

What do we know about Australia?

Before reading, have students share everything they think they know about Australia. Put the ideas into categories and add to the lists as they learn more. You may want to include other read alouds to build background.

Acting out verbs

The verbs used in *Wombat Underground* help the reader picture exactly what is happening, but they may not be familiar vocabulary words. Teach the verbs through actions, so students can easily connect to the story.

A few verbs to act out include:

- A skink darting
- A wallaby bounding
- Animals scampering, scurrying, leaping, and loping
- A wombat who is huffing, grumbling, grunting, muttering, and shuffling



What starts fires?

If we know what starts fires, then can we take steps to prevent them? Read the author's note. Give students the opportunity to learn about what they can do to prevent fires. They may want to interview a local firefighter to learn more.

Are they really that bad?

Most of the time we hear about how bad fires are, but they also can be good in some ways. Read the author's note and discuss how fires can also be helpful. Then, extend students' thinking even more and ask them to share a time they thought something was bad, but there were good things that happened too.

Why was 2019-2020 so much worse?

In the author's note, there is a discussion about why the Australian fires in 2019-2020 were so much worse than in the past. After reading, have students look back in the book for evidence that matches the descriptions in the informational text. How do the pictures show the sun getting hotter and the way the land was responding? Make a chart of all the changes the students see.



Teaching Tips for wombat underground



What happens to the animals during a bushfire?

The author's note explains that many animals were injured during the bushfire and some are now in danger of becoming extinct. Discuss with students what it means when an animal is endangered. Then, extend their knowledge by learning more about what they can do to help animals that are endangered. The class may want to create a fundraiser or awareness campaign.

What is an echidna, skink, wallaby, or wombat?

There are many interesting animals found in Australia. Gather books about the animals of Australia and divide students into research teams. Ask each group to choose an Australian animal to learn about. Decide on a few key facts each team will focus on. Then, regroup students so there is one "expert" on each animal in every group. Have students take turns teaching the group about the animal they researched.

Friendship in times of trouble

In the story, the wombat's cave helps save the other animals. Even though the wombat was snarling at first, the animals were able to come together during difficult times. Look for other stories that show how characters come together during difficult times. Compare and contrast with the other stories.

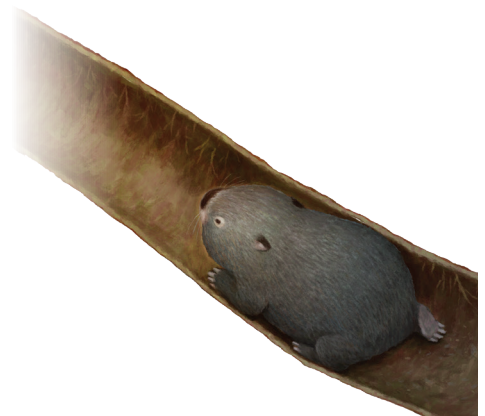


Author's style

Ask students to reread the story and really pay attention to how the author chose words and told the story. Ask students to turn to a partner and share something they noticed about the way the story was written. How did the illustrations and the way the words were written on the page help the author tell the story? If students want, ask them to try to write a story that uses this same style.

Wombat tunnel math

Wombat tunnels can be 90 yards long! Get students involved in a measuring activity by showing how long 90 yards is by using yards, feet, or alternative measurements like number of school buses. Students may want to work with older students or adult helpers at home to find creative ways to show how long a wombat tunnel can be.



These Teaching Tips were created by Dr. Jennifer McMahon, Education Consultant