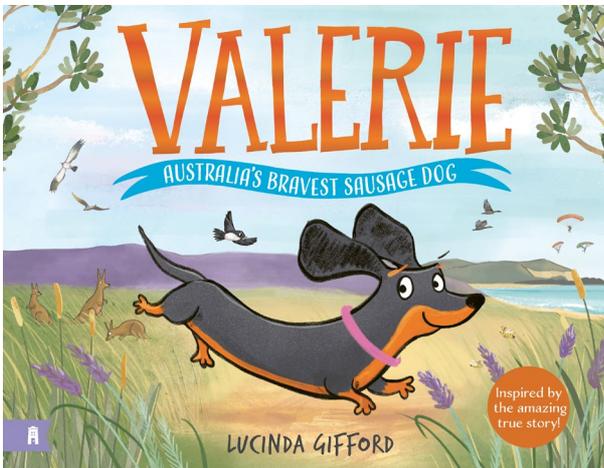


Valerie: Australia's Bravest Sausage Dog

By Lucinda Gifford



Join Valerie on her unforgettable journey and discover just how far a brave little dog can go!

RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 3 – 6 (Lower Primary)

THEMES

Bravery, adventure, dogs, survival, wilderness

ISBN (AUS)

9781761182594

SYNOPSIS

All over Australia and all around the world, people fell in love with Valerie - the bold-hearted dachshund who escaped a campground on Kangaroo Island and roamed the wilderness for over 500 days before being reunited with her loving owners.

In this gloriously warm-hearted romp of a picture book, bestselling author and illustrator Lucinda Gifford has imagined Valerie's adventures and brought them to vivid and hilarious life, as she befriends dolphins, eats her fill, and explores the wild... before finding her way safely home again.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Lucinda Gifford is the author and illustrator of many well-loved books for kids. In the 90s, Lucinda studied architecture in Scotland, where she learned to draw fancy buildings and moody scenery. Many years later, she put some of her best drawings in a folio and started looking for work illustrating children's books. Lucinda has since illustrated over 40 books, ten of which she has also written. She works from her studio in Melbourne's north and especially enjoys making books about chickens, wolves, dogs, cats and magical creatures. Lucinda loves her new job and plans to write and draw for the rest of her life, or until her hand drops off, or both.



IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Pre-reading Cover Discussion

Before opening *Valerie; Australia's Bravest Sausage Dog* look at the book's front and back covers and ask:

- What kind of animal is Valerie? Look at her shape, ears and tail.
- What is a sausage dog? What is it about Valerie's body that reminds you of a 'sausage'?
- Look at Valerie in the picture and describe how she is feeling. What specifically tells you she is feeling like that? [Look closely at her mouth, eyes, eyebrows, tail and ears.]
- What Australian animals can you spot on the cover?
- What does the word 'bravest' tell us about Valerie? What do you think she might do that is brave?
- Can you describe where Valerie lives based on what is in the background of the cover?
- It says this is 'inspired by an amazing true story'. What do you think that means?
- If you could ask Valerie one question, what would it be?
- What do you predict this story might be about? What clues does the cover give us?
- Look closely at the way the subheading, *Australia's Bravest Sausage Dog*, is shown on the cover. Does it remind you of something you might win in a competition?

[Answer: award ribbon.]

Comprehension Questions

Read the story through once, close the book and ask your class the following comprehension questions:

- What food did Valerie take from the barbecue at the start of the story?
- How did Valerie go from eating a sausage to being in the water?
- Who helped Valerie when she fell into the ocean?
- What did Valerie use to ride the waves back to the sand?
- Name two things Valerie did while she was having her beach adventure.
- Why did Valerie decide to return home?
- What sort of welcome did Valerie receive when she got home?
- What did Valerie dream of doing next at the end of the story?

- Finish the sentence: Valerie is a very _____ sausage dog because she _____.
- True or False: Valerie returned home because she was hungry and thirsty.

Language

- Explain to students that Lucinda Gifford has written the story carefully to make it exciting and fun to read and listen to. This includes:
 - Choosing the right word to convey meaning
 - Changing the expected word order
 - Using rhyme, rhythm and sentence length to make the story memorable and musical
- *Word Choice*: Explain that some words tell us a lot about how a character moves or feels.

Turn to the second double-page spread:

Cleverly, Valerie let herself out.

Daintily, Valerie followed her snout.

She sniffed out the barbie ... crept up to the grill... then snaffled a sausage and dashed down the hill.

Choose four students to act out each one of the underlined words in front of the class.

Once complete ask students:

- How did each word describe a different movement?
- Did some words suggest slow movements and some quick?
- Did faces look different for each word?

Now rewrite the sentences on the board without the underlined words.

Ask students:

- Which version do you like better and why?

- *Changing Word Order*: Return to the first two sentences:

Cleverly, Valerie let herself out.

Daintily, Valerie followed her snout.

Explain that 'cleverly' and 'daintily' are describing words (adverbs), that they tell us *how* Valerie does something and that normally such words sit in the middle of a sentence. Use as an example: *Valerie cleverly let herself out.*

Explain that Lucinda Gifford puts the describing word at the start of her sentences here to make the sentence sound more exciting and dramatic.

Ask students:

- Can you find another sentence in the story where the describing word comes first?
- *Rhyme*: Explain that rhyming words share the same sound at the end. For example, *out* / *snout*.

Ask students:

- Can you find other rhyming words in this part of the story?
- Reread the story and ask students to clap once every time they hear a rhyme.

Ask students:

- Do you like rhymes in stories?
- Do rhyming words make a story more musical to listen to?
- Do you like guessing what the next rhyming word will be?
- *Rhythm and Sentence Length*: Explain that authors also make stories interesting by using short and long sentences. Go back to the example given earlier:

Cleverly, Valerie let herself out.

Daintily, Valerie followed her snout.

She sniffed out the barbie ... crept up to the grill... then snaffled a sausage and dashed down the hill.

Discuss how the first two sentences are very short (count the words together), while the next sentence is long and full of actions. Explain that this makes the story feel faster and more exciting.

Ask students:

- Can you find another place in the story where short or long sentences make the story more exciting?

Visual Literacy

- *Typography (How Words Look)*: Explain that how words look on the page can also help tell the story and make it more exciting. Turn to the double-page spread featuring the words:

*Then a wave swept her up and ... **DOG OVERBOARD!***

Ask students:

- How are these words shown differently here compared with other pages?
- Are they bigger?

- A different colour?
- In a different place on the page?

Point out:

- The words on the left look like a wave forming.
- The words on the right look like a wave crashing.
- Explain that the author and illustrator use word shape and size to show action.
- *Pictures Give Extra Information:* Explain that sometimes pictures tell us more than the words. Turn to the first double-page spread where Valerie lies on her bed.

Ask students:

- The words tell us Valerie wants to go to the barbie but what do you see in the picture that tells us why she wants to go?
- Turn to the last picture in the book. Explain that the words say Valerie fell asleep wondering where she would go next but the picture shows us exactly what she dreamed about.

Ask students:

- Describe what you think Valerie is dreaming about doing next.
- *Feelings:* Return to the first double-page spread where Valerie is thinking about the sausages at the barbie.

Ask students:

- What word tells us Valerie is sad? (*sigh*)

Explain that pictures can show feelings too. Look closely at the illustration of Valerie and talk about how her body language tells us a lot about what she is thinking. Consider her:

- Tail
- Her eyes
- Her ears
- Her mouth
- Her body posture

Turn to the page where Valerie is on the boat. Point out the words *eagerly* and *joyfully* are words that tell us what she is feeling.

Ask students to describe how the illustration shows us how she is feeling.

Finally, turn to the page featuring the words:

'Shouldn't she be with her family instead?'

Ask students:

- How do you think Valerie is feeling here?
- What in the picture helps you decide?
- *Colour:* Explain that illustrators also use colour to tell a story.

Compare the bright colours when Valerie is 'living the dream' at the beach (yellow, blue, pink, orange) with the darker, duller colours when her journey home is *rugged and long*.

Ask students:

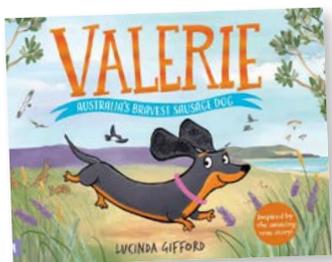
- Which colours suggest Valerie is happy and which suggest she is sad and struggling?

Creating Texts

- *Postcard from Valerie:* Students create a postcard. On the front of the postcard draw Valerie taking a selfie on her adventure. On the back of the postcard write a short message saying:
 - What she is doing
 - How she feels
 - When she thinks she will come home
- *Write a New Story:* Ask students to write a new story about Valerie's adventures. Suggest prompts such as:
 - Did she meet and befriend a lonely person?
 - Did she make friends with the local wildlife?
 - Was she working in a café?
 - Did she become a surf lifesaver?
- *Mapping a Story:* Explain that drawing a map can help us plan a story.

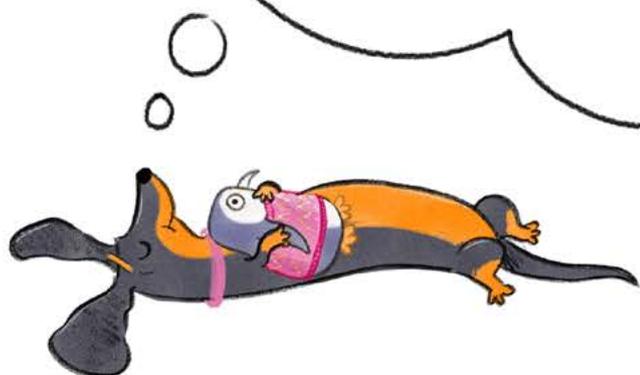
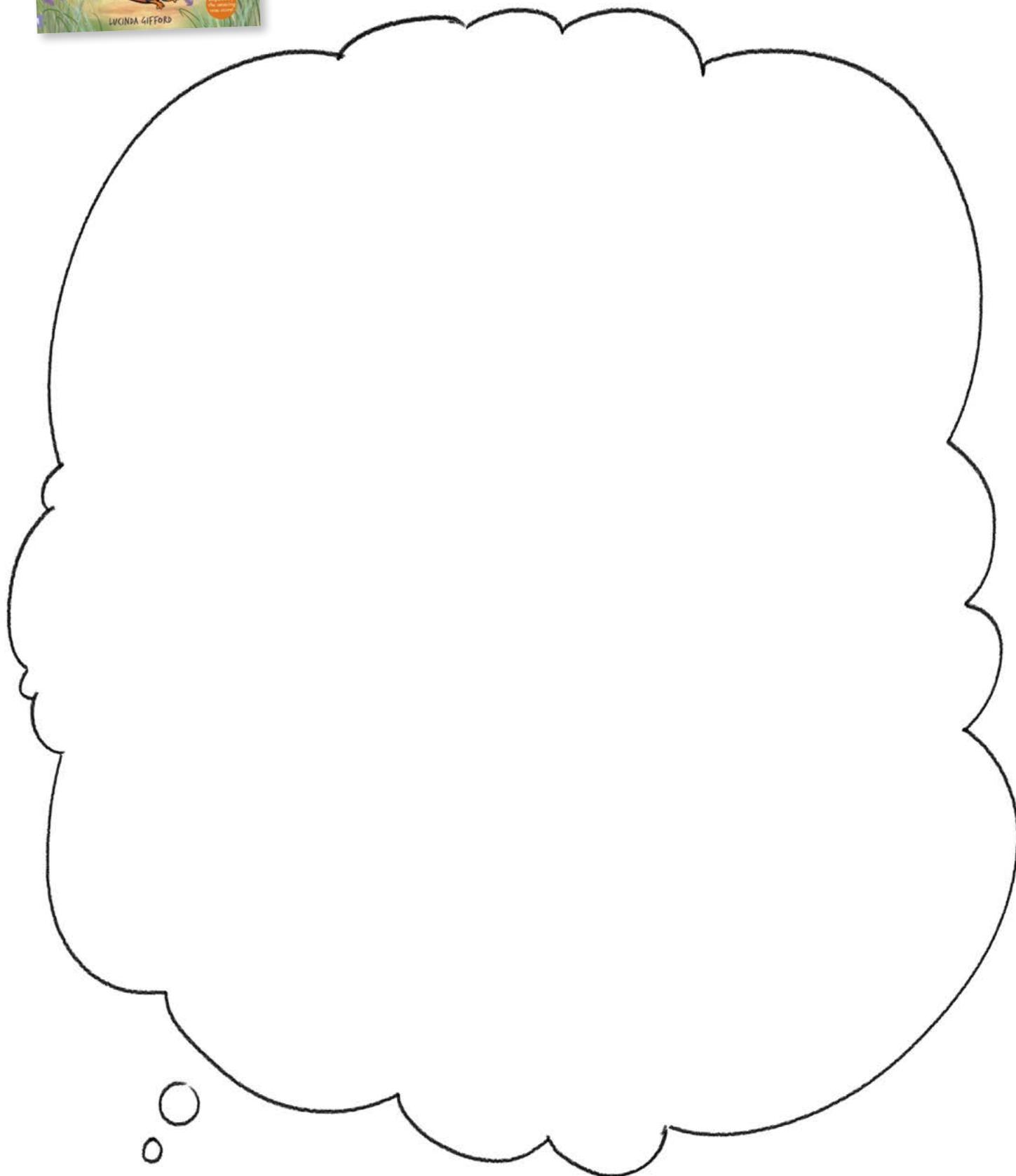
Ask students to:

- Draw their own made-up island
- Include places like beaches, hills, deserts, swamps or mountains
- Think about what adventures might happen there



VALERIE DREAMING

Valerie is home at last! Now she is dreaming of her next adventure. What will it be?

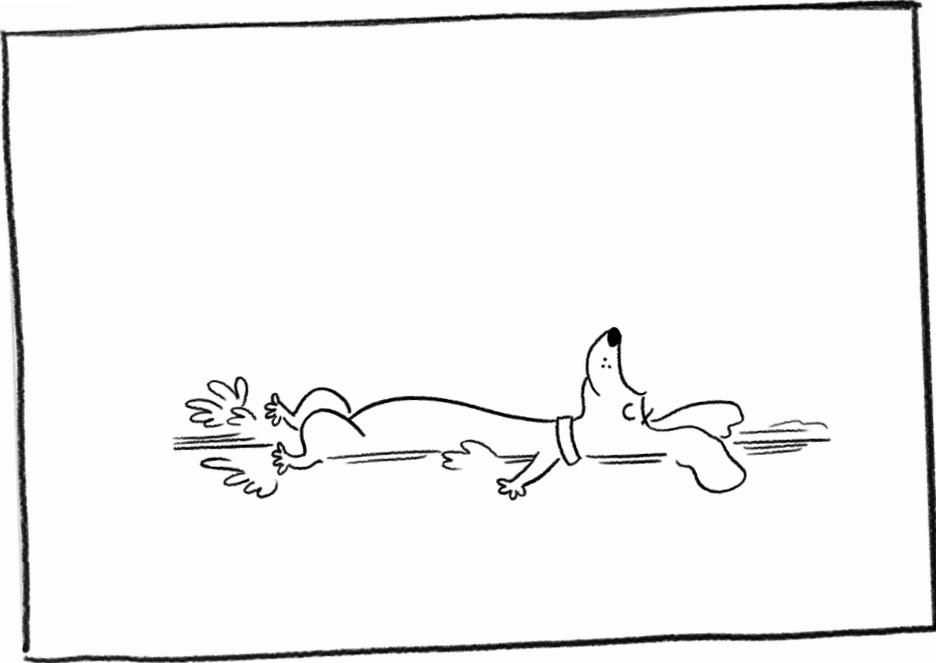


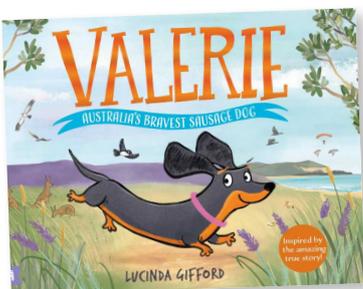
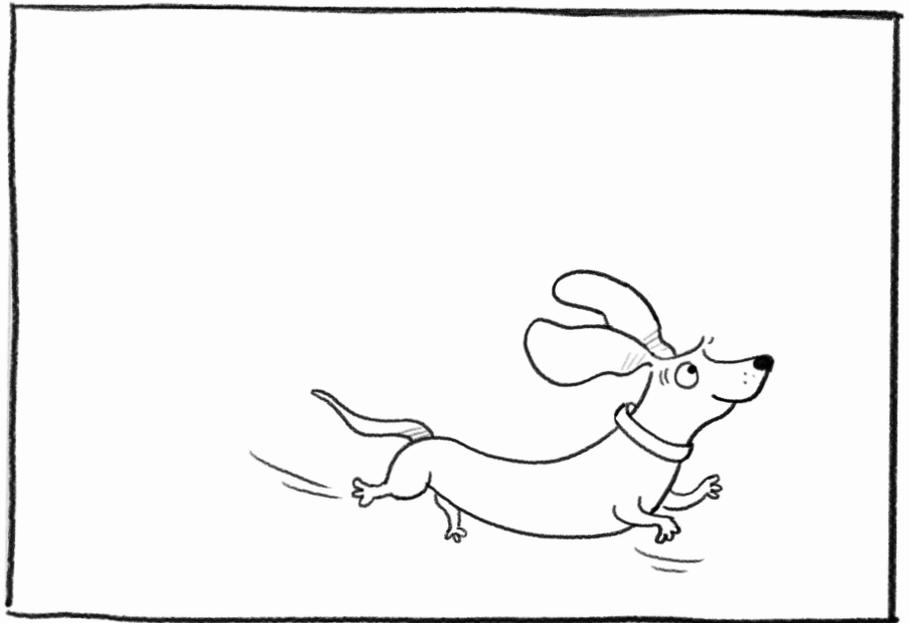
VALERIE, written and illustrated by Lucinda Gifford.
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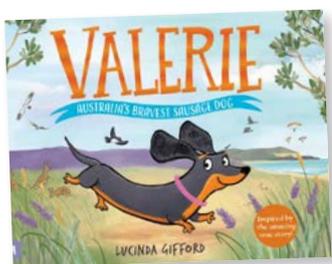
VALERIE'S HOLIDAY SNAPS

Valeris is having a marvellous adventure! Here are some of her holiday photos. Where is she? And what was she doing? Add some backgrounds, colours and notes.





Written and illustrated by Lucinda Gifford.
Published by Albert Street Books, February 2026
Inspired by the amazing true story of the tiny dog
who captured the heart of a nation



KANGAROO ISLAND ANIMALS

There are lots of animals on Kangaroo Island.
Can you find them all in the word search?



F H H D W Y M E F S
N K M P E L I C A N
P C A A O E S H A R
L Y O N A Z E I W D
A W J C G Q A D H O
T E O R K A L N A L
Y A I M I A R A L P
P G B O B H T O E H
U L I Q H A P O O I
S E S L X T T A O N



WOMBAT
KANGAROO
SEAL
PELICAN

IBIS
EAGLE
COCKATOO
PLATYPUS

WHALE
DOLPHIN
ECHIDNA