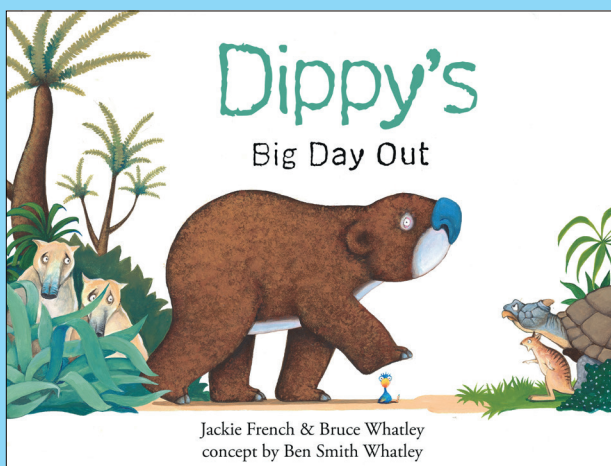# Dippy's
Big Day Out

Jackie French & Bruce Whatley
concept by Ben Smith Whatley

**DIPPY'S BIG DAY OUT
BY JACKIE FRENCH AND BRUCE WHATLEY
BASED ON A CONCEPT BY
BEN SMITH WHATLEY**

ISBN
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eBook: 9781460708514
Suitable for 3+

Themes:
Literacy
History
STEM

Notes by: Barbara Braxton

ABOUT THE BOOK

AN 'ICE AGE' MEETS DIARY OF A WOMBAT STORY

Dippy is a diprotodon, the BIGGEST, friendliest wombat who lived 100,000 years ago.
All Dippy wants is happy friends, a place to sleep and lots to eat.

Who knew that could be such an adventure?

Based on a concept by Ben Smith Whatley and brought to life by the creators of the international bestselling *Diary of a Wombat*, this is a hilarious story of prehistoric daring and chaos set in the fascinating world of ancient Australia megafauna.

ACTIVITIES

BEFORE READING

- Field knowledge and context
- Building field knowledge
- Exploring the context of the text

Examining covers give us clues to the contents. (ACELA1433)

- What do you think this book is about?
- What creature does this remind you of?
- How is it the same as /different from a wombat?
- How has the illustrator made it look so big?

Explain that it is a diprotodon, an ancient ancestor of the wombat that grew to be 3.8 m long (head to tail), 1.7 m wide at the shoulder and weighed 2800kg. Use a measure to understand its size and compare it to a modern wombat (100cm x 60cm and about 26kg) and a rhinoceros or hippopotamus.

Look at the other creatures on the cover.

- Do they remind you of any modern-day creatures?
- Why do they look so concerned?
- Would you expect to see Dippy on a walk in the bush today?
- How would you feel if you did? (ACELY1646)

Explain that Dippy and other megafauna (huge creatures that evolved after the extinction of the dinosaurs) roamed Australia thousands of years ago. Use appropriate resources from Extinct Australian animals over time R10704 (accessible via Scootle) to enable students to understand the concept of megafauna, the timeframe and setting of the story.

Introduce the concept of "extinction" and "evolution".
Discuss how things can change to adapt to their environment as it changes, but that sometimes the change is too great or too quick and so they become extinct. Consider how diprotodon became wombat.

Introduce vocabulary like "fossil" and "palaeontologist" and their meanings,

Explore what both the author and illustrator would need to know about megafauna to create this story. List some of the questions they would have had to ask and investigate.

ACTIVITIES

RESPONDING AND EXPLORING

- Responding and exploring
- Responding to the text

Exploring plot character and setting [for fiction]

Examine the picture of Dippy sleeping.
- How does the illustrator suggest that this is a story from long, long ago?

Explore what students think Australia was like during the time the story was set.

Create a class mural of background scenery that students can add their pictures and information labels to as their discoveries increase. (ACELT1586; ACELY1651)

Invite students to suggest what is happening on each page using the cues and clues in the pictures.
- Why do the animals wake Dippy up?
- Are they angry? How do they feel? How do you know this?
- How does Dippy get distracted as he searches for a new place to sleep?
- What sorts of food does he try?
- Why is it all unsuitable?
- How does eating the roots solve Dippy's problem of finding somewhere to sleep? (ACELY1649; ACELY1650)

Explore cause and effect by having the students explain scenes where there is no explanatory text, such as how the koala landed on Dippy's head; what happened when he tried to eat the big plant; and what happened when he tested the orange food; how digging for ants leads to a place to sleep.
(ACELT1578; ACELY1670; ACELA1451)

- How do the other animals feel about Dippy? Are they scared of him?
- Do the students feel scared of him? If so, explain why they feel this way. (ACELT1783)

Discuss how the author and illustrator have used language, humour and images to create the characters that are non-threatening. (ACELA1786; ACELT1581)

As you read, create a chart listing those creatures who are familiar and those who are not. Compare some of the creatures in the story with their modern counterparts using the students' knowledge and a range of resources. (ACELY1665)

ACTIVITIES

EXAMINING

- Examining text structure and organisation
- Examining grammar
- Examining visual and multimodal features (where relevant)

Identify the difference between an imaginative text and an informative one (ACELY1648; ACELY1658) and determine which *Dippy's Big Day Out is.*

Compare *Dippy's Big Day Out* with a non-fiction text about diprotodons and examine the differences in purpose, structure, language and illustrations. (ACELA1430; ACELY1665; ACELA1463; ACELA1453 ACELA 1447).

- What features make *Dippy's Big Day Out* a work of fiction?
- Can we learn factual information from fiction books?
- What have we learned from this one?
- Add the students' comments and pictures to the class mural. Encourage those who are interested to explore other megafauna.

Examine the structure of the text and discuss who is telling the story. Compare it to other texts that use a third person narrator.
- How do the words and illustrations combine to tell the story without the need for explanation and elaboration?
- How does the use of punctuation, text direction and font size contribute to telling the story?
- How do these techniques meet the needs of the target audience?
- How do the illustrations contribute to telling the story and enhancing the students' understanding? (ACELA1449; ACELA1469)

As a class, retell the story from the perspective of the little bird that accompanies Dippy. (ACELT1593)

Explore words like 'diprotodon" and how they can be broken into syllables to make them easier to say, read and spell. (ACELA1818; ACELA1824)

Share other stories by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley to extend the students' literary repertoire.
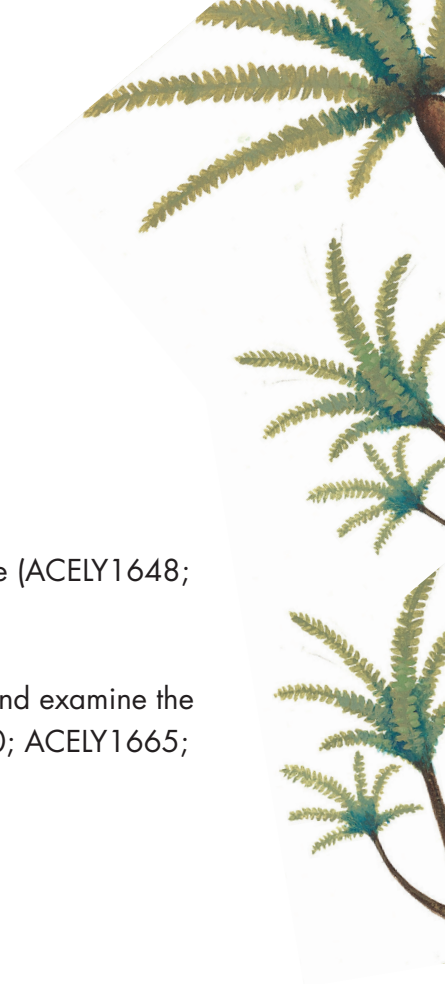
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND LINKS TO OTHER TEXTS

- Australian Museum
- Diprotodon
- Common Wombat
- The Megafauna of Australia
- Australia's Megafauna
- Australian Megafauna
- Meet the Megafauna
- Resources available through Scootle
- Megafauna Exhibition - BTN
- The Giants of Ancient Australia

BIO-NOTE

Barbara Braxton has been an educator for more than 45 years, over 20 of those as a teacher librarian. She has written a number of books focusing on creating practical activities for the primary classroom and written many units of work for Education Services Australia and PETAA. She currently reviews books for young children on her blog The Bottom Shelf.

DIPROTODON FACTS

1. DIPROTODON

Its name means "two forward teeth."
It was first discovered during the 1830s by Major Thomas Mitchell. He discovered the fossils of this marsupial in a cave in New South Wales in Australia. After discovering them, he then sent them to Sir Richard Owen, who described and named it in 1838.

2. DIPROTODON, THE THREE-TON PREHISTORIC WOMBAT

Diprotodon was truly a gigantic animal. During the Pleistocene Period, just about every animal grew to enormous sizes and marsupials were no different. This animal was approximately 10 feet long and would have weighed in excess of 3 tons. Known also as a "Giant Wombat", these marsupials were about the size of a rhinoceros.

3. DIPROTON WAS THE LARGEST MARSUPIAL THAT EVER LIVED

The Diprotodon comfortably holds the title of largest marsupial ever. ...weighing upward of 2,800 Kilograms. Although massive, the Diprotodon was smaller than either a hippopotamus (up to 4500 kilograms in weight) or rhinoceros (up to 3600 kilograms in weight), to which it is often compared

4. DIPROTODON RANGED ACROSS THE EXPANSE OF AUSTRALIA

One of the many fascinating facts about Diprotodon was that it lived all over Australia. While many animals existed in just one or two areas, the Giant Wombat could be found all over the continent. It lived everywhere from New South Wales to Western Australia to the Northern Territory.

5. MANY DIPROTODON HERDS PERISHED FROM DROUGHT

The extinction of megafauna around the world was probably due to environmental and ecological factors. And was almost completed by the end of the last ice age. It is believed that megafauna initially came into existence in response to glacial conditions and became extinct with the onset of warmer climates. Australia can be punishingly dry – almost every bit as much two million years ago as it is today. Extreme drought conditions would also explain occasional fossil discoveries of clustered-together Diprotodon juveniles and aged herd members.

6. DIPROTODON MALES WERE LARGER THAN THE FEMALES

Over the course of the nineteenth century, paleontologists named a half-dozen separate Diprotodon species, differentiated from one another by their size. Females were almost two-thirds the size of the males

7. DIPROTODON WAS ON THYLACOLEO'S LUNCH MENU

A full-grown, three-ton Giant Wombat would have been virtually immune from predation – but the same couldn't be said for Diprotodon babies and juveniles, which were significantly smaller. Diprotodon was almost certainly preyed on by Thylacoleo, the "marsupial lion," and it may also have made a tasty snack for the giant monitor lizard Megalania as well as the Quinkana, a plus-sized Australian crocodile. And toward the start of the modern era, the Giant Wombat was also targeted by the first human settlers of Australia.

DIPROTODON FACTS

8. DIPROTODON WAS AN ANCESTOR OF THE MODERN WOMBAT

One of the many fascinating facts about Diprotodon was that it lived all over Australia. While many animals existed in just one or two areas, the Giant Wombat could be found all over the continent. It lived everywhere from New South Wales to Western Australia to the Northern Territory.

9. THE GIANT WOMBAT WAS A CONFIRMED VEGETARIAN

If you look at Diprotodon pictures, then you'll notice that this marsupial was covered in fur. It had an extremely large nose and pronounced front teeth. More than likely, it was an herbivore – feeding on everything from leaves to grasses to even salt bushes. Which is probably why it lived all over Australia, as it could have lived off any plant.

10. DIPROTODON COEXISTED WITH THE EARLIEST HUMAN SETTLERS OF AUSTRALIA

Megafauna and Indigenous Australians coexisted for at least 17,000 years.
Rock paintings have been discovered in Queensland that may (or may not) depict Diprotodon herds.

11. WHY THE GIANT WOMBAT WENT EXTINCT

Scientists believe that Diprotodon went extinct because of an extreme drought. It is believed that these animals began migrating in search of increasingly scarce sources of water. Many of the fossils recovered have been around salt lakes. Some of them have also been recovered from inside the salt lakes. That suggests that many of these marsupials fell through the crystalline surfaces of these lakes and subsequently drowned.

SOURCE

www.newdinosaurs.com
www.thoughtco.com/facts-about-diprotodon-the-giant-wombat-1093327
www.australianmuseum.net.au

FIND THE MEANING

Megafauna	
Marsupial	
Ice Age	
Perish	
Gigantic	
Facts	
Extinction	
Glacial	
Expanse	
Prehistoric	
Environmental	
Coexisted	
Herbivore	
Crystalline	
Fossil	
Ancestor	
Roam	
Palaeontologist	
Evolution	

DIPPY'S BIG DAY OUT

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H  E  G  L  N  T  E  A  E  L  R  A  U  P  H
S  N  I  A  I  O  Z  V  I  S  N  O  R  B  D
I  V  G  I  P  Z  I  S  O  C  N  E  A  E  U
R  I  A  P  H  U  S  T  E  L  H  A  T  M  O
E  R  N  U  Z  O  D  S  C  I  U  S  P  E  S
P  O  T  S  F  M  T  U  S  N  I  T  A  X  Y
T  N  I  R  K  O  H  T  L  X  I  Y  I  C  E
S  M  C  A  R  U  O  C  E  H  M  T  U  O  R
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I  L  E  N  I  L  L  A  T  S  Y  R  C  D  V
C  J  J  B  U  I  E  T  P  R  W  U  P  N  X
E  E  E  L  A  I  C  A  L  G  W  D  Y  O  W
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AGE

CRYSTALLINE

EXPANSE

FOSSIL

HERBIVORE

PALAEONTOLOGIST

ROAM

ANCESTOR

ENVIRONMENTAL

EXTINCTION

GIGANTIC

ICE

PERISH

COEXISTED

EVOLUTION

FACTS

GLACIAL

MARSUPIAL

PREHISTORIC

BE A PALEOARTIST

Artists that attempt to reconstruct or depict prehistoric life according to the current knowledge and scientific evidence are called paleoartist.

Draw your own prehistoric animal with your knowledge of scientific evidence.