

Magabala Books • Teacher Notes

The Lizard Gang

Written by Kirra Somerville

Illustrated by Grace Fielding

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

OVERVIEW

Meet Zed, Boo, Eliza and Zoro – a spirited gang of monitor lizards who learn the meaning of teamwork when they work together to escape a raging flood.

This morality tale highlights the importance of friendship and trust. Children will learn that the key is to work together and everybody is good at something.

- Immediately engaging and endearing characters
- A contemporary moral tale about cooperation and friendship
- Illustrated by Crichton Award-winning illustrator, Grace Fielding

THEMES

- Individuality
- Acceptance
- Humility
- Gifts and Talents
- Cooperation
- Friendship
- Teamwork

AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

The Lizard Gang was written by Kirra Somerville when she was nine years old. Written in third person, past tense, it is a fable that shares important themes such as individuality, acceptance, humility and cooperation. It follows the challenges that four lizards face when they are swept away in flood waters, realising that they must cooperate and use each of their individual gifts and talents to help one another survive. As such, it is a timely text for students in the early-middle primary school age bracket who are learning the qualities that help form lasting friendships.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Kirra Somerville is descended from the Martu people of the Western Desert in Western Australia. She was born in Perth in 1995 and went to school there with her twin sister, Jarra.

Kirra wrote *The Lizard Gang* when she was nine years old and won a prize with this story in the 2004 WA Children's Book Council of Australia 'Make your own storybook' competition. It is her first book.

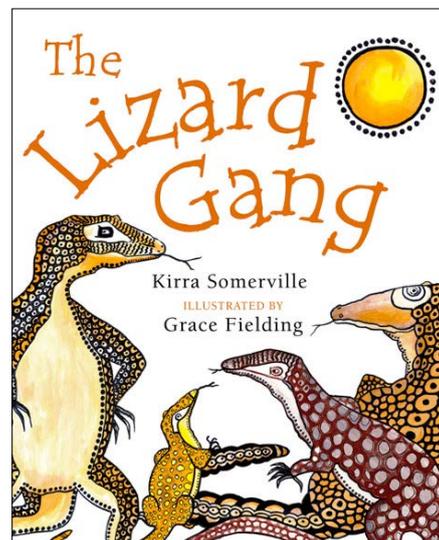
Grace Fielding was raised at the Wandering Mission near Perth, Western Australia. She lives in Perth, WA where she is well known for her unique style of art and fabric printing, combining traditional dot art with contemporary images. Grace has illustrated several children's titles with Magabala Books.

LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

This book and the classroom activities provided are primarily relevant to the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Learning area	Year level
English	Years F-4
Science	Year 1; 4

The appendix highlights relevant content descriptions, cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities that relate to the text and classroom ideas provided.



CLASSROOM IDEAS

English

- The text begins, 'Deep in the Australian bush...!' Use the internet to locate images of the Australian bush. How does this setting contribute to *The Lizard Gang*? Place these images around the room to create a display based on *The Lizard Gang*.
- After reading the text through for the first time, re-read it, taking note of the words that are enlarged and written in gold font such as 'different', 'argued', 'strongest', 'huge', etc. Discuss the way in which this shows that in isolation, these words don't achieve much, however, when the lizards use their gifts and talents to help one another, 'they were all brave and together they were a team'. Discuss the theme of cooperation and teamwork in this light.
- Create a table that shows the name of each lizard and their particular strengths and weaknesses.
- In what ways does *The Lizard Gang* teach us about friendship?
- Why do the lizards argue with one another? Have you and your friends ever argued? Write a reflection that shares a time when you and your friends quarrelled. How did you resolve your arguments? Why do books like *The Lizard Gang* make a point of writing about these sorts of friendship issues?
- Create your own drawings of Zed, Boo, Eliza and Zoro based on the illustrations by Grace Fielding. On each lizard, write their gifts and talents on their bodies.
- Using the template on the following page, create a lizard for each student in the class. Pass these lizards around the class, allowing students to write positive comments about one another onto their bodies. Display these around the classroom.
- How must Boo have felt when the other lizard's laughed at her? Have you ever felt like this? Share with a friend.
- Why does Boo collect eggs while the other lizards are sleeping? What does this tell us about Boo? What is Boo's strength?
- When the lizards feel ashamed, it is likely that they would apologize to Boo, however, sometimes, it is hard to apologize. Practise giving and accepting apologies in the roles of the lizards.
- What advice about friendship would you give to each of the lizards?
- Why did it take a storm and floodwaters to make the lizards work together as a team?
- Recreate *The Lizard Gang* in the form of a poem.
- Re-write this story from one of the lizard's points of view.
- How do the illustrations help tell the story of *The Lizard Gang*? Which is your favourite illustration? Why?
- In small groups, retell *The Lizard Gang* in a dramatic performance.
- Write and illustrate your own fable that explores the themes of friendship, humility and teamwork.
- Graph the plot of *The Lizard Gang* using a story graph. Include the complication, rising tension, climax and resolution.

Science

- Research and present an information report about monitor lizards.
- Investigate the life cycles of lizards. Represent your findings in an infograph.
- Construct a PMI table that shows the ways in which weather affects living creatures.





The *Monitor Lizard* reaches a length of ten feet. Color: greenish with yellow spots.

APPENDIX - LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Year	Curriculum Area
F	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' own experiences (ACELT1575) Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (ACELT1783) Retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images (ACELT1580)
	1 English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts (ACELT1584)
	Science Biological Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living things have a variety of external features (ACSSU017)
2	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created (ACELT1587)
3	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others (ACELT1596) Create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features, for example perspective, distance and angle (ACELT1601)
4	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create literary texts that explore students' own experiences and imagining (ACELT1607)
	Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living things have life cycles (ACSSU072) Living things depend on each other and the environment to survive (ACSSU073)
Cross-Curriculum Priorities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture	

