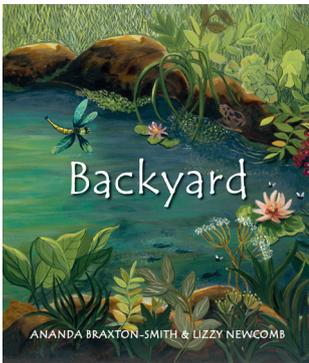




# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



## Backyard

Author: Ananda Braxton-Smith  
Illustrator: Lizzy Newcomb  
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\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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## Outline:

*White gum rustle, tawny frog mouths still as wood, dragonflies swoop. Banjo frog calls the secret – watch the world carefully, your backyard is home to animals other than you!* A child stands on her back step at dusk and surveys her backyard. The backyard is teeming with life – birds, possum, native rat, bats, insects and bugs.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Ananda Braxton-Smith is a journalist and children's author. She has written several titles for Black Dog Books, including a series for older readers, the Secrets of Carrick. The first two books in the series, *Merrow* and *Tantony*, were Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Books in 2011 and 2012, in addition to being finalists in the Young Adult Fiction category of the 2010 and 2011 Aurealis Awards.

As a child, Lizzy Newcomb would sit and watch her dad draw and hand-colour his architectural plans; this inspired her love of art. Sydney-born and raised, she spent most of her childhood exploring the bushland near her home and began a love affair with nature. Lizzy has studied nursing, travelled throughout Europe and Scandinavia, and run a business producing handmade ceramic pieces. In 2006 her first solo exhibition sold out and she has held an exhibition each year since. *My Name is Lizzie Flynn* (written by Claire Saxby) was her first book with Black Dog Books.

## 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 F-1
- Ages 5+

### Key Learning Areas:

- English

### Example of:

- Picture Book

### Themes/Ideas:

- Nature
- Flora/Fauna
- Animals
- Australian Environment



# Walker Books Classroom Ideas

## Discussion Questions and Activities:

### Before Reading

What do you think this book might be about just from hearing the title? How do your ideas change when you see the cover? After reading the book, compare your initial thoughts to what the book is actually about. Discuss the phrase “you can’t judge a book by its cover.”

### Exploring the Book

Is *Backyard* an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? How can you tell? Who do you think the book was created for? Why do you think that?

Take turns describing/retelling the story as if you were explaining it to someone who hasn’t read it yet. What do you think are the most important parts of the story? Why do you think that?

What is your favourite part of the book? What do you like about that part?

“... this city that is like other cities ...”

Is the city shown in the book similar or different to where you live? Make a word cloud that describes your city or town.

Ananda Braxton-Smith uses beautifully creative adjectives when describing people, animals and plants in *Backyard*. For each example listed below, describe what these words make you think/feel and why you think Ananda Braxton-Smith used these particular words.

- Sleep-moony child
- Sweet-tooth bats
- Last-light dragonfly
- Moon-shiny jubilee
- Hot-rock skinks

Where do you think this book is set? How can you tell? What might be different if the book was set elsewhere?

Spend some time sitting in your own backyard, a local park or school grounds and concentrate on taking in everything around you. What can you see, hear, smell and feel? Write a poem, story or report on what you observed. Did anything surprise you?

Choose one of the animals mentioned in the book and research it in your school library or online. Create a poster with images and facts about this animal. Include information on where in Australia or the rest of the world it can be found, what it eats and any other interesting facts.

Onomatopoeia is where a word sounds like the noise it is describing, such as “bang” or “wobble”. Find examples of onomatopoeia in *Backyard*. What other words can you think of like this?

A simile is a device that compares one thing to another, usually with “like” or “as” connecting the words, for example “Tawny frogmouths still as wood ...”. Can you find other similes in *Backyard*? Complete the following starters and come up with some similes of your own:

- Hard as \_\_\_\_\_
- Happy as \_\_\_\_\_
- Soft as \_\_\_\_\_
- Smart as \_\_\_\_\_
- Brave as \_\_\_\_\_

Animals choose where to live based on a number of factors’ which could include safety or availability of food. Choose several animals shown in the book and have a class discussion on why you think that animal lives in or visits the backyard.

### Creative Responses to the Text

Examine several of the spreads and have a class discussion about the following:

- What is the main colour or colours used? What mood/feeling do these colours create?
- What objects are in the foreground (front), the midground and background of the picture? Why do you think the illustrator chose to do that?
- What are the characters on this page doing and where are they looking? Why are they doing this? What effect does this have?

What has Lizzy Newcomb painted on the endpapers? Why do you think she chose to include these illustrations? What information do they give the reader about the book?

Ask students to pretend to be some of the animals that are in this book. How would these animals move? Would they walk, jump, hop, fly? Ask students to move around like each animal.