



Wombat Valley

Evan Croker

Focus phonics

oo (as in look) written as oul as in would, could, should

ee written as ey as in Valley, joey, turkey

Tricky words

anymore, everywhere, friends, many, their, there, thought, through, where

Book summary

Enzo comes from Italy to visit his friend Coen. When Enzo accidentally drops his camera into a burrow, the boys get chased all over Wombat Valley by a grumpy wombat. It's only when Mum downloads Enzo's photos from inside the burrow that the reason for the wombat's behaviour is discovered.

Learning intention

Phonics: To decode words with the phonemes /oo/ (as in look) spelt oul and /ee/ spelt ey, that feature in the text and extend to other known words with the same grapheme-phoneme correspondences, e.g. chimney, donkey, hockey.

Comprehension:

- Retrieve and record information/key details from the text
- Explain the meaning of words in context
- Summarise main ideas
- Make inferences from the text
- Make predictions that fit with information given in the text
- Make connections (text to self, text to text, text to world)
- Ask questions
- Visualise

Fluency:

- Read at a natural speaking pace with minimal sounding out
- Pay attention to punctuation when reading, pausing and changing tone as appropriate
- Read with appropriate emphasis and intonation to support the meaning of the text

Before reading

Story discussion: Look at and discuss the front cover and read the title together. Ask: What is a wombat? (an Australian animal about the size of a large cat – see the picture on the title page) Who is in the front cover picture? (two boys named Coen and Enzo) Who is the author? (Evan Croker) Share knowledge and views of any other books written by Evan. (in the Reading Road

series, Evan has written Ducks in a row, Pie in the sky, In the loop, Living room beach) Invite students to share any prior knowledge of wombats, and make predictions about what might happen in the story. Keep a note of predictions and return to them later. Read and discuss the blurb on the back cover. Flick through the book to get an idea of the story. Ask: Do you think this is a fiction or non-fiction text and say why?

Quick phonics warm-up: Read the words on the inside front cover together, with the focus phonemes of /oo/ (as in look) written as oul and /ee/ written as ey. Flip through the text to locate and read words with these focus phonemes. Discuss the meaning of these words. Build the focus word *turkey* with letter cards. Think of words that rhyme with *turkey*, e.g. key, kidney. There are many ways to spell the sound /ee/. Two ways are: ey and y. Sort words into the way the /ee/ sound is written, e.g. jockey, baby, bunny, lucky, candy, trolley, silly, valley. Then read the words.

Vocabulary check:

valley (front cover) low area of land between mountains and hills

burrow p 12 hole or tunnel dug by an animal as their home

Morphology: lemonade p 10 a drink made from lemon juice. The suffix -ade means action or process – there was a process done to a lemon to make juice (squeezing it).

Etymology: sandwiches p 10, 1762, said to be a reference to John Montagu (1718-1792), 4th Earl of Sandwich, who was said to be a gambler who ate slices of cold meat between bread at the gaming table during marathon sessions rather than rising for a proper meal (this account of the origin dates to 1770).

Tricky word practice: Display the tricky words *anymore* and *through*. Ask: What are the tricky parts of these words?

anymore – the tricky part is a which says /e/.

through – the tricky part is ough which says /oo/ as in moon.

Practise reading and spelling these tricky words.

During reading

Read the story: This book may not fit into a single reading session. The end of Chapter 2, p 15 is a good point to break the reading. Students can finish the book in a second group session or for homework.

Reading could follow one or more of the following approaches:

- Start by reading the text with students, then invite them to take over the reading. On p 5, ask: Why didn't Enzo know what a wombat was? (he came from Italy and had not seen one before) On p 5, ask: How did Coen show Enzo what a wombat looked like? (he showed him a picture from a book on the shelf) On p 7, ask: What happened when Enzo was taking photos of birds? (he dropped his camera) Students continue reading.
- Students read silently at their own pace; listen to each student in turn as they read a brief passage.
- Divide the book up between groups of or pairs of students; they read a section or chapter each and then summarise the main ideas to report back on.

Phonics support: Remind students to sound out and blend the letters as necessary to read any unfamiliar words, but encourage them to read words with familiar letters and sounds fluently on sight if they can, without sounding out. If students get stuck on a word, model how to sound out

and blend the sounds in the word. Encourage students to help each other with sounding out and blending and praise good use of this strategy, especially words with the focus phonemes of /oo/ (as in look) written as oul; and /ee/ written as ey.

Comprehension support: Pause occasionally to talk about the story and encourage students to find and retrieve key details from the text, e.g. on p 8, ask: Where did Enzo's camera land? (in a hole) What did the hole turn out to be? (a wombat's burrow) Why did Jill stop Enzo from going into the burrow? (wombats can hurt you if they get angry) On p 9, ask: What idea did they have for retrieving the camera? (hooking it with a fishing rod)

After reading

Apply learning: Discuss the text. Ask: What have you learned about wombats and their habitat? On p 10, ask: Why did Enzo grab some strong magnets and tape? (to tape a magnet to the fishing rod) How did that help? (the magnet would stick onto the camera) Share any other ideas students have for ways to retrieve the camera. What did Evan (the author) need to know before writing this text?

Comprehension: Review the predictions made earlier. Were they correct? Were there any surprises? On p 15, ask: Why was the wombat chasing Coen and Enzo? (not happy about intrusion into the burrow) What was surprising about the wombat? (how fast it could run) On pp 24–25, ask: What did Jill see in the photos? (a baby joey in the burrow) On p 26, ask: Was the wombat a good mum? (yes, she was protecting her baby) On p 28, ask: Why is the word *should* in bold print and how should it be read? (with emphasis because the wombat was right to chase the boys away from her home) Read the sentence without emphasis and then with emphasis to compare the difference in meaning. What can be learned from this story? (be mindful around animals and treat them with respect) Read and discuss the questions on the inside back cover. Ask students to choose a chapter or a page and retell it. Together they retell the story in order, chapter by chapter. Ask them to suggest alternative chapter titles that could have been used by the author. Do you think this story could be based on a true story? Could it have really happened? On p 5, ask: In which country do you think this story takes place (Australia) Enzo is from Italy – where is Italy? (in Europe – on the opposite side of the world to Australia) On p 13, ask: Why do you think *slowly* is repeated three times? (for emphasis) What do the dots mean? (they are ellipses, they mean that more is to come) What does *running paws* mean on p 15? (feet were moving fast and tossing up the dirt) Locate words with adjacent consonants to list and read, e.g. flight, flapping, flock, squelching etc.

Fluency: Choose a passage from the book and model how to read it fluently paying attention to punctuation when reading, pausing and changing tone as appropriate. Students read the same passage, copying your reading. (echo-reading) Students choose another brief passage and read it fluently/with expression to their partner, then swap over. Read parts of the text together (choral-read) to build fluency and self-confidence. Students practise speed-reading the focus words from the inside front cover to encourage automatic recall (words that can be recalled automatically have been orthographically mapped to students' long-term memory).

Spelling and writing through dictation: Read out the following passage for students to write. It uses words and sentences from the text as these are decodable. The focus is on encoding (spelling) rather than creating content.

(page 16)

"Big and heavy," said Coen, panting, "but he can run!"

"Let's get up that tree!" called Enzo. They dropped their rods and went up a tree, quick as lightning.

"Oh, no!" yelled Coen. There was a big lizard up the tree! It was longer than both of them.

(page 18)

The boys jumped down the tree even quicker than lightning. They ran further up the hill, as the angry wombat got closer.

(page 19)

They woke up a mob of kangaroos sleeping in the shade. Kangaroos hopped left and right, but Coen and Enzo kept running. "Sorry!" called Coen.

Follow-up activities

Students complete the follow-up activities:

Worksheet 1: Phonics

/oo/ as in look spelt oul. /ee/ spelt ey.

Complete sentences.

Write sentences.

Write definitions.

Worksheet 2: Comprehension

Answer questions about the text.

Fill in a story template and use it to retell the story.

In a group, read a page of the story as though it were a play.

Worksheet 3: Science

Australian animals. Read and write facts and questions.

Marsupials – Label marsupials.

Worksheet 4: Handwriting

Copy a page of the text then check it for accuracy.