
Teachers' Notes



JOSIE MACK AND THE MEGA DIVISION

Bethany Loveridge / Jade Goodwin

ISBN: 9781761112829

Reading level: Junior Fiction (7-11)

BOOK SUMMARY

One night, a wombat knocks at Josie's window. She thinks her lifelong wish for a pet has come true! But Ursula the wombat is on an important mission for the Fellowship of Underground Nocturnals (the FUN). The FUN need human help to solve their wildlife woes. They want Josie and Ursula to join the FUN's mysterious MEGA Division, which means they'll receive a mega-helpful power.

Can Josie and Ursula prove they're the team the FUN is looking for? Or will joining the MEGA Division be a mega mistake?

THEMES

Friendship • Environment • Recycling • Consent •

Domesticated Animals & Wild Animals • Conservation & Animal Endangerment •

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Light the Dark Pty Ltd, Trading as Wombat Books
Rhiza Edge, PO Box 302, Chinchilla, Queensland 4413

ABN: 30 137 345 941
admin@wombathriza.com.au

Bethany Loveridge is available for author talks and workshops.

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Josie Mack and the MEGA Division Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Bethany Loveridge is an author-illustrator, film and art teacher, and lifelong bookworm. She's been in trouble for daydreaming and doodling since she could dribble and has dreamt of having a book of her own for almost as long. Bethany lives in Queensland, Australia with her trivia-loving husband and two creative kids. Her nonno really did raise tens of thousands of chickens in long tunnel sheds and one of her favourite pastimes was climbing the mulberry tree (preferably in mulberry season). Harper Wells: Renegade Timeline Officer is the first story in the Wollemi Trilogy and Bethany's debut book. Find her at www.bethanyloveridge.com or hanging with the animals at Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary.

AUTHOR NOTES

When I was about nine, I sat down at the family computer (computers were really big back in those days), and I started writing a story about a little girl who wandered near a mossy creek and found she could talk to animals. Though my curious little sister blew a fuse and those original words were lost, I never stopped thinking about that storyworld. Over thirty years later, I am finally realising my dream story in *Josie Mack* - the story of a little girl who meets a talking wombat and is invited into a secret society. *Josie Mack* has everything I loved (and still love) in a tale--adventure, friendship, and lots of beautiful Australian animals. Jade's cute illustrations have brought Josie and Ursula and their friends to life and I'm so pleased to share this special story with the world.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Jade Goodwin is a children's book illustrator based on Wonnarua Country in the Hunter Valley NSW. Since 2022, Jade has illustrated 23 published books, with another ten (and counting!) currently in progress, including picture books, chapter books and junior fiction series. Jade believes in making art that feels warm and accessible and dreams that her illustrations spark curiosity, courage and a love of stories. When she's not drawing, you'll find her drinking coffee, planning her next project, or being "assisted" by one or all of her three mischievous studio cats.

ILLUSTRATOR NOTES

For this project, one of the most important parts of the illustration process was researching Northern Hairy-Nosed Wombats. I originally began sketching a typical wombat shape and quickly realised it wasn't accurate for Ursula's species. Northern Hairy-Nosed Wombats have distinct facial features, fur textures and body shapes that set them apart, so I spent time studying reference images to make sure her design felt true to the species.

This research helped guide Ursula's look and ensured readers can connect with an animal that is both unique and critically endangered, supporting the broader themes of care, curiosity and awareness woven through the story.

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REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

Josie Mack and the MEGA Division is the first book in a series that blends adventure, humour, and environmental awareness through the eyes of a relatable primary school protagonist. Through Josie's experiences, students are introduced to the positive and negative ways humans interact with the natural world, encouraging them to reflect on their own role in protecting the environment. While the story is grounded in Australian wildlife and landscapes, its messages about conservation and responsibility are globally relevant.

Josie's story provides a valuable opportunity to explore environmental issues in an accessible and empowering way. Josie and Ursula, the talking wombat, find practical actions children can take—such as cleaning up rubbish, raising awareness, and working together to solve problems. This makes it an excellent springboard for discussions about sustainability, conservation, and community involvement. The story also weaves in elements of social-emotional learning, such as friendship, teamwork and consent. Josie collaborates with her peers, her community and members of the Fellowship of Underground Nocturnals.

The inclusion of Australian native animals—such as wombats, platypuses, and curlews—offers opportunities for cross-curricular learning, particularly in Science and Geography. Students can deepen their understanding of native species, their habitats, and the challenges they face, while also developing an appreciation for Australia's unique biodiversity.

As illustrated chapter books the *Josie Mack* series is highly accessible for younger readers. Its combination of short chapters, visual support, and engaging narratives makes it ideal for developing reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. The imaginative premise of talking animals and secret missions captures students' interest, while the underlying messages provide meaningful opportunities for reflection and learning across multiple curriculum areas.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

CURRICULUM V9

YEAR 3

English, Science, HASS, Health & Physical Education

AC9E3LA01 - understand that cooperation with others depends on shared understanding of social conventions, including turn-taking language, which vary according to the degree of formality.

AC9E3LA09 - identify how images extend the meaning of a text.

AC9E3LE02 - discuss connections between personal experiences and character experiences in literary texts and share personal preferences.

AC9E3LY04 - read a range of texts using phonic, semantic and grammatical knowledge to read accurately and fluently, re-reading and self-correcting when required.

AC9E3LE03 - discuss how an author uses language and illustrations to portray characters and settings in texts, and explore how the settings and events influence the mood of the narrative.

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AC9E3LY03 - identify the audience and purpose of imaginative, informative and persuasive texts through their use of language features and/or images.

AC9S3U01 - compare characteristics of living and non-living things and examine the differences between the life cycles of plants and animals.

AC9HS3K05 - the similarities and differences between places in Australia and neighbouring countries in terms of their natural, managed and constructed features.

AC9HS3K07 - why people participate within communities and how students can actively participate and contribute to communities.

AC9HP4P04 - select, use and refine personal and social skills to establish, manage and strengthen relationships.

YEAR 4

English, Science, HASS, Health & Physical Education

AC9E4LE03 - discuss how authors and illustrators make stories engaging by the way they develop character, setting and plot tensions.

AC9E4LY05 - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, to expand topic knowledge and ideas, and evaluate texts.

AC9E4LE02 - describe the effects of text structures and language features in literary texts when responding to and sharing opinions.

AC9E4LY06 - plan, create, edit and publish written and multimodal imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, using visual features, relevant linked ideas, complex sentences, appropriate tense, synonyms and antonyms, correct spelling of multisyllabic words and simple punctuation.

AC9S4U01 - explain the roles and interactions of consumers, producers and decomposers within a habitat and how food chains represent feeding relationships.

AC9HS4K05 - the importance of environments, including natural vegetation and water sources, to people and animals in Australia and on another continent.

AC9HS4K08 - the roles of local government and how members of the community use and contribute to local services.

AC9HP4P04 - select, use and refine personal and social skills to establish, manage and strengthen relationships.

TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Give the students a moment to analyse the cover and ask them if there are any interesting details they can see. What makes these details interesting and what do they think it will mean within the book?
2. Read the back cover blurb and discuss. Ask what themes they think might be prevalent in the novel. Ask what other books it reminds them of.
3. Talk to students about the differences between wild animals and domesticated animals. Can wild animals make good pets? Why or why not?
4. Have a discussion about native animals in the region. Do any native animals live closeby? What should we do if we find an injured native animal?

AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Do you relate to any of the characters? Which one and why?
2. What is your first impression of Josie? What about Ursula?
3. How does Josie change over the course of the story? Does Ursula change too?
4. What do you think about the situation that Josie finds herself in? Are Josie and Ursula able to pull through the challenges they face?
5. Josie really wants a pet, and even asks a wombat at the zoo if it will be her pet. If you had a pet wombat, how would you take care of it?
6. Bucky is a female platypus. Ursula warns Josie about male platypuses being venomous. Which part of the male platypus is venomous?
7. Why do you think Josie and Ursula's missions take place at night?
8. Josie is very accepting of Ursula, the talking wombat, and the other talking animals in the story. How would you react if you could suddenly talk to animals? Would you help them with their problems?
9. Josie and Ursula talk about the MEGA division collar and how being ten times bigger than you already are would be scary. Do you think it would be scary?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- What was your favourite part of the story? Why?
- How would you describe Josie as a character? What makes her interesting?
- What is the most important lesson Josie learns in the story?
- What makes the story uniquely Australian?
- If you could join the FUN, what kind of mission would you want to go on?
- List three reasons why it was important for a human to join FUN (Fellowship of Underground Nocturnals).
- How would it feel to go MEGA (physically and emotionally)?
- What choice would you have made about activating the MEGA tag? Explain your choice
- What might go wrong if the wrong person discovered animals could talk?
- Can you find two moments in the story when you would have felt scared if you were Josie?

FRIENDSHIP

- What makes Josie, Tilly, and Gray good friends?
- How do Josie's friends help her solve problems?
- Why is it important that Josie shares her ideas with others?
- Would you consider Josie and Ursula friends or do they just work together?
- How does Josie show she cares about her friends?
- Why was Ursula worried about Josie getting in the water with Bucky? Find three instances where Josie asks for help from a friend to solve a problem.
- Josie and Ursula demonstrate moments of bravery in the story. In what ways is it easier to be brave when you have the support of your friends?

ENVIRONMENT

- Why is it important to take care of the environment?
- How do problems in the environment affect animals? What about humans?
- What problems were caused by the rubbish near the creek?
- How did Josie and her friends help improve the environment?
- What are some small things you can do every day to help the planet?
- Why do you think the FUN group works at night to protect nature?

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RECYCLING

- Why is recycling important for animals and the environment? What items in your home can be recycled?
- Do you know how rubbish is processed? Discuss the cycle of rubbish disposal and recycling as a class.
- How did the characters deal with the mess from the skip bin?

CONSENT

- Why didn't Ursula want Josie to pat her at first?
- Why is it important to ask before touching an animal?
- How can we show respect for other people's or animals' boundaries?
- What could happen if we don't listen when someone says "no"?

DOMESTICATED ANIMALS & WILD ANIMALS

- What is the difference between a pet and a wild animal?
- Do you know the term 'domesticated animal'? What does it mean?
- What animal wouldn't you like to see mega-size?
- Do you think the animals of the Council of the FUN would all get along? What other Australian animals would you invite to the Council?
- Why wasn't Josie allowed to keep a wombat as a pet?
- Why should wild animals stay in their natural habitats?
- How should humans behave when they see wild animals?
- Can you think of animals that are safe as pets and ones that are not? Why?

CONSERVATION & ANIMAL ENDANGERMENT

- What dangers did the animals face in the story?
- Why is it important to protect animals like the platypus and curlew?
- In what ways is caring for animals and their habitats important for us to do?
- How does caring for animals demonstrate empathy and kindness?
- How did Josie help save animals during her missions?
- What might happen if people don't protect endangered animals?
- What groups or actions help protect wildlife in real life?
- Have you ever seen a spill or mess like the one Ursula showed Josie near the creek? Who was responsible for making the mess you saw? Who should clean it up?
- What are some of the problems with rubbish being thrown in our waterways? What can you do to help protect Australian animals?

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

MEGA YOU!

Students imagine what it would be like to be ten times taller than they are now. They draw a picture of themselves at MEGA size in their everyday environment (school, home, playground).

Consider: What would be easy? What would be difficult? How would you feel being that big?

AUSTRALIAN ANIMAL ART

Using reference images, students draw and colour an Australian animal featured in the story (e.g. wombat, platypus, curlew).

Encourage students to include details such as habitat, textures, and key features.

HELPING WILDLIFE POSTER

In groups, students research what to do if they find an injured native animal.

They create an informative poster that includes:

- Who to contact
- What to do (and what not to do)
- How to keep themselves safe

Extension: Display posters around the classroom or school.

VISIT OR VIRTUAL EXCURSION

Students explore a local organisation that protects native animals (e.g. a wildlife sanctuary or rescue group).

Afterward, students reflect:

- What did you learn?
- Why is this work important?
- How can people help?

Consider places like Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary as options to visit.

LIFT THE PROBLEM!

Inspired by Tilly's pulley idea, students design their own way to lift or move a heavy object.

They draw and label their design, explaining how it works.

Extension: Build a simple model using classroom materials.

CREATE A FUN MISSION

Students invent a new mission for the Fellowship of Underground Nocturnals.

They decide:

- Which animal needs help?
- What is the problem?
- How is it solved?

Extension: Write the mission as a short story or comic.

CLASS CLEAN-UP CHALLENGE

As a class, students take part in a supervised clean-up of the school grounds.

Afterwards, discuss:

- What did you notice?
- How did it feel to help?
- Why is it important to take care of shared spaces?

POSTERS FOR THE PLANET

Students choose an environmental issue they care about (e.g. littering, protecting animals, clean waterways) and design a persuasive poster.

They should include:

- A clear message
- Helpful facts
- Eye-catching visuals

Optional: Hide a small image (like Gray's frog) in their design.

ANIMAL FEATURES INVESTIGATION

Students observe and compare features of a northern hairy-nosed wombat and at least two other Australian animals from the story.

They record:

- Physical features
- Habitat
- Special adaptations

Extension: Present findings as a mini-report or labelled diagram.

WOULD A WOMBAT MAKE A GOOD PET?

Students create a pros and cons chart about having a wombat as a pet.

Consider: What do wombats need to survive? Would they be happy living with humans?