

Overview of this Inquiry

This Inquiry will lead children to investigate the characteristics and needs of the wombat, and how the wombat's special features influence the way it moves and lives. Students will find out about the type of environment the wombat needs. They will gain knowledge about threats to the wombat. They will make comparisons with other Australian animals and find out about their similarities and differences. They will begin to develop understandings about the interdependence of living things and what can be done to preserve wombats and their environments, effectively making strong links between caring for the environment and the survival of Australian wildlife.

Students will come up with ways they can spread the knowledge they have gained and begin to develop solutions to problems and put these into action.

This is not a new model for Inquiry, rather the material in this book follows along the general lines of Inquiry models and moves through the stages of Tuning In, Setting Up the Investigation, The Main Investigation, Where to Now?, Concluding the Inquiry and Celebrating the Learning.

The following understandings form the basis for this Inquiry:

There is an interdependent relationship between living things on Earth – (people, plants and animals).

The impact of humans on the natural environment has an effect on the balance of this relationship.

Humans have the responsibility and power to play a part in protecting and sustaining the relationship between Australian animals and their environment, i.e. through caring for Australian animal environments and making choices in their lifestyles that preserve the natural environment for all.

There are similarities and diversity among Australian animals and we need to value their uniqueness.

Australian animals have special features and structures to support them in functioning and surviving in their environment.



Numbered Heads Together

Students will have listened to the story of **Sebastian Lives in a Hat** and will now work in cooperative groups to discuss questions about the story.

Organise the children into groups of four. The children in each group now take a card numbered from one to four.

Tell the children they are going to discuss some questions about the story among their group members and that you will ask one child to respond on behalf of the group. They must listen carefully to others in their group and discuss reasons for their ideas. Everybody should understand what has been said and should have something to contribute.

The teacher poses a question about the story and each group discusses it among their members.

The teacher then draws a number from one to four out of a hat. The student who has been assigned that number responds on behalf of the group. The benefits of this group approach is that everybody contributes and everybody must be prepared to listen and respond.

Choose questions carefully. Use open-ended questions to encourage higher order and more divergent thinking.

Questions could include:

- Why does Sebastian live in a hat?
- What were the good and bad things about using a hat for Sebastian to live in?
- How could you comfort a baby wombat if it was frightened?
- Other than a hot water bottle, how could you keep a wombat warm?
- What kind of environment will Sebastian need when he outgrows the hat?
- How could you stop Sebastian from eating things around the house?
- How would you cope with a baby wombat in your house?
- What would be good about it?
- What problems could it cause?

Setting Up the Investigation

Once students have tuned in to the Inquiry, ask them what they now know about wombats. Prompt them to think about why it would be important for them to learn about wombats and other Australian animals.

Prepare a large KWHL chart with four columns that will be labelled K, W, H and L as explained below.

- K – stands for what you already **KNOW**
- W – stands for what you **WANT** to learn
- H – stands for **HOW** you can learn more
- L – stands for what you **LEARN** as you go

This KWHL is a great tool to help the children bridge to the next stage of the Inquiry.

Give each child a 15cm x 10cm card. Ask them to draw or write on the card what aspect of wombats they are wondering about or a question they would like answered.

Example: What do wombats eat? Tim

Display the students' question cards on the appropriate K and W section of the KWHL.

Prompt students to ensure that all areas of the Inquiry into wombats are covered, and add more aspects to the list on the KWHL if they have not been mentioned. This focuses the direction of the Inquiry and provides explicit directions for students who then have real input into what they want to find out.

Record the discoveries made during the the Inquiry in the L column and ideas for how to find out in the H column. Record the students' ideas and identify a major issue or problem that the children can focus on in the Inquiry. For example: **How can we help wombats and other Australian animals survive?** This will set a basis for the Inquiry and drive the investigation so that solutions can be sought.

Using the wombat rug:

- Instruct the children to find things around them that the wombat would see from its view point.
- Collect some of these items such as grass, twigs, stones, dirt, leaves, roots and bark, and lay them on the wombat rug for all to see.
- Discuss the importance of protecting places for native animals to survive.
- Collect all these items and place them in a feely bag to revisit at a later time in class.
- Draw the children together in a group and look at some books about wombats. Display pictures from the books.
- Talk about characteristics of the wombat.
- Focus on the wombat's size, shape, sight, smell, strength, claws and teeth.
- Talk about the backwards facing pouch and how this stops the baby wombat from being sprayed with dirt as the wombat digs.
- Discuss how all of these animal characteristics determine how it lives and moves.
- Finish your outdoor experiences by reading stories from the wombat backpack. Pass the animal puppet around the circle and have children take turns to tell what they have learnt about wombats.

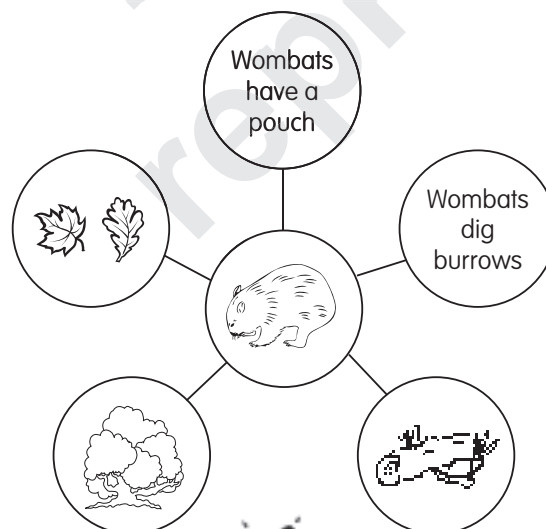
Expert Talk

Invite a ranger from a wildlife park to talk about care of wombats. Prepare children before the visit by having them come up with questions they might like to ask about wombats. Refer to the questions and wonderings on the KWHL chart.

Ask the ranger to talk about how the wombat lives in the Australian bush and what it eats. Ask questions about how the wombat finds its food and what it means to be a nocturnal animal and a marsupial. Ask what helps it live in its environment and what the threats and dangers are.

Once children have gained more information about wombats from the ranger, have them complete the 'Wombat Work' worksheet. Children draw a picture of a wombat and cut and paste from the 'What a Wombat Needs' worksheet. They can add more pictures of their own.

Using the program Kidspiration® or Microsoft Word®, the children can make a spider organiser with a picture of a wombat in the centre. Around the centre image, insert pictures of things that a wombat needs to survive in its environment.



What I Know About Wombats

Choose the right word.

burrow

furry

pouch

sleep

leaves

food

night

wombat

A wombat's coat is very _____.

It has a _____ for the baby wombat.

It digs a large _____ for a shelter.

A wombat eats _____ and grass.

It likes to _____ in the day.

A _____ keeps cool underground in its burrow.

It roams about at _____ looking

for _____.

