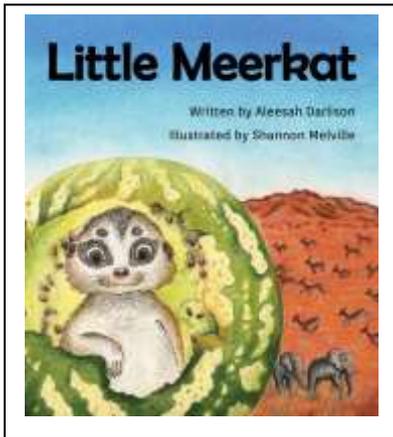


## Teacher's Notes and Activities

Prepared by Wombat Books



## Little Meerkat

By Aleesah Darlison

Illustrated by Shannon Melville

ISBN: 978-1-921632-82-2

Recommended Retail: \$24.95

Recommended Age: 3-7 year olds

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## Story Summary

*Little Meerkat* is a humorous, lively and adventurous picture book aimed at 3 – 7 year olds. The main character, Little Meerkat, craves independence and adventure in his life. His extended family, of Mum, Dad, brother, sister, Aunty and Uncle, are there to guide and protect him.

## Key Learning Areas

Key learning areas focus on many crucial aspects in a child's mental development. These include learning independence, family values, appreciating others, finding your place in the world, acceptable social behaviours, and respect for others. The book also allows study of African animals, including the indomitable meerkats, snakes, eagles and other animals that can be found in the Kalahari Desert. These topics are perfect for Early Stage 1 and Stage 2 school students.

## Values Addressed/Themes

Meerkats are extremely high-interest, popular and easily recognisable animals. Using an internationally recognised animal as the main character for this picture book means children from all backgrounds, cultures and countries can connect with and learn from Little Meerkat's story.

Because Little Meerkat is such a brave and inscrutable character, his behaviour, dialogue and mis-adventures bring humour to the story.

The book features bright, detailed and humorous illustrations by artist Shannon Melville, which will capture the reader's attention.

The book is designed to be read to or with young children in pre-school, library and primary school situations. It makes an excellent learning tool, teaching social behaviours, independence, family values and respect – all crucial aspects of a child's mental development.

## Related Text/Resources

*Meerkats (Animals)* by Robyn Weaver: provides an introduction to the meerkat including physical characteristics, diet and habitat.

*Mia the Meerkat* by Jan Latta, True to Life Books. Photographic narrative non-fiction story about meerkats including facts and habitat maps.

*Meerkat Manor* Documentary Series, created by Oxford Scientific Films for Animal Planet

National Geographic website includes photos, fun facts and information:

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com.au/animals/mammals/meerkat/>

Facts About Meerkats website includes fun facts, photos, and video footage:

<http://www.findfast.org/facts-about-meerkats.htm>

Animal Fact Guide: Meerkats webpage: <http://www.animalfactguide.com/animal-facts/meerkat/>

Live Science website: <http://www.livescience.com/27406-meerkats.html>

Youtube: various videos of meerkat babies and families: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

### About the Author – Aleesah Darlison



Aleesah Darlison writes picture books and novels for children. She also reviews children’s books for the *Sun Herald*. Aleesah has won many awards for her writing. Her publications include *Little Meerkat*, *Bearly There*, *Puggle’s Problem*, *Warambi*, *Little Good Wolf*, *Fangs*, *I Dare You*, the *Unicorn Riders Series*, the *Totally Twins Series* and the *Ash Rover Series*. Aleesah travels extensively across Australia and internationally entertaining and inspiring students of all ages. Website: [www.aleesahdarlison.com](http://www.aleesahdarlison.com). Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/AleesahDarlisonFanPage](https://www.facebook.com/AleesahDarlisonFanPage). When Aleesah isn’t writing, she’s usually entertaining her three energetic children and her dog, Floyd.

### About the Illustrator – Shannon Melville



Shannon is a freelance illustrator, graphic designer and community art teacher from Perth. The first book she illustrated was *My Arms Your Legs* (Blake Education), written by Kim Rackham.

Shannon was contracted by *Be Active WA* in 2010 to illustrate and design two books: *Matilda’s Morning Adventures* and *Choose Active Transport: a Teacher’s Resource*. They are used in every West Australian School.

*Little Good Wolf* is her fourth book and right up her alley, as she is an animal lover and has two furry friends: Banjo (aka Red Dog) and Jaya for inspiration.

## READING

Have the teacher read the book out in class, making sure everyone can see the illustrations. Alternatively, students can take turns at reading each page out aloud.

1. Why do you think Little Meerkat is so determined to show his independence?
2. How does his family support Little Meerkat?
3. Why is Little Meerkat's family so protective of him?
4. What are some of the dangers Little Meerkat faces in the desert?
5. Do you think Little Meerkat has a good imagination?
6. What does Little Meerkat learn at the end of the story?
7. Does Little Meerkat change by the end of the story?
8. Find words in the story that you don't know the meaning of. Try to work out the meaning of the words. Then look them up in a dictionary to find out if you were correct. Some words might be: heroic, eagle-eyed, stealthy, fearless, intrepid, explore, powerful.

## WRITING

1. What was your favourite page in the story? Why?
2. What do you think the weather is like in the Kalahari Desert?
3. Have you ever been to a desert before? Or Africa?
4. Write down ten important facts about one of the animals in the book and present them to class.
5. List all the animals you see in the book. Write a story about one of these animals.
6. Write a story about Little Meerkat when he is all grown up. How do you think he will behave then?
7. Research the Kalahari Desert. Write a report or create a powerpoint presentation about the area and present it to class.
8. Draw your family tree. Write down the ten best things about your family.
9. Little Meerkat tries to be very independent. How are you independent in your life? What activities do you do by yourself? What things do you still need Mum and Dad to help you with?

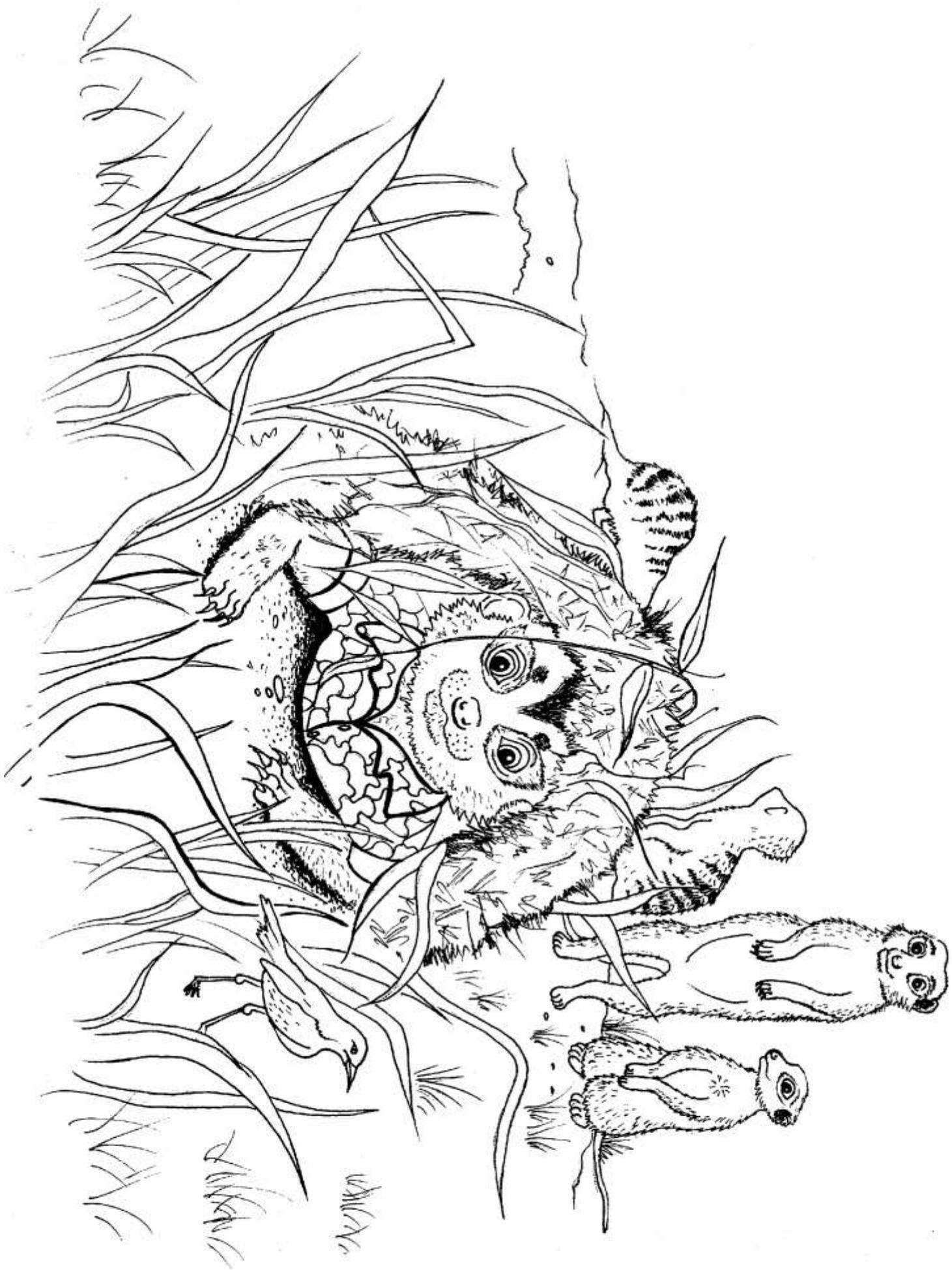
## ART

1. Look closely at the illustrations in the book. Which one is your favourite? What colours are used in the picture?
2. Make a list of all the animals you can think of that live in the Kalahari. Which one is your favourite? Draw a picture of it. Pin up all the drawings of the animals done by the students around the classroom walls.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Organise a visit to a zoo where there are meerkats. Draw pictures of the meerkats and take photos and videos to study their habits. Present your findings to class.
2. Book into a video conference through DART Connections or via Skype with the author, Aleesah Darlison. Develop a list of questions you could ask Aleesah about the story, why she wrote it, and how the book was created.

3. Build a diorama of a desert scene. Use rocks, sand, stick, paper and other materials. Make sure you add some plants and wildlife that appear in *Little Meerkat*.
4. Borrow some books from the school or community library about the Kalahari Desert. Learn all you can about this amazing place. Locate it on the map of Africa. Draw a picture of the Kalahari.
5. Draw a picture of a meerkat family. Try to make each meerkat look different by giving them distinctive characteristics. Give them names.
6. Meerkats live in large family groups. Draw a picture of your own family. Try to include as many family members as you can think of. Include their names.
7. Draw your own version of Little Meerkat on white cardboard. Colour him in. Then cut him out and glue on plastic eyes and pipe cleaners for whiskers. Make a display of all the Little Meerkats made by the class. Take a photograph and send it to the author, Aleesah Darlison, at [aleesahdarlison@yahoo.com](mailto:aleesahdarlison@yahoo.com) so she can display it on her website.







**Little Meerkat**, written by Aleesah Darlison, illustrated by Shannon Melville. Published by Wombat Books.

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