.
25. Develop an animal quiz about Australian endemic creatures, including bilbies.
26. Print out a page containing pictures of a variety of Australian animals and have students try to identify each one.
27. Dandelions feature quite prominently in the book. Discuss these plants and the idea of wishing on their seeds as you blow them into the wind. What other things do people commonly wish on? Also, what are some fun facts about dandelions?
28. Have students investigate other native flowers and draw their favourites.
29. Some people who can't hear well or at all use sign language. Discuss this communication form and teach children some basic signs.

30. Talk about different ways of expressing emotions, such as via body language, facial expressions, verbally, in writing, etc. Have students choose an emotion and try to convey it to others in their group, or the class, in different ways.
31. Get one hearing-impaired student at a time to don ear muffs or headphones. See if they can work out what another student is saying when sound and clarity is limited. Suggest that they try to lip read. Have children write down what they think is said, and discuss how it is different from what was actually communicated.
32. Some animals are considered pests by humans because they negatively impact other, often endangered creatures, and/or the environment or certain flora. At the same time, though, all life is important. Discuss how we might balance these competing factors.

About the Author: Kellie Byrnes



Kellie Byrnes is a children's author, freelance writer, blogger, reviewer, and presenter. Her first picture book, *Cloud Conductor*, was published in May 2018 by Wombat Books. She has a picture book, *One Remarkable Reef*, being published by the State Library of Queensland in 2020, as well as *Evie is all Ears* by Little Pink Dog Books.

In 2021, Kellie's fourth and fifth picture books will be published by Little Pink Dog Books and EK Books respectively. Kellie also has a picture book with Macmillan U.S. and a junior fiction novel with Wombat Books due out in 2022.

Kellie has a BA degree in Literature, and was an Artist-in-Residence at The Crows Nest on the Sunshine Coast for four months in 2019. She was also chosen as a mentee in the 2018 'Writing with the Stars' U.S. mentorship program.

As a copywriter for businesses around the world, Kellie has created blogs, articles, newsletters, advertisements, website content, and more since 2013. She has written text for companies such as MYOB, Intuit, St. George Bank, Optus, Mortgage Choice, and Fiji Airways. Plus, during Kellie's career, she has worked in the publishing industry, and in various marketing, PR, and entrepreneurial roles.

You can find Kellie online at her [Website](#), on [Twitter](#), and on [Facebook](#).

About The Illustrator: Lesley McGee



Lesley is a Melbourne artist, designer, and photographer who lives in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges, Melbourne. Lesley's early creative work featured landscape oils and gouache caricatures, but her passion for experimentation has led her to use vibrant pencil, pastel, and inks.

Texture, light, and detail are a dominant feature of her work. Influenced by the intricate styles of Norman Rockwell, Robert Ingpen, Graeme Base, and Frida Kahlo, she also looks to her extensive travel experiences for inspiration.

Evie is All Ears is her first commissioned picture book. She is also excited to be working with Little Pink Dog Books on future titles *Night Lights* by author Inda Zabari and *Emma's Freckles* by author

Sarah Wallace. Future ambitions include an exhibition of a series of cultural portraits and publishing her own picture book featuring the adventurous Milly and a cast of magical creatures.

Lesley's dedicated illustration web page is [here](#). You can also visit her Facebook Artist [Page](#) and her Instagram Art & Photography [Page](#).