



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Nature Storybooks: Emu

Author: Claire Saxby
 Illustrator: Graham Byrne
 ISBN: 9781922179708
 ARRP: \$27.95
 NZRRP: \$29.99
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

In the open forest, Emu gathers granite-green eggs under soft feathers. Emu will care for the eggs and protect the stripy chicks once they hatch. There are many hazards in the forest for this unusual family.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Claire Saxby was born in Melbourne and grew up in Newcastle. She's lived in more houses than she can remember, and attended many schools. Claire is the author of many books including *There Was an Old Sailor*, illustrated by Cassandra Allen, which won the Crystal Kite Member Choice Award, Australia and New Zealand Division, Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, 2011.

Born in Sydney sometime last century, Graham Byrne did the usual school and university time, worked as an electrical engineer for years, then went into building houses and structures. The old back injury put paid to hard physical work. An interest in art as a creative adjunct to the practical nature of building led to formal education, work installing artworks at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, and wonderings about other roads to explore. Wanting his art to have some "practical" useful purpose, to be illuminating, pointed Graham to illustration and design pathways. Explorations of drawing, painting, filling sketchbooks, making books for his grandchildren and illustrating short stories have combined to prompt his journey as a book illustrator. *Big Red Kangaroo* (2013) was Graham's first picture book and was short-listed for the Children's Book Council of Australia Chrichton Award for New Illustrators.

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Primary years 2+
- Ages 7+

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Science

Example of:

- Non-fiction
- Narrative non-fiction

Themes/ Ideas:

- Emus
- Australian wildlife
- Nature

National Curriculum Focus:*

Science
 Year 2
 ACSSU030
 ACSU032
 ACSIS037

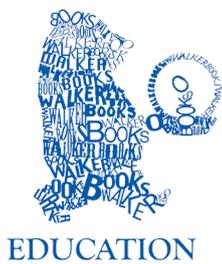
Year 3
 ACSSU044
 ACSHE050
 ACSHE051

*NB this book is a useful resource for studies of biological sciences throughout the F-6 Australian Curriculum.

English
 Year 2
 ACELA1460
 ACELA1463
 ACELA1465
 ACELA1466
 ACELA1468
 ACELA1469
 ACELT1587
 ACELT1589
 ACELT1590
 ACELT1593
 ACELY1665
 ACELY1666
 ACELY1668
 ACELY1671

Year 3
 ACELA1475
 ACELA1477
 ACELA1478
 ACELA1483
 ACELT1594
 ACELT1596
 ACELT1598
 ACELT1599
 ACELT1600
 ACELT1601
 ACELT1791
 ACELY1678

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Discussion Questions and Activities

Physical characteristics

Draw a picture of Emu and label the parts of his body as described in the book. Also write a brief description of what each part is for.

Natural Habitat

In small groups, create a diorama in a cardboard box to represent the emu's habitat. Try to incorporate materials from the natural environment into your display. Use the text and illustrations as a guide as to which colours and materials to use.

Literature and Context

Find other books about emus in your school library. How do the authors deal with the subject of emus differently to Claire Saxby and Graham Byrne?

Is *Emu* an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? Is it a combination of more than one of these types of texts? How can you tell? Who do you think the book was created for?

Emu includes an index at the back of the book. What is the purpose of an index? How do you use it? In what kind of books would you normally find an index?

Examining Literature

The text in this book is presented in two styles. Identify the formats. Why do you think the author did this? Read the book using each format separately and then discuss how the different formats change the purpose and alter the perception of *Emu*.

Identify the events in an emu's life as described in this book. Have students work in small groups to present this as a Keynote/PowerPoint presentation.

Which writing style do you prefer: the descriptive storytelling style or the informative factual style? In what types of texts would each of these writing styles usually be used? For example, novels, short stories, newspaper articles and reference books.

The author uses descriptive language, or imagery, on many occasions in the book. For example, "... where eucalyptus fringe tufty grasslands, honey-pale sunshine seeps to where Emu sits on a nest." (Page 6.) What other examples can you find? How does this description help bring the world of the emu to life? Write

some sentences using descriptive language about items or places around you in a similar style.

There are also many examples of similie ("... hair-like feathers ..." page 8) and alliteration ("... granite-green eggs" page 6) in this book. List other examples of these literary devices that the author has used throughout.

Look at the colours the illustrator has used in *Emu*. Why do you think he chose to use these colours? Do they accurately represent the environment that emus live in?

Examine the page where the emus are zigzagging away from the eagle. Whose perspective has the illustrator drawn this illustration from? Why do you think he has chosen to do this? How does this angle affect the reader's perception of the emus?

Responding to Literature

Before beginning a study of this title, use an online or IWB polling tool conduct a survey to ascertain students' knowledge of emus. Ask participants questions like:

- What do emus eat?
- When do emus eat?
- What predators threaten emus?

Redo the poll after reading *Emu* and discuss results.

Do you think an emu is a good animal for a pet? Why or why not? Hold a class discussion.

Emu chicks are camouflaged to help protect themselves from predators. What does camouflage mean? What other animals are camouflaged?

How would you feel if you encountered an emu with his young in the bush? Write a diary or blog entry.

Write a story from the goanna's perspective about him wanting to eat Emu's eggs. Why does he want to eat them?

Write a book review on *Emu*. Write what you liked about the book and if you think the author and illustrator did a good job of conveying information in an interesting way. Mention any books that are similar to *Emu* and make a recommendation as to who you think will like this book.

Other great books in the Nature Storybooks series - Classroom ideas available for all titles in this series



Bilby Secrets
Author: Edel Wignell
Illustrator: Mark Jackson
HB 9781921529320
AU\$29.95/NZ\$31.99
PB 9781922077042
AU\$16.95/NZ\$18.99



Python
Author: Christopher Cheng
Illustrator: Mark Jackson
HB 9781921529603
AU\$29.95/NZ\$32.99



Flight of the Honey Bee
Author: Raymond Huber
Illustrator: Brian Lovelock
HB 9781921529665
AU\$27.95/NZ\$29.99



Big Red Kangaroo
Author: Claire Saxby
Illustrator: Graham Byrne
HB 9781921720420
AU\$27.95/NZ\$29.99