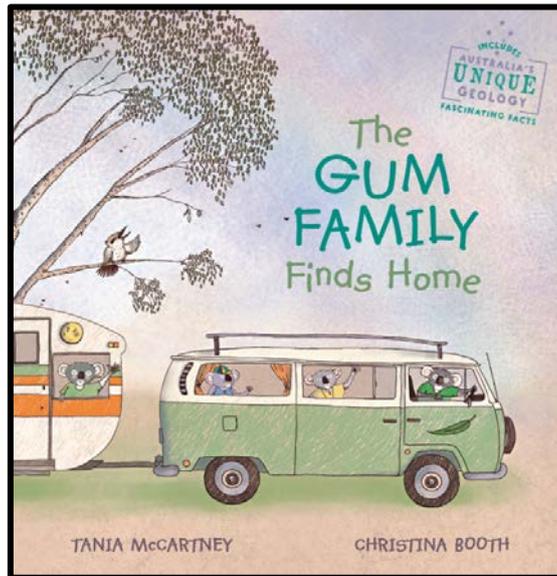


TEACHERS' NOTES

THE GUM FAMILY FINDS HOME

written by Tania McCartney, illustrated by Christina Booth



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Recommended Year Levels: Years K–3

Author: [Tania McCartney](#)



Tania simply adores books and words and pictures. If she could, she would live inside a book and, as an author, illustrator and editor—she kind of already does. As an ambassador for the National Year of Reading, an ambassador for the Chief Minister’s Reading Challenge and the Founder of Kids’ Book Review, she is mad about juvenile literacy. She’s also mad about illustration and that’s why she founded the 52-Week Illustration Challenge. Tania has written more than 24 books, many of which have won awards and been shortlisted for prizes. She lives in New South Wales, with a very nice husband, two marvellous kids and a mountain of books.

Illustrator: [Christina Booth](#)



Christina Booth is a writer, illustrator and landscape artist. She illustrates her own books, as well as books for other authors, such as Colin Thiele, Max Fatchen and Christobel Mattingley. Some of her books have won awards, including *Kip* (Honour Book Award, 2010 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards) and *Welcome Home* (2014 Environment Award for Children's Literature). Christina lives on a bush property in Tasmania with her family, chickens, fish, a cat and a dog. When she's not drawing or writing, Christina enjoys reading, gardening, cooking, fishing, talking to her chooks and watching *Dr Who*.

Australian Curriculum Content: *The Gum Family Finds Home*

- Learning Areas
 - English
 - Science
 - Humanities and Social Sciences
- General Capabilities
 - Personal and Social Capability
 - Critical and Creative Thinking
 - Intercultural Understanding
- Digital Classroom
 - Year 3: Connection to Country
 - <https://www.nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-3/themes/connection-to-country>
 - Year 3: Australian Symbols
 - <https://www.nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-3/themes/australian-symbols>

THE STORY

The Gum Family Finds Home is an Australian story about home and family and a celebration of the stunning Australian landscape and its flora and fauna.

Join the Gum family of koalas, who hitch up their caravan and set off in search of the perfect home. Together with the Gum family, children will explore the sheer variety and imposing grandeur of the Australian geological landscape, from Uluru to King's Canyon, from gorges and limestone pillars to precariously placed boulders and sweeping plains. Searching for that perfect home, they learn the heart-warming truth that the best home is the one you create for yourself among family and friends.

Parents, friends, carers and teachers will enjoy the age-old premise that 'home is where your heart is' and smile as children try to figure out where the Gums will decide to live. At the back of the book, travel the country again through photographs of locations from the story and learn fascinating facts about their formation and history.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

These are activities or questions to look at before reading to prepare students for the concepts/themes explored in the book. They are not necessarily curriculum based.

- Look at the cover of the book with the class. What do you think the book will be about? What makes you say that?
- Can you identify any of the animals on the cover?
- Where do you think the story is set?

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT: ENGLISH

Year Level: Foundation

Language

Content description: Understand that texts can take many forms, can be very short (for example an exit sign) or quite long (for example an information book or a film) and that stories and informative texts have different purposes ([ACELA1430](#))

Elaborations:

- sharing experiences of different texts and discussing what sorts of things can be different
- discussing the purpose of texts, for example: 'this text will tell a story'; 'this text will give information'

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- *The Gum Family Finds Home* is both a story book and an information book. Discuss which parts of the book tell a story and which parts provide information about Australian rock formations.

Activity

- In *The Gum Family Finds Home*, a koala family travels around Australia looking for the perfect home. Draw a picture of one of the members of the Gum family visiting one of the rock formations in the book.

Literature

Content description: Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' own experiences ([ACELT1575](#))

Elaboration:

- comparing experiences depicted in stories with students' own

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- In what ways is your family different from the Gum family? In what ways is your home different from their home? What do you like best about your home? Could you and your family live in a tree?

Activity

- The Gum family live in a tree. Draw a picture of your family outside your house.

Content description: Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts ([ACELT1783](#))

Elaboration:

- talking about people, events and ideas in texts, enabling students to connect them to their own experiences and to express their own opinions about what is depicted

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Think about a trip your family has been on. Was your trip a quest, like the Gum family's quest to find a new home? Or did you go on a trip just to experience new places and have fun together as a family?
- Can you think of other reasons why people travel (e.g. business trips, visiting family, etc.)?

Activity

- The Gum family travels around Australia in a Kombi van. Make a poster about a family trip you and your family have been on. Use pictures and photos to show how you travelled, where you went and what you saw.

Year Level: 1

Language

Content description: Explore differences in words that represent people, places and things (nouns, including pronouns), happenings and states (verbs), qualities (adjectives) and details such as when, where and how (adverbs) ([ACELA1452](#))

Elaborations:

- talking about effective words that describe a place, person or event
- learning how a sentence can be made more vivid by adding adjectives, adverbs and unusual verbs

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss how descriptive words can create an image in the mind of the reader.

Activity

- The author describes the Gum family's home as follows: *They live in a gum tree, high in the sky, with buzzy bees, tender rain, lulling breezes and kookaburra cackles.* Which words in this sentence are descriptive?
- Write about your own home using descriptive words that help the reader to imagine what your house looks like (e.g. number of storeys, roofing material, colour of paintwork, type of fences, garden features, pets, etc.).

Content description: Compare different kinds of images in narrative and informative texts and discuss how they contribute to meaning ([ACELA1453](#))

Elaboration:

- talking about what is 'real' and what is imagined in texts, for example: 'this is the section about platypuses in the book about mammals'

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss how *The Gum Family Finds Home* combines reality and imagination. What is real and could actually happen, and what is not? Do koalas really drive Kombi vans and renovate houses?
- Why have the author and illustrator used a koala family, rather than real people, as the main characters in this book?

Activity

- Draw a picture or make a collage of you and your family; however, instead of people, show them as Australian native animals (e.g. kangaroos, possums, echidnas, emus or bilbies).

Literature

Content description: Discuss how authors create characters using language and images ([ACELT1581](#))

Elaboration:

- discussing the characteristics of animals and how they relate to human characteristics

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- How has the illustrator presented her characters? Are the koalas dressing up as people but acting like koalas? Or do they look like koalas but act like people?
- Why has she drawn them in this way?

Activity

- The main characters in *The Gum Family Finds Home* are koalas. If you were represented by an animal, what animal would you be? Create a model or draw a picture of your animal character. Where do you live? What do you wear? How do you act? Do you have any secret powers?

Content description: Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences

Elaborations:

- discussing characters from books and films and whether these are life-like or imaginary (for example, talking animals)
- comparing characters and events in texts to students' own experiences

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- How does your trip differ from the trip taken by the Gum family? What activities do the Gum family do on their trip that your family have done (e.g. taking photographs, meeting people, discovering the flora and fauna, going to places they wouldn't usually visit, etc.)?

Activity

- On their trip, the Gum family send postcards to their friend Kooka. Make a postcard based on a place you have visited while on holiday. Include what you saw, where you went and what you enjoyed most. Who will you send it to?

Content description: Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts ([ACELT1584](#))

Elaborations:

- discussing features of book settings including time (year, season) and place (country or city, realistic or imagined)
- discussing how plots develop, including: beginnings (orientation), how the problem (complication) is introduced and solved (resolution)

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Compare the picture books *The Gum Family Finds Home* and *Possum Magic*. Discuss the clues embedded in the text and images of each book that tell you when and where they are set.
- What are the similarities and differences between these two books? In particular, identify the problem at the centre of each story and explore how the trip around Australia that each family undertakes helps to resolve their problems.

Activity

- Make a chart showing the following for each book: Time (when it is set), Place (where it is set), Characters (who is in it), Plot (what happens and why).

Literacy

Content description: Respond to texts drawn from a range of cultures and experiences ([ACELY1655](#))

Elaboration:

- exploring some of the meanings and teachings embedded in Dreaming stories

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- How is the story of the Rainbow Serpent linked to the rock formation Karlu Karlu in *The Gum Family Finds Home*?
- Discuss what the meaning of the story is and why it is an important part of Aboriginal culture.

Activity

- Many of the rock formations in *The Gum Family Finds Home* are linked to traditional Aboriginal Dreaming stories. Read the picture book *The Rainbow Serpent*. Draw or make a model of the Rainbow Serpent.

Year Level: 2

Language

Content description: Identify language that can be used for appreciating texts and the qualities of people and things ([ACELA1462](#))

Elaborations:

- exploring how language is used to express feelings, including learning vocabulary to express a gradation of feeling, for example 'happy', 'joyful', 'pleased', 'contented'
- exploring how language is used to construct characters and settings in narratives, including choice of nouns such as 'girl', 'princess' or 'orphan', and choice of adjectives such as 'gentle', 'timid' or 'frightened'

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss the ways in which Leaf and Nut (the girl and boy in the Gum family) are portrayed in both the illustrations and the text. How do you know which one is a girl and which one is a boy? Are they shown doing different things or reacting in different ways?

Activity

- Make a list of the words used by the author to express feelings in *The Gum Family Finds Home*. Group the words into positive and negative terms—ones that show happiness or contentment, and ones that show sadness or discontent.
- Using some of these words, write a poem about something you either like or dislike.

Literacy

Content description: Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts ([ACELT1589](#))

Elaboration:

- discussing each other's preferences for stories set in familiar or unfamiliar worlds, or about people whose lives are like or unlike their own

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss how people who have come from other countries would find a home in Australia. How could they fit into their new country? How could you help them feel more at home?

Activity

- Write a travel diary about a family of Australian animals trying to find a home in another country. In creating your story, think about the following: What would they look for in a new home? How would they fit in with the animals already living there? What would they eat?

Year Level: 3

Literature

Content description: Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative ([ACELT1599](#))

Elaboration:

- identifying and discussing the use of descriptive adjectives ('in the middle of a vast, bare plain') to establish setting and atmosphere ('the castle loomed dark and forbidding') and to draw readers into events that follow

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- How can words alone create a picture in the mind?

Activity

- Make a list of the descriptive adjectives used by the author in *The Gum Family Finds Home* to describe the rock formations visited by the family.
- Research one of the rock formations in the book. Write a description of the rock formation for someone who has never seen it before. Try to create a picture in their mind of what it looks like. Include descriptions of its size, colour, distinguishing features and setting.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT: SCIENCE

Year Level: Foundation

Science Understanding

Content description: Living things have basic needs, including food and water ([ACSSU002](#))

Elaborations:

- recognising the needs of living things in a range of situations such as pets at home, plants in the garden or plants and animals in bushland
- comparing the needs of plants and animals

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss what plants, animals and people need to survive (e.g. air, water, nutrition, care, attention).

Activity

- Draw a picture of one of the animals or plants featured in *The Gum Family Finds Home*. Include images of the things the animal or plant needs to survive and thrive.

Content description: Daily and seasonal changes in our environment affect everyday life ([ACSSU004](#))

Elaborations:

- investigating how changes in the weather might affect animals such as pets, animals that hibernate, or migratory animals
- linking the changes in the daily weather to the way we modify our behaviour and dress for different conditions, including examples from different cultures

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- What do animals do when it rains, or when it is very hot or very cold? Choose an animal from *The Gum Family Finds Home* and discuss how it could survive different weather conditions.

Activity

- One of the things the Gum family were looking for in a new home was more protection from the weather. Draw a picture or make a collage of the things you would wear or use for protection on the following days: rainy, cold, hot.

Year Level: 1

Science Understanding

Content description: Living things live in different places where their needs are met ([ACSSU211](#))

Elaboration:

- recognising that different living things live in different places such as land and water

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss how animals are able to survive in different environments (e.g. the bush, fields, deserts, coastal areas, alpine areas, etc.).

Activity

- Draw a chart showing where the following animals featured in *The Gum Family Finds Home* make their homes: koalas, bees, butterflies, seagulls, fish, camels, wombats, kangaroos and emus.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT: HASS

Year Level: Foundation

Researching

Content description: Collect data and information from observations and identify information and data from sources provided ([ACHASSI002](#))

Elaboration:

- listening to stories from oral, audiovisual and other sources to find information about family, friends, celebrations, places and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss how houses have changed over time, and identify what was different when your parents or grandparents were children.

Activity

- Like the Gum family's gum tree, homes sometimes need updating and renovating over time. Talk to an adult member of your family (parent, grandparent, great-grandparent) and find out where they lived when they were a child and what their house was like. Record their answers on a poster, with photos and other memorabilia that show how and where they lived.

Analysing

Content description: Interpret data and information displayed in pictures and texts and on maps ([ACHASSI007](#))

Elaboration:

- sorting pictures of places and people using criteria such as old/new, younger/older, same/different, outside/inside, safe/not safe, special/not special

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss how and why homes differ depending on where people live and what resources are available.

Activity

- The Gum family look at a range of possible new homes. Find pictures of homes from around the world. Make a chart, grouping the homes according to either building materials (e.g. wood, brick, thatch, cement, adobe, etc.) or sites (forest, desert, beach, snow country, etc.).

Geography

Content description: The places people live in and belong to, their familiar features and why they are important to people ([ACHASSK015](#))

Elaborations:

- identifying the places they live in and belong to (for example, a neighbourhood, suburb, town or rural locality)
- describing the features of their own place and places they are familiar with or they are aware of (for example, places they have visited, places family members have come from, imaginary places in stories, or places featured on television)
- identifying how places provide people with their basic needs (for example, water, food and shelter) and why they should be looked after for the future

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss the important features of your suburb or town. What makes it unique? Why is it a good place to live? What other features or amenities would you like your suburb or town to have?

Activity

- *The Gum Family Finds Home* includes a map of Australia. Create a map of your suburb or town. Include the places that are significant to you (e.g. school, cafe, playground, oval, natural areas, museums, library, river, beach, etc.).

Content description: The Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Country/Place on which the school is located and why Country/Place is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples ([ACHASSK016](#))

Elaboration:

- identifying Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander landmarks in the local area

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss why it is important to learn about, identify, recognise and look after Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Places.

Activity

- Many of the places visited by the Gum family have particular significance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Identify and draw a picture or make a map of any areas with this significance in your suburb or town, or in your state or territory.

Content description: The reasons why some places are special to people, and how they can be looked after ([ACHASSK017](#))

Elaboration:

- identifying places they consider to be 'special' (for example, their room, a play area, holiday location or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Place of family significance) and explaining why the place is special to them

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss the reasons why some places are more important to us than others (e.g. memories, family connections, safe places, fun places, etc.).

Activity

- After travelling around Australia, the Gum family realise that their gum tree is where they really want to be. It is their home. Draw a picture or make a model of a place that is particularly important to you.

Year Level: 1

Researching

Content description: Collect data and information from observations and identify information and data from sources provided ([ACHASSI002](#))

Elaboration:

- listening to stories from oral, audiovisual and other sources to find information about family, friends, celebrations, places and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- What do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dreaming stories tell us about what was important to our First Nations?
- Make a checklist, like the one the Gum family make, of the things Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples looked for in the places they called home.

Activity

- Using the rock formations featured in *The Gum Family Finds Home*, find stories based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dreaming. Draw a picture inspired by one of these stories.

Analysing

Content description: Interpret data and information displayed in pictures and texts and on maps ([ACHASSI007](#))

Elaboration:

- sorting pictures of places and people using criteria such as old/new, younger/older, same/different, outside/inside, safe/not safe, special/not special

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss why people live in the homes they do. What factors influence the sorts of homes they live in, what they build them from and where they build them?

Activity

- The Gum family were trying to find the perfect home. Source photographs and other images of homes from around the world. Make a chart contrasting old and new homes, homes from different countries made from the same building materials, homes in cold and hot countries, and unusual or strange homes.

Geography

Content description: The natural, managed and constructed features of places, their location, how they change and how they can be cared for ([ACHASSK031](#))

Elaboration:

- recounting Dreaming and Creation stories of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples that identify the natural features of a place

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Why is it important to look after significant rock formations in Australia, and especially those with a strong link to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures?

Activity

- Select one of the significant rock formations featured in *The Gum Family Finds Home*. Make a chart showing where it is, the Dreaming/Creation story linked to it, how you would get to it from where you live and how it is maintained or looked after.

Year Level: 2**Geography**

Content description: The idea that places are parts of Earth's surface that have been named by people, and how places can be defined at a variety of scales ([ACHASSK048](#))

Elaborations:

- examining the names of features and places in the local area, the meaning of these names and why they were chosen
- investigating the names and meanings given to local features and places by the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss why it is important to know about the origins of the placenames in your area. What can placenames tell you about the history of where you live?

Activity

- Some of the rock formations visited by the Gum family have both Aboriginal and European names (e.g. Uluru/Ayres Rock, Karlu Karlu/Devils Marbles, Kata Tjuta/The Olgas). Identify placenames in your area based on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander words and phrases, or on people from your area who have made an important contribution to its development. Find out what you can about one particular placename and write a short description of its origins.

Content description: The connections of people in Australia to people in other places in Australia and across the world ([ACHASSK050](#))

Elaborations:

- examining the ways people are connected to other places (for example, through relatives, friends, things people buy or obtain, holidays, sport, family origin, beliefs, or through environmental practices such as where their waste ends up and its effect on people there)

Activity

- The Gum family travel around Australia in an attempt to find their perfect home. Make a list of the places in Australia and around the world where members of your class and their families have come from. Use different coloured pins to show the places on a map of the world.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Are there areas on the map where the pins are clustered? Are there areas where there are very few or no pins? Discuss why this is so.

Year Level: 3

Geography

Content description: The representation of Australia as states and territories and as Countries/Places of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; and major places in Australia, both natural and human ([ACHASSK066](#))

Elaborations:

- using geographical tools (for example, a globe, wall map or digital application such as Google Earth) to locate and name significant places such as the states, territories, major cities and regional centres in Australia
- identifying and describing the major natural features of Australia (for example, rivers, deserts, rainforests, the Great Dividing Range, the Great Barrier Reef and islands of the Torres Strait) and describing them with annotations on a map

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss how Australia's states and territories differ from each other.

Activity

- Select one of the states or territories of Australia visited by the Gum family. Make a map or a mural showing significant features of that state, including geographical features such as rock formations, waterways, beaches, significant Aboriginal sites, and built features such as bridges, iconic buildings and major cities.

CONCLUDING ACTIVITIES

English

- Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts demonstrating increasing control over text structures and language features and selecting print, and multimodal elements appropriate to the audience and purpose ([ACELY1682](#))

Suggested Activities

- Write a creative response to the text (e.g. a story or poem about the Gum family's adventures, a song about their trip, an 'interview' with one of them about their experiences, a newspaper article about their trip, etc.).
- Write a persuasive text, providing reasons why the Gum family should or shouldn't relocate to a particular location.

HASS

- Sort and record information and data, including location, in tables and on plans and labelled maps ([ACHASSI036](#))

Suggested Activities

- Plot locations featured in the book on a map of Australia.
- Sort these locations into different groups (e.g. arid/wet, by location, good for koalas/bad for koalas, etc.).
- Draw a floorplan of your home, using labels to show what each room is used for. Add your dream room to your floorplan. What is its function? How would you decorate it? What furniture would you include?

Further Reading

Maps/Atlases

- Tania McCartney, *Illustrated Map of Australia* (Hardie Grant)
- Tania McCartney, *Illustrated Map of the World* (Hardie Grant)

Geography Books

- Tania McCartney, *Australia Illustrated* (EK Books)

Travel Books

- Alison Lester, *Are We There Yet? A Journey around Australia* (Penguin)
- Mem Fox and Julie Vivas, *Possum Magic* (Scholastic)

Australian Animal Books

- Clare Saxby and Julie Vivas, *Koala* (Walker Books)
- Frane Lessac, *A Is for Australian Animals* (Walker Books)
- Gina Newton, *Amazing Animals of Australia's National Parks* (NLA Publishing)

Aboriginal Dreaming/Creation Stories

- Dick Roughsey, *The Rainbow Serpent* (HarperCollins)