The top of the cover features several branches of green eucalyptus leaves with clusters of bright pink, bell-shaped flowers. The background is a dark blue night sky with small white stars.

MY POSSUM PLAYS THE DRUMS

Teacher's Notes

Written by Catherine Meatheringam

Illustrated by Max Hamilton

Published by Windy Hollow Books



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A note from the Author

Catherine spends her days writing children's picture books and drinking way too many cups of tea. She loves reading and writing picture books that are full of music, noise and imagination. Catherine lives in Canberra with her husband, two children, dog and a noisy possum that lives (uninvited) in the garden shed.

The inspiration for the story came from being kept awake one night by a noisy possum. The possum made so many different thumps, bangs and hisses that it sounded like a possum orchestra. I love music - I can play the violin and sing soprano, and I love books that encourage child participation. I wanted the book to be an interactive story where children can join in and make lots of noise. I also wanted it to be a celebration of possums and their night time antics, as well as an introduction to musical instruments. I am passionate about nature and play-based learning and I have included ideas on ways that children can make some of the instruments that the possums play in the book.



A note from the Illustrator

Max has worked as a graphic designer, textile designer and professional illustrator for the past 24 years. She now works primarily as a Children's Book Illustrator and can be found painting away in her Sydney studio.

I began the process of illustrating "My Possum Plays the Drums" by drawing lots of possums, researching musical instruments, pretending that I was a possum playing each instrument and then working out how I could combine all these elements of the story to illustrate a noisy "Orchestra" of possums within an urban environment. I started with very rough thumbnail sketches, then larger scale sketches and once my black and white drawings were approved I used watercolour to create the final book illustrations. I also added in little details and made minor adjustments digitally.





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Activities

Reading the book

Invite children to join in reading the book by making the musical sounds and movements in the story. This can be with their voice, clapping, stomping and using real, play or craft musical instruments.

Musical instruments and sounds

Explore the musical instruments and sounds in the book.

Explore the actions used to make sounds with the instruments such as blowing, tapping and plucking.

Play with real instruments such as tambourines, drums and maracas.

Children can make their own musical instruments to play along with the story:

- Make craft instruments such as drums out of boxes or tins and guitars or harps out of boxes with elastic bands around them. Put dried pasta or rice in containers to make maracas.
- Make instruments with objects in the house such as pot and ladle drums and saucepan lid cymbals.
- Make nature musical instruments such as tapping sticks and gumnut and acorn maracas.

Learn about the different instruments in an orchestra, band and opera.

Explore instruments from other cultures.

Musical concepts and sounds

The author uses words to describe the sounds and movements that the possums and musical instruments make. Ask the children to think of other sounds and instruments that the author could have used.

Explore musical concepts with children such as pitch (high and low), tempo (fast and slow), rhythm (the beat) and dynamics (loud and soft).

Ask the children to list the noises that the possums make that are low and high pitch (eg. thump and screech), loud and soft (eg. crash and hiss) and fast and slow (eg. bang and rustle). Clap out the rhythm of sounds with one and two syllables.

Use real or craft instruments to explore musical concepts. Put objects in containers and shake them fast and slow to explore tempo and rhythm. Different objects, such as stones and rice, will make louder and softer sounds.

Fill glass jars with water at varying heights. Tap them with a stick or spoon to learn about high and low pitch. You can also ask children to stretch elastic bands over different sized boxes. Plucking elastic bands over larger boxes will make a high pitch sound. Plucking elastic bands over smaller boxes will make a lower pitch sound.



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Nature – Flora and Fauna

Encourage children to learn about possums and their habitat.

Can the children think of other nocturnal animals and the sounds they make?

Ask the children if they know what the bird is in the story. Encourage the children to learn about Rainbow Lorikeets and their habitat.

Ask the children to describe how the Lorikeet is feeling. Why do they think it is bothered by the noise?
Can the children list any noises that are too loud for them?



Take the children on a nature walk to listen for sounds such as the rustle of leaves, crunch of gravel and bird calls.

Take the children on a nature walk to collect leaves, acorns, gumnuts, stones, flowers and other objects. Provide students with a magnifying glass to have a closer look at the objects. Use the objects found on the nature walk to make maracas by putting them into containers.

The illustrator has used different Australian flora in the book. Ask the children what they can see in the book. Go on a nature walk to find some of the flora. Encourage the children to draw what they have found.

English and Drama

Ask the children to rewrite the story using different animals and sounds such as nocturnal animals, jungle animals, farm animals and birds.

Ask the children to perform the original story or the new one that they wrote. They can use their voices, bodies (clapping, stomping and tapping) or the instruments they made in the performance.



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About the musical instruments in the book and how to make them

Drums



Drums make sounds when they are hit or tapped. Children can make drums out of empty tins, balloons and elastic bands. Cut the end off the balloon and stretch the balloon over the tin (make sure the tin does not have a sharp edge). Secure the balloon with the elastic band.

Saxophones



Saxophones make music when air is blown into the saxophone. Use cardboard rolls or even small watering cans as saxophones.

Violins



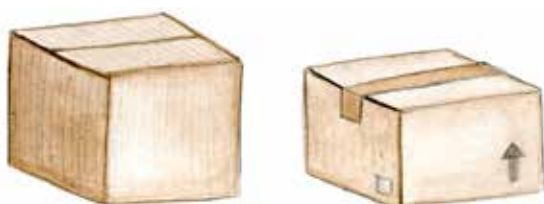
Violins make music when a bow is rubbed along the four violin strings.

Cymbals



Cymbals are banged or rubbed together to make loud or soft crashing noises. Saucepan lids or jar lids make great cymbals.

Timpani



Timpani are huge drums that are hit to make loud, thumping noises. Large cardboard boxes make great timpani.



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Maracas



Maracas are shaken like rattles to make soft, slow or fast sounds. Containers filled with rice, pasta, acorns or gum nuts make great maracas.

Piano

Pianos make music when the black and white piano keys are tapped.

Opera singing

Opera singing tells a story like a book or play. There are usually six types of singing voices in an opera. From highest to lowest pitch are the: Soprano (the highest pitch), Mezzo-soprano, Alto, Tenor, Baritone and Bass (the lowest pitch).

Guitars



Guitars make music when the strings are plucked or strummed. Guitars usually have six strings. An open box, such as a shoe box, with elastic bands around it makes a great guitar.

Trumpets



Trumpets make music when air is blown into it. A cardboard roll makes a fabulous trumpet to toot through. Use paper to make a cone to stick on to the end of the tube to replicate the trumpet funnel. Kitchen funnels also make fun play trumpets.

Tambourines



Tambourines are rattled or hit to make a jingling sound. Make a tambourine out of a paper plate with objects such as craft bells or dried pasta threaded onto it.

Harps



Harps usually have 47 strings that are plucked to make beautiful music. Mini harps can be made by gluing paddle pop sticks together to create a triangle or square. Elastic bands can be looped over the paddle pop sticks to make harp strings.



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How the book and extension activities can deliver on The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) outcomes:

OUTCOME 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

- co-operate and work collaboratively with others
- engage in and contribute to shared play experiences

OUTCOME 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

- broaden their understanding of the world in which they live
- use play to investigate, project and explore new ideas
- demonstrate an increasing knowledge of, and respect for natural and constructed environments
- explore, infer, predict and hypothesise in order to develop an increased understanding of the interdependence between land, people, plants and animals
- show growing appreciation and care for natural and constructed environments

OUTCOME 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

- share humour, happiness and satisfaction
- increasingly co-operate and work collaboratively with others
- engage in increasingly complex sensory-motor skills and movement patterns
- combine gross and fine motor movement and balance to achieve increasingly complex patterns of activity including dance, creative movement and drama
- use their sensory capabilities and dispositions with increasing integration, skill and purpose to explore and respond to their world
- respond through movement to traditional and contemporary music, dance and storytelling



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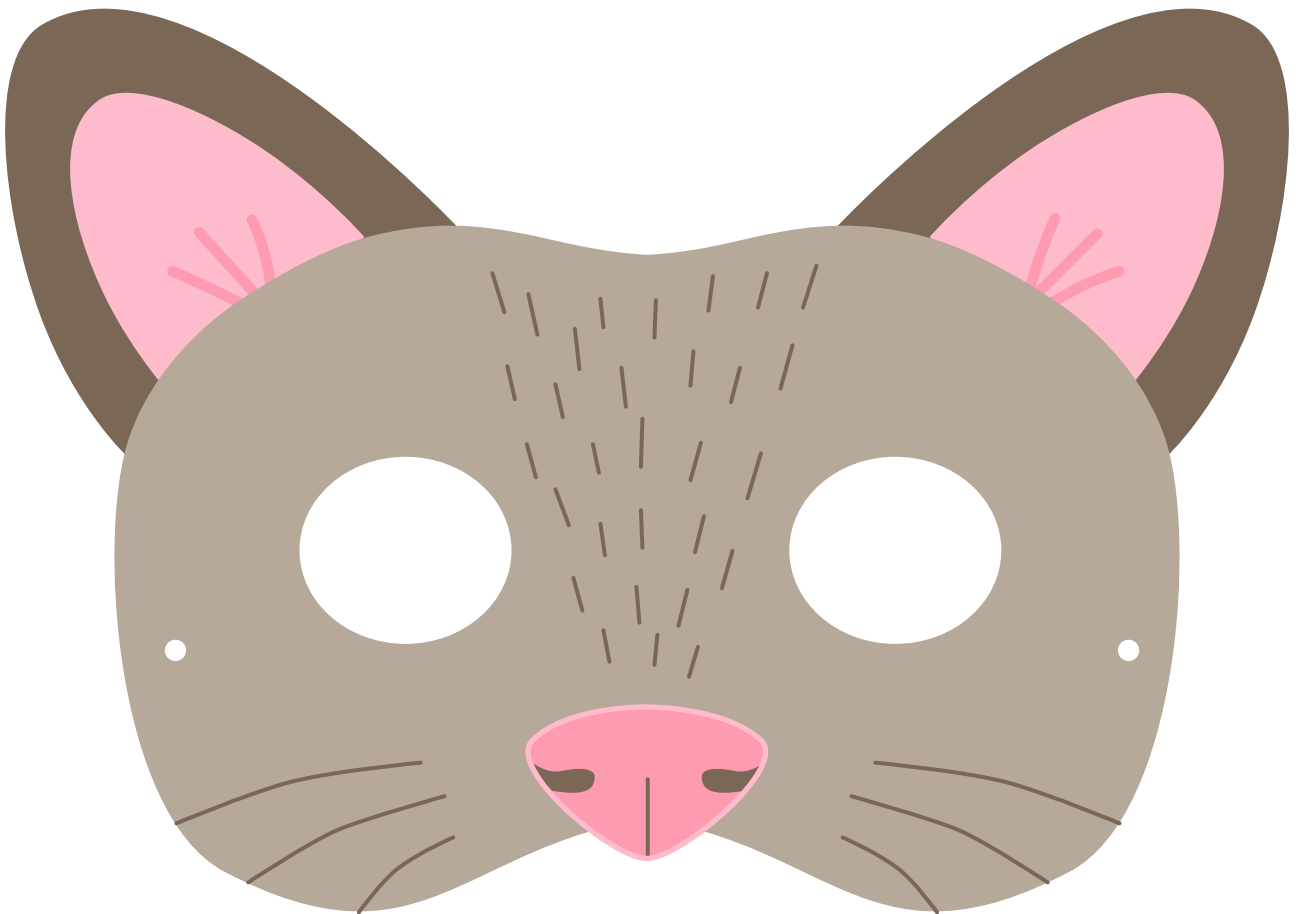
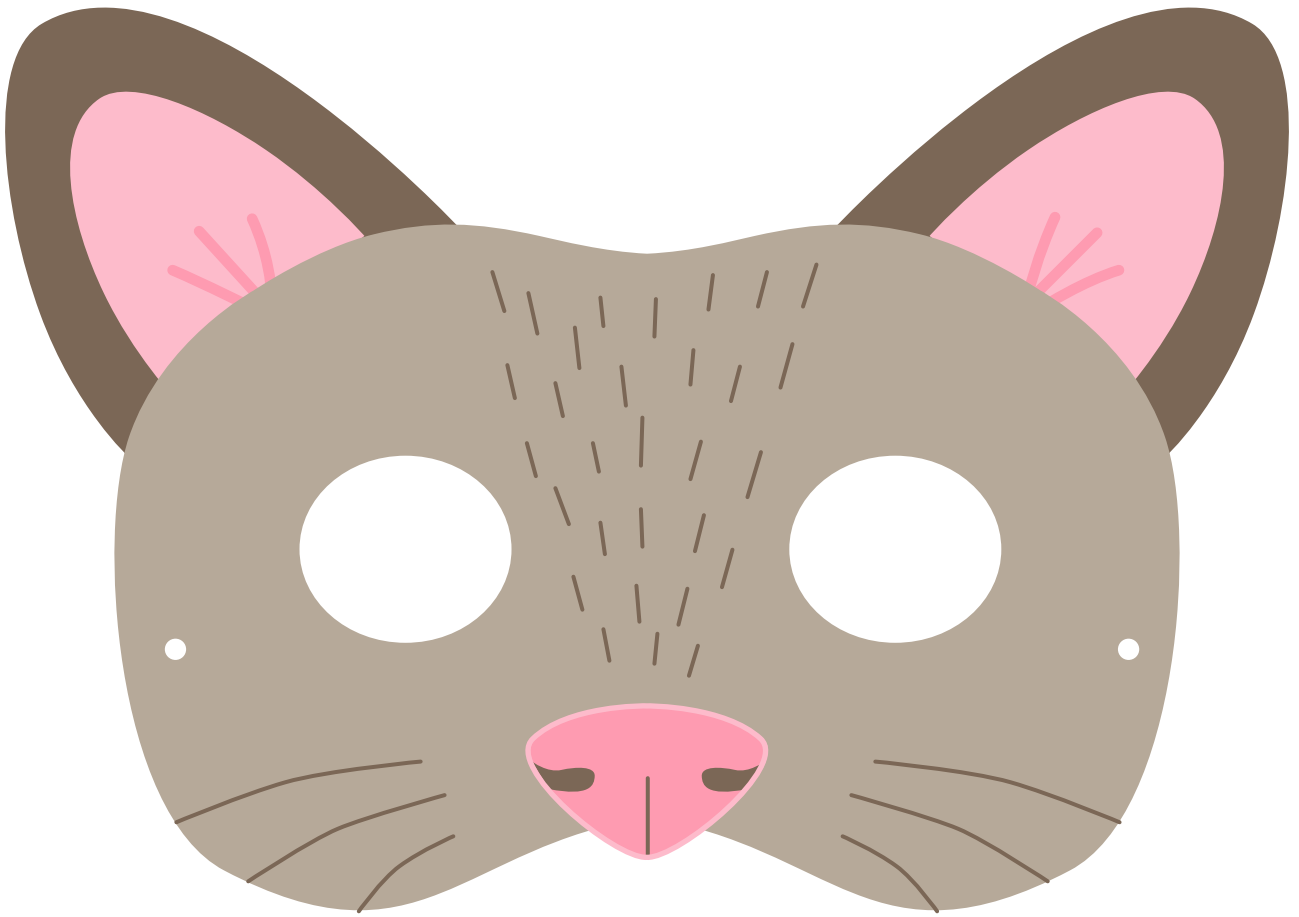


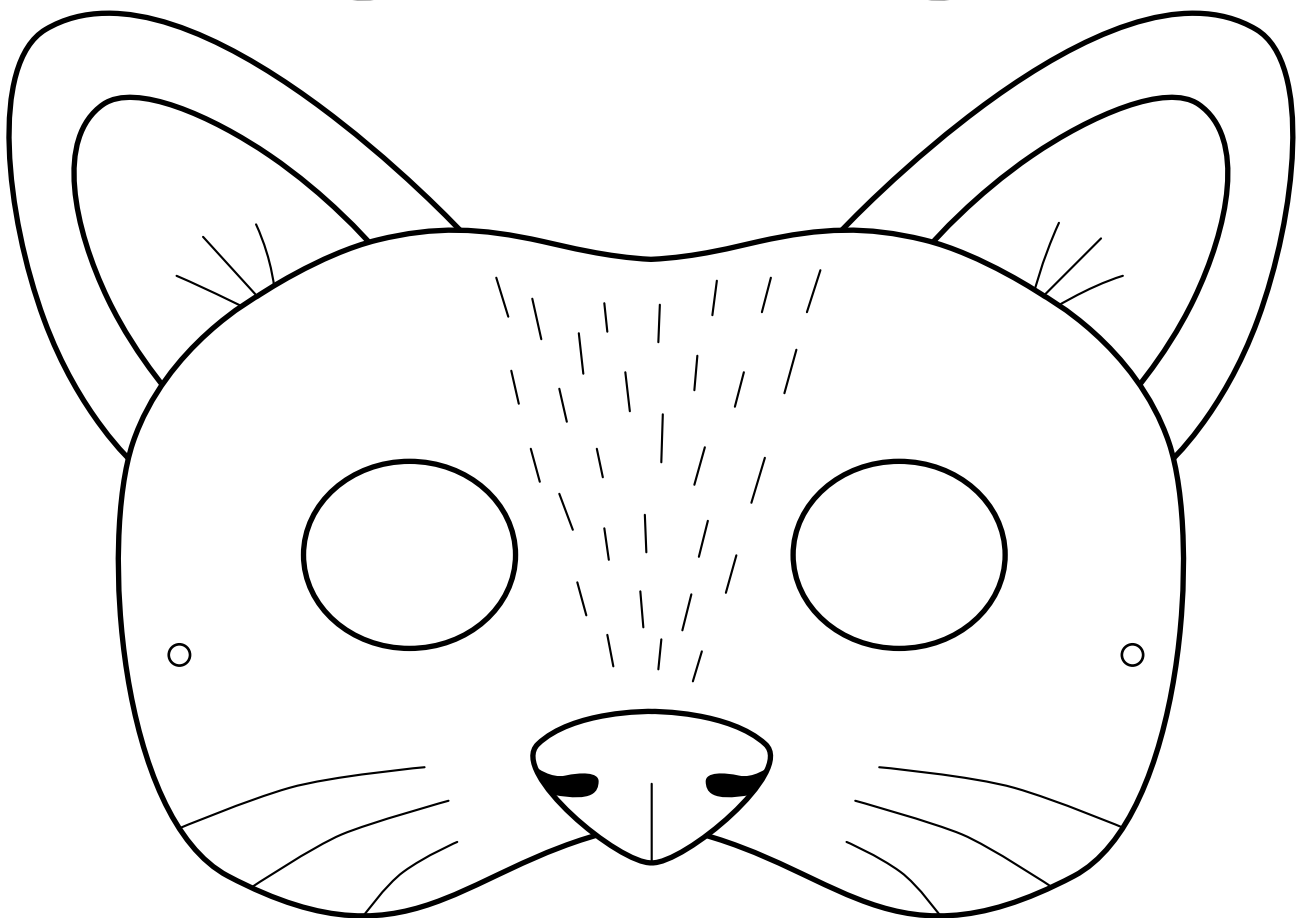
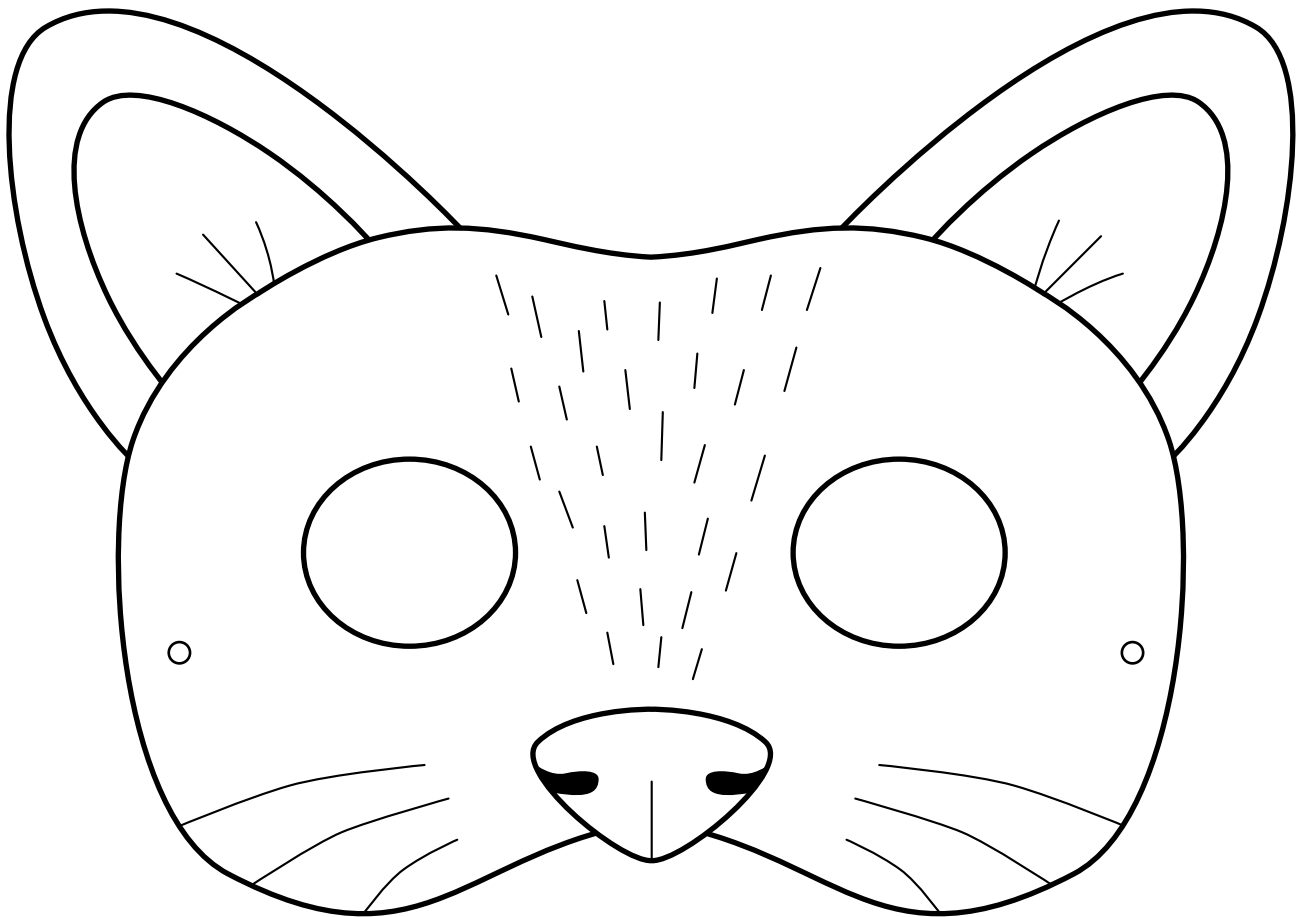
OUTCOME 4: Children are confident and involved learners

- express wonder and interest in their environments
- are curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning
- use play to investigate, imagine and explore ideas
- follow and extend their own interests with enthusiasm, energy and concentration
- manipulate objects and experiment with cause and effect, trial and error, and motion
- engage with and co-construct learning
- make connections between experiences, concepts and processes
- use their senses to explore natural and built environments
- manipulate resources to investigate, take apart, assemble, invent and construct
- explore ideas and theories using imagination, creativity and play

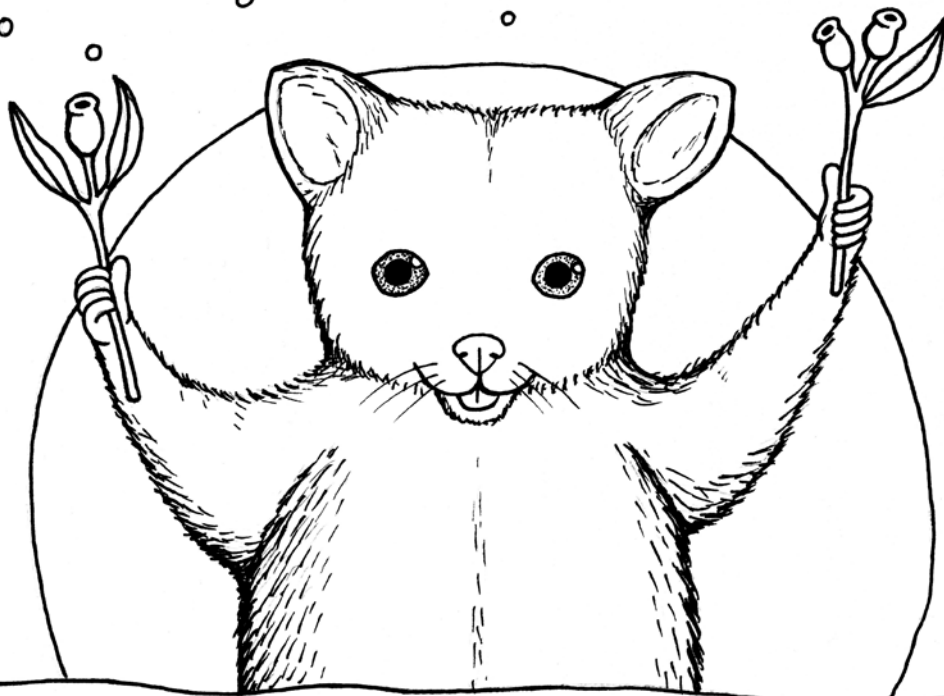
OUTCOME 5: CHILDREN ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS

- respond verbally and non-verbally to what they see, hear, touch, feel and taste
- use language and representations from play, music and art to share and project meaning
- interact with others to explore ideas and concepts, clarify and challenge thinking, negotiate and share new understandings
- listen and respond to sounds and patterns in speech, stories and rhymes in context
- view and listen to printed, visual and multimedia texts and respond with relevant gestures, actions, comments and/or questions
- sing and chant rhymes, jingles and songs
- explore texts from a range of different perspectives and begin to analyse the meanings
- actively use, engage with and share the enjoyment of language and texts in a range of ways
- recognise and engage with written and oral culturally constructed texts
- use the creative arts such as drawing, painting, sculpture, drama, dance, movement, music and storytelling to express ideas and make meaning
- listen and respond to sounds and patterns in speech, stories and rhyme





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