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### Blurb

Welcome to the perfectly peculiar world of Australian animal families!

*Peculiar Parents* introduces us to 60 Australian animal species, focusing on all things family—picking a mate, making a home, having babies, finding food and looking after one another.

You'll meet parrots that play the drums and cuttlefish that can change colour, as well as dancing spiders, travelling turtles, kissing lizards, plonking pobblebonks and many more amazing Aussie animals.

### About the creators

Dr Stephanie Owen Reeder is the author of over 25 books for children and adults. She has worked as a school teacher, a librarian, a book editor, a university lecturer and a Hansard Editor at Federal Parliament. Stephanie has won many awards, including the CBCA Book of the Year Award and the NSW Premier's History Award. In 2019, Stephanie was presented with the CBCA Laurie Copping Award for Distinguished Service to Children's Literature.

Based in Meanjin/Brisbane, Ingrid Bartkowiak is an artist and illustrator who works primarily in watercolour. Her work features native flora, fauna and fungi. Ingrid has a fascination with all things small and intricate, from tufts of moss on a footpath to the fungi sprouting from a wombat dropping. Ingrid has worked across a diverse array of projects, including picture book illustrations, murals, packaging designs and even pet portraits.

## Peculiar Parents

### Teachers' Notes

Recommended for: Year K–6

### AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT

#### Learning areas

- English
- HASS (Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Science
- Health and Physical Education

#### General capabilities

- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Literacy
- Personal and Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding

#### Cross-curriculum priorities

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
- Sustainability

### NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA DIGITAL CLASSROOM

#### Year 4 Science

- Module: '[Understanding the Living World](#)'
  - Topic: '[Circle of Life](#)'
  - Topic: '[Intertwined](#)'

#### Year 4 Humanities

- Module: '[First Contacts](#)'
  - Topic: '[Strange Creatures](#)'

### BEFORE YOU READ

#### Cover:

Encourage students to carefully examine the book cover and discuss their observations. Make predictions about the book based on visual clues such as the illustrations, title and blurb. Think critically about why the illustrator presents the animal portraits in frames. Where have students seen this type of imagery before? Foster curiosity about what students are most eager to discover from the book, helping to build engagement before reading.

### AFTER YOU READ

#### Textual Features

Guide students through a 'text feature walk' to explore the key elements of *Peculiar Parents* as an informative text. Introduce features such as the table of contents, glossary, headings, subheadings and index. Encourage students to define each one and consider its purpose.

Help them reflect on where they have seen these features before and why the author may have included them. Discuss how these elements support readers in navigating and understanding the text effectively.

Display examples of textual features on a learning wall. This will reinforce their importance and support students to use these elements in their own informative writing.

While reading, focus on the glossary and spelling words in *Peculiar Parents*. When unfamiliar terms arise, use the pictures and textual context to interpret meaning. After that, refer to the glossary for official definitions.

Encourage students to add these words and descriptions to the learning wall, allowing for their understanding to evolve and deepen.



### Animal index (p.67)

Encourage students to explore how scientists classify living things based on shared characteristics. Scientific classification assists with describing, identifying and studying plants and animals. Invite students to examine images from *Peculiar Parents*, describing the animals and sorting them into their own categories. Categories might include things such as number of legs, colour or size.

Facilitate discussion on whether these groupings were effective or required further classification. Introduce the vertebrate group classes—mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and amphibians—as well as the idea of invertebrates. Use a classification branching tree to organise animals into their correct class and use the animal index to check answers.



### Life cycles of animals

Guide students in exploring the life cycles of animals by selecting an example from *Peculiar Parents*. Have students describe, sequence and illustrate the complete lifecycle of their chosen animal. They could use the information provided in the text or refer to the 'Find out More' links on p.64 to fill in any knowledge gaps.

Facilitate discussions comparing similarities and differences between the lifecycles of different animal categories such as mammals and fish.

### Habitat Exploration

Explore the concept of habitats and how they support living things through the illustrations in *Peculiar Parents*. Identify which habitats are present, recognise which animals belong to that habitat and discuss what these animals need to survive such as food, shelter and space. Use the senses to describe how these environments could look, smell and sound.

Facilitate a conversation around how these habitats protect our species and how we in turn can help nurture and protect different ecosystems and local biodiversity.

### Adaptations for survival

Encourage students to explore how animals develop physical and behavioural adaptations. These evolved traits help animals survive in their habitats. Observe physical adaptations such as body coverings or special body parts and behavioural adaptations such as migration and hibernation. How do these adaptations allow animals to find food, water, shelter and mates?

For a creative extension, invite students to list their favourite animal adaptations and create a brand-new animal. Ask students to illustrate, annotate and present their new animal, including details such as their name, habitat and diet, and discuss how their adaptations enable them to thrive in their environment.

### Types of Communication

Explore how animals communicate using smell, sound, sight and touch to attract mates and ensure their survival. Begin by reading the introductory text together. Brainstorm the different courtship behaviours mentioned. Then, gradually sort animals from the 'Will You Be My Mate' chapter into these behaviours. Take note if any animals display more than one type of courtship behaviour and discuss how this could enhance their chances of finding a mate. Continue to add more animals to these lists as you explore other chapters in *Peculiar Parents*.

### Human Behaviours and Communication

Foster social capabilities in students by making connections between animal communications and the diverse ways humans use communication. This might include expressing affection, building respectful relationships or protecting themselves and others.

Encourage students to observe everyday communication in a range of settings such as at home, at school or out in the wider community. Discuss how people use verbal and non-verbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice and body language. Consider also how we use technology to connect with others.

How does clear communication build understanding, relationships and community? Help students reflect on how they communicate their needs, wants and feelings. Emphasise the importance of clarity and empathy in their interactions.

### Further Inquiry

Encourage students to engage in reflection using the Think, Puzzle, Explore thinking routine.

Have students independently write down what knowledge they already have on a chosen animal. Identify what still puzzles them about this animal and consider what learning or knowledge they would like to explore further.

Students can also use the Connect, Extend, Challenge routine to make connections between new and prior knowledge, with an implicit guide for how to develop their interest.

Students use the routine to recognise prior knowledge about one animal, reflect on new information they discovered that extends their knowledge, and challenge themselves to find out more about any further questions they would like answered.

The 'Find Out More' section (p.64) has many helpful links students can explore to extend investigations and foster independent inquiry.



### Become Citizen Scientists

Develop students' environmental awareness by engaging in citizen science activities. Activities such as scavenger hunts, animal bingo and Bio Blitzes can contribute to real-world science initiatives. Through these students develop skills in observing and documenting the world around them. Encourage discussion and brainstorming around these observations to develop action plans that support local wildlife, such as planting native vegetation, installing nest boxes or educating the school community about conservation efforts.

Introduce students to digital tools to record and share data. This could include entering data into tables and graphs, taking photographs or capturing sound recordings to enter in survey databases. Discuss how students would present these findings to their peers. How would their work raise awareness of local animals, conservation and environmental protection?

Explore National Science Week and other local science pages to investigate any local initiatives where students could take part to promote personal scientific inquiry and environmental awareness.



### Conduct a Bio Blitz

A Bio Blitz is a concerted effort to observe and record as many living things as possible within a designated area and time frame. Organise small groups and assign each group with a marked 1m x 1m area. Encourage each group to note the details of their space such as moisture levels, vegetation and terrain. Allow students time to search for, document and photograph both living and non-living elements in their space, promoting careful observation and data collection.

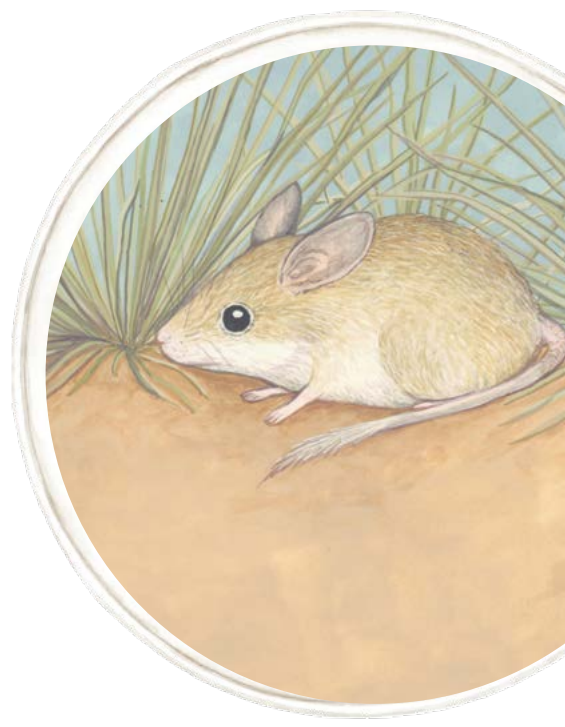
After exploring, facilitate a classroom discussion to collate and analyse findings between groups. Encourage students to reflect on plants and animals discovered. What environmental conditions, and factors support or hinder life in their area? Brainstorm how this data could be used. Consider whether it could support further environmental studies, address the impacts of human activity on local species or whether repeating this activity in different seasons could provide further data and insights.

### Caring for Special Places

Encourage students to explore the special places and environments around them such as parks, bushlands, beaches or gardens. Guide students to observe how different environments support plant and animal life. Facilitate connections with local First Australian Traditional Owners, farmers, gardeners, nursery owners, ecologists or wildlife carers. Investigate how people care for and protect these spaces. Discuss the role of conservation in maintaining biodiversity. Brainstorm how students can take action to create safe spaces for native animals in their local area.

### First Nations languages

*Peculiar Parents* features Wiradjuri, Gamilaraay Yuwaalaraay, Dhurag and Arrernte language words for a selection of animal names. Other languages may also have other name for these species. Encourage students to try to learn First Australians language names for animals that live near you.



### FURTHER FIRST NATIONS AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HISTORIES AND CULTURES

#### Cross-curriculum priorities

- Investigating examples of how First Australians manage and care for places.
- Recognising First Australians' use of 'observable features' to group living things.
- Exploring how First Australians' observations of external features of living things are replicated in traditional dance.

When developing a teaching and learning program suitable for your school's local context, refer to the *FIRST framework* to support engagement with First Australian communities and align with the Australian Curriculum. This framework is designed to help educators build meaningful relationships with their local community and ensures learning activities are authentic and culturally respectful.