

A MONKEY BAA THEATRE COMPANY PRODUCTION

Diary of a Wombat

BASED ON THE BOOK BY
JACKIE FRENCH & BRUCE WHATLEY

CONCEPTUALISED
BY EVA DI CESARE, SANDRA ELDRIDGE & TIM MCGARRY



2020 US tour
teacher & venue
resource

monkey
baa theatre
company

about monkey baa theatre company

Monkey Baa was formed in Sydney, Australia 23 years ago by Sandra Eldridge, Eva Di Cesare and Tim McGarry (pictured right).

In 2017, Tim departed the company for new horizons and Sandie and Eva continue their collaboration to deliver the company's exciting artistic vision, alongside our incredible staff and production team.

Monkey Baa is Australia's widest reaching touring company for young people, having conducted over 28 national tours to 135 regional and remote communities across every state and territory of Australia, 5 international tours and over 2,500 performances, engaging with over 1.5 million young people!

Youth are at the centre of what we do: theatre provokes empathy, imagination, respect and understanding, allowing us all to see the world from different perspectives. Young audiences, as equal citizens, deserve the same dexterity, depth and rigour in theatre creation and presentation that adult audiences demand. We tell stories that embrace social and cultural connectivity, celebrate Australia's rich cultural heritage, challenge and inspire. Accessibility to a theatrical experience is deeply important to us.

We believe that rural and regional young audiences should have the same opportunities as their city cousins to engage with excellent theatre, so we continue to tour from the bush to the coast and across the seas. An integral part of our exciting process is our collaboration with young people from a work's inception right through to the opening performance, their voices reflected in the work we create for them. Through our popular arts education programs we are committed to building confident, thriving communities, empowering young people to self-expression, self-awareness and self-determination.

OUR MISSION

IS TO EXHILARATE YOUNG MINDS,
HEARTS AND IMAGINATIONS
BY CREATING AND SHARING
EXCEPTIONAL AUSTRALIAN THEATRE
NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.





about the book's author & illustrator

JACKIE FRENCH: AUTHOR

Jackie French is an Australian author, historian, ecologist, 2014-2015 Australian Children's Laureate, 2015 Senior Australian of the Year and an honorary wombat (part-time). Jackie has written over 200 books, some of which have sold millions of copies and won over 60 awards in Australia and internationally!

Jackie was born in Sydney and grew up on the outskirts of Brisbane, however she now lives in the Araluen Valley where she researches the species that live in the surrounding bush land around her home. Jackie has passionately written many environmental publications, and advocates for the protection of endangered species. When Jackie isn't writing, she enjoys lunch with friends, harvesting fruit from her own trees, reading to her grandkids, trying to find her glasses, and eating dark chocolate.

Jackie is dyslexic and a patron of literacy programs across Australia, with a wide and deep experience in learning differences, support methods, and their outcomes for students. Jackie is a passionate advocate for equal education opportunities.

For more information about Jackie visit her website www.jackiefrench.com

BRUCE WHATLEY: ILLUSTRATOR

Bruce jumped into the unknown world of picture books after a career in advertising as an illustrator and art director working in London and then Sydney. Since 1992 Bruce has written and/or illustrated over 80 children's picture books. Though based in Australia, his work is published internationally, and in 2014 was included in the Bologna Children's Book Fair Exhibition.

His main inspiration has been his family, who feature in several of his earlier picture books. His wife Rosie Smith has often been co-author on many of his projects. He uses a variety of illustration mediums, including: gouache, pen and ink, pencil, oils, water colour and more recently CGI software. His aim is to entertain and surprise the reader with illustration styles that vary considerably depending on the text and the age group of his audience.

For more information about Bruce visit his website brucewhatley.com



about the show: things to know before you see the show

THERE ARE 4 PERFORMERS ON THE STAGE (NOT INCLUDING PUPPETS):

There are 3 actors in the show, and one cellist. The performers are Michael Cullen, Samantha (Sam) Hickey and Kailah Cabanas. The 'cellist is called Mary Rapp. Mothball appears on stage as a puppet. The Mothball puppet you will see on stage is large, and it is worthwhile informing students the puppet wombat is larger than a real life wombat.

THE WOMBAT'S 'VOICE' IS A 'CELLO:

Mothball's character is represented by a puppet, but her 'voice' is characterised by a musical instrument called a 'cello. You will also hear the actor operating the puppet make sounds with her voice such as grunting or breathing, and the actor is wearing a microphone to amplify these sounds.

THERE IS BARELY ANY SPOKEN DIALOGUE:

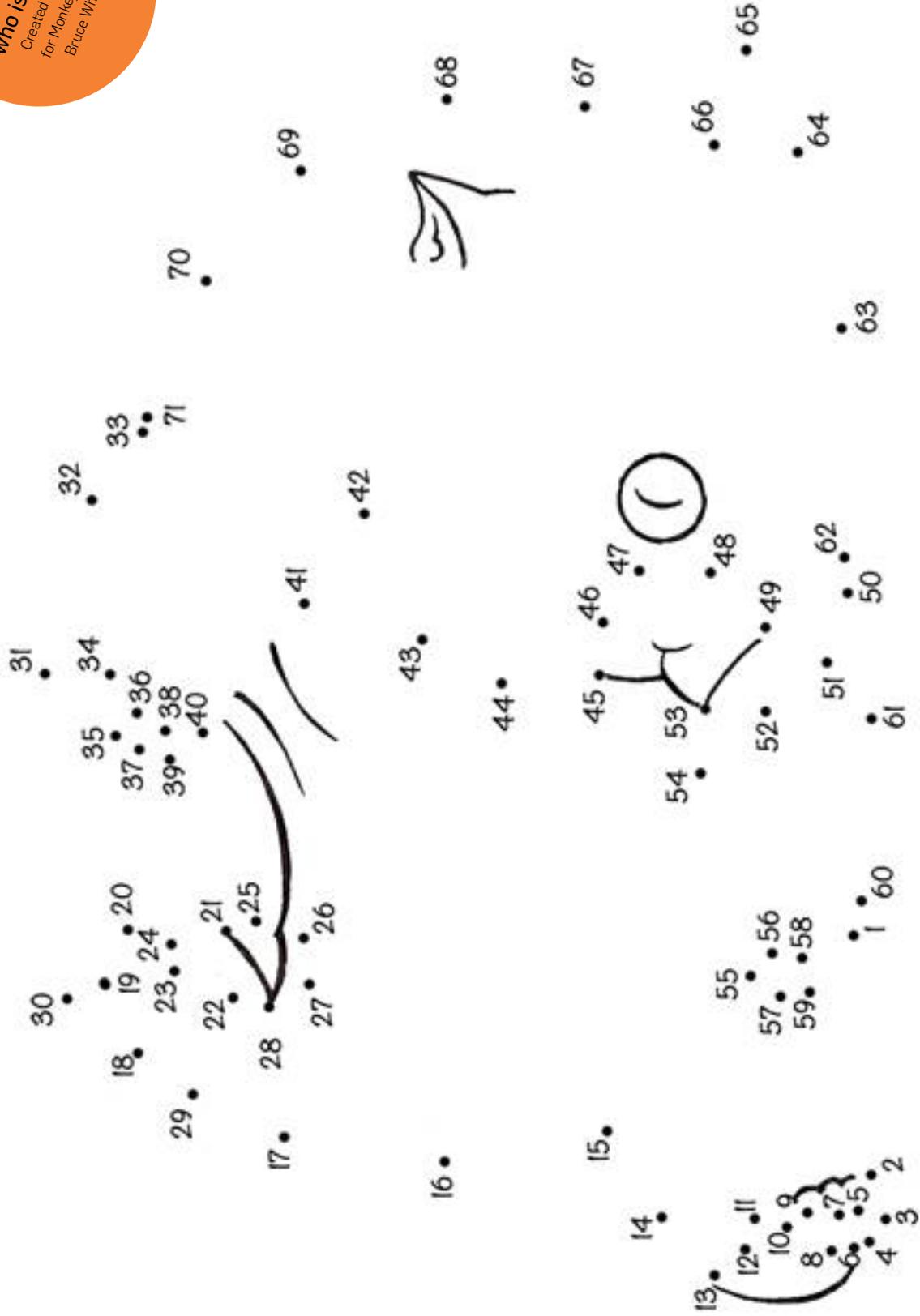
The book is written as a diary, which is not usually a spoken form of text. It is also a diary as if written by Mothball the wombat - and wombats cannot speak (as far as we know...) So in the production, instead of giving the wombat the ability to speak like a human, the 'cello music becomes Mothball's 'voice', and the human characters speak. They do not say very much though! So, much of the text, emotion, atmosphere and story are created by music, and other theatrical elements.

THERE ARE SOME SURPRISES IN THE SET DESIGN:

Students can spot some of the surprising and interesting things that the set can do, and some surprising things that happen with the puppets! There are moving elements to the set, such as parts that revolve to show a change of place. Perspective and scale are also manipulated through use of puppetry and through the set design. It's useful to discuss how time passing and changes in setting can be created on stage through changing costume, lighting, sound, set configuration and/or music.

JOIN-THE-DOTS
who is asleep?

Created especially
 for Monkey Baa by
 Bruce Whatley



**COLOURING
ME IN!**

Created especially
for Monkey Baa by
Bruce Whatley



**GROUP
DISCUSSION
ACTIVITY**

DRAW A LINE BETWEEN THE JOB TITLE & MATCHING DESCRIPTION

activity: who does what in the theatre?

makes the final decisions about what you see on stage: the 'boss' of the show

ACTOR

**SET &
COSTUME
DESIGNER**

writes the original music for the show

decides what colours & types of lights shine on the stage

COMPOSER

**PUPPET
MAKER**

conceives the ideas & oversees construction of the set, costumes & props for the show

designs & constructs the puppets & repairs puppets if necessary

DIRECTOR

**LIGHTING
DESIGNER**

manages all the technical elements on stage & backstage

shapes the movement of the actors & puppets on stage to help tell the story

**PUPPETRY
& MOVEMENT
DIRECTOR**

**STAGE
MANAGER**

performs the show on the stage

**SOUND
DESIGNER**

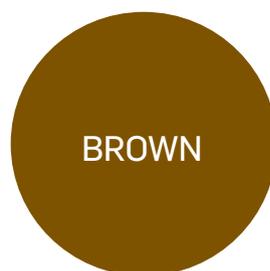
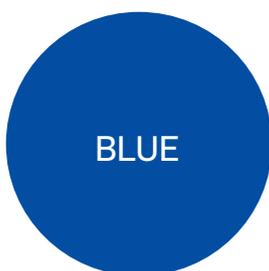
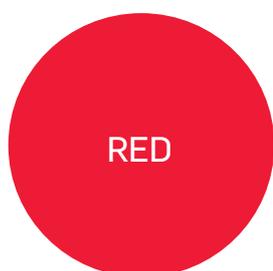
selects sound effects & manages all the levels (volume) of all the sounds you hear on stage

make & create: colour mixing activity

COLOUR PALETTE

The set & costume designer collaborates to create the physical world of the play - the set, costumes, and props. One of the tools available to the designer is colour. *Diary of a Wombat* has a distinct colour palette, and the design reflects this palette on the stage. Designer Imogen Ross worked with the book's colour palette in mind as she chose the colours appearing on stage, in both the set and the costumes.

ARRANGE COLOURS TO CREATE A COLOUR MIXING CHART SHOWING
THE RESULTS OF MIXING TWO (OR MORE) COLOURS TOGETHER



research: wombat investigation

SET YOUR STUDENTS AN ASSIGNMENT TO RESEARCH THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS OF A WOMBAT. THEY CAN CHOOSE TO PRESENT THEIR FINDINGS AS A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION OR A POSTER.

Here are some key inquiry questions for their research:

- What do Wombats eat?
- Where do Wombats live in the wild?
- How big are Wombats?
- What sounds do Wombats make?
- Are Wombats at risk of extinction?
- How many different types of Wombats are there?
- What are the physical characteristics of a Wombat?
- What is the scientific name of a Wombat?

WEBSITE RESOURCES

Australian Wildlife Protection Council <https://awpc.org.au/wombats/>

WIRES (NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service)

<https://www.wires.org.au/wildlife-info/wildlife-education/wombats>

Australia Zoo <https://www.australiazoo.com.au/our-animals/mammals/wombats/>

Australian Museum <https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/animals/mammals/common-wombat/>

Australian Geographic <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/wildlife/2015/09/northern-hairy-nosed-wombat/>

Encyclopedia Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/animal/wombat>

WWF Posters and school resources <http://www.wwf.org.uk/get-involved/schools/resources>

