

# Cloudspotting

## Teachers' Notes



When the sun rises over the sea, the sky is a canvas of possibilities for a father and daughter. *Cloudspotting* is a joyful celebration of love, lunch and the imagination.

Join a father and daughter as they share a special time catching crabs but also treasuring being on the water and appreciating what is around them.

### FROM THE AUTHOR

This story is really about spending time with my dad growing up near the Mandurah estuary in Western Australia. As a kid, I loved waking up in the early morning, just like my dad, but my brothers did not! This meant, that I was the one who was out on the boat with him in the early part of the day. Soon, I was named the "crab pulling champion of the family." We didn't just go boating - we used to body surf at the beach near our home nearly every day. Just him and me, greeting the ocean each morning. It was very special.

But this story is not just about crabbing. It's about the quiet space that sits between a parent and child, and the language they can create between them. Childhood is so precious and so very short, and we each remember things differently. This is why I used clouds to portray the wonder of our imagination, and our memory, in keeping that time alive for ourselves as we grow old. Clouds move and disappear very fast!

### FROM THE ILLUSTRATOR

Since I first picked up Samantha's manuscript, I've been in love with the quiet simplicity of the little girl's relationship with her Dad. So, when approaching the illustrations, I tried to always keep that relationship at the core. From the first page, I included details that point to that close familial relationship, and their love for the sea. Seeing inside the family home, you can spot family photos, paintings of seagulls and ocean creatures, a toy boat and books about crabs. When reading, readers can keep an eye out for that pair of seagulls from the painting, as they appear in almost every scene.

The other main focus I had when illustrating this book, was anchoring the story in one day, using the colour and lighting to move the action along. Progressing from when the first light appears on the horizon, their adventure unfolds as the colours change across the sky. As the girl and her Dad enjoy their milky tea and biscuits, they watch the sky and the clouds, and let their imaginations play.

## Writing Style

*Cloudspotting* is written in first person point of view, which places the reader more closely in the narrative. Tidy allows the young female character to express to the reader her anticipation for the coming morning's activity, including her reactions to the weather, which offers a sense of adventure. She uses sensory experiences such as the cold, the sun on her face, the wind in her hair and what she can taste, to pull the reader into the story with their senses. The story unfolds with the use of dialogue, which seeks to make the story feel more personal. Onomatopoeia is used (such as click!), alliteration (sea grasses sway, a tiger on tippytoes) and a calculated use of repetition to slow the story to a pace where the reader understands that time with family is best enjoyed when taken slowly – hence, the overall message of the story, to consciously enjoy family time together.

## Illustration Style

The story of *Cloudspotting* unfolds as the day progresses from pre-dawn to afternoon. The sky, clouds and scene lighting changes on each page to reflect the progression of time. The colours used in the illustrations are deep and vibrant, picking up the multi-hued nature of the ocean and sky at sunrise. Susannah makes her illustrations in layers, using watercolour paint and coloured pencil to create the different elements on each page. The background, foreground, sky, characters and creatures are all painted separately then scanned into her drawing tablet. Using Photoshop, she then digitally cuts out, edits and pastes the elements to create a collaged scene. The textures and irregularities produced by watercolour paints create a unique look, and by combining this traditional medium with digital collage, she has flexibility when arranging and editing scenes.

## Themes

Key themes include ocean life, parenting, imagination, ecological sustainability, family dynamics, patience, slow living.

## National Curriculum Links

### CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

- Sustainability

### HASS

- My personal world
- Our past and present connections to people and place
- Diverse communities and places and the contribution people make

### SCIENCE

- Nature and development of science
- Earth and space sciences
- Biological sciences - Living things

### VISUAL ARTS

## Before Reading

Explore the cover clues and endpapers - what do you think this story is about? Where do you think it is set? What kinds of things do you expect to happen?

## After Reading

Did you think the story was going to be about that?

Which was your favourite page and why?

What other books are about enjoying the ocean that you have read and enjoyed?

Can you make a class set of books about the ocean and spending time on or near the sea?



# LEARNING ACTIVITIES

## Visual Literacy

After reading the book to your class, have students explore the illustrations up close, allowing them to point out things that perhaps are not so obvious on a first reading. Have them:

- Examine the first house interior page. What elements inside the house tell you more about this family?
- Look closely at the sky as it becomes lighter during the day. What shapes can you find appearing? Are there any clouds that they have not spotted?
- What can you see under the water?
- What is the name of the boat? Why do you think the illustrator chose this word for the boat?
- Are there any other 'characters' in the story that make a regular appearance?
- After reading, have students look at the endpapers. They are two different colours. Consider why the crabs are blue at the beginning of the story, and red at the end.

Having examined the illustrations closely, ask students:

- How do the illustrations and the words work together to tell you more about the story?
- How would the story play out if there were no illustrations?
- How would the story be different if there were no words, and you relied on the illustrations only to understand the story?

## Visual Arts

Consider the underwater viewpoint page, looking up from the bottom of the ocean. Find also, this same scene illustrated later as a side view.

Ask students to illustrate what this view would look like from above. Discuss the differences between these perspectives and consider who would have this view (eg. A bird, a fish).

Consider a craft activity to compliment the reading of the book:

- Make crabs using paper plates and red and blue paint (see activity sheets)
- Hang seaweed streamers from the ceiling and build a larger, underwater scene over a term or year
- Colour in a crab fishing scene from the book (see activity sheets)
- Make some seagulls using felt sheeting and ribbon (see activity sheets)
- Display other ocean themed books alongside *Cloudspotting*, and your craft activities
- As a celebration of the imagination, take your students outside and spot some cloud shapes! They could then come back inside and draw them or make them from paper shapes filled with stuffing to hang from the ceiling in the classroom.





## Science and Sustainability

In this story, the father measures a crab and decides to put it back as it is clearly too young to be taken from the ocean at this point in its life.

Have students create a decision flowchart for this event. Have them explore the consequences of what would happen if the father did not put the crab back, and what would happen over time if he did this every week. What would happen if everyone did this?

Explore with students how we might encourage others to think this way if they don't already.

You might consider having them make a poster or advertisement that explains this to people interested in fishing or crabbing.

Can we apply this way of thinking to other considerations in our life?

What situations can happen at school if people don't consider such consequences?

This may enable a larger discussion around recycling, keeping the play area tidy, putting things back appropriately, etc.



## Civics and Citizenship

The brothers clean the boat after their return. It appears this might be a regular chore for them. Ask students what chores they each fulfil in their own families.

Are there chores they would like to do, but don't currently?

What chores do they not like? Which chores are fun and how do they feel when they contribute in this way to their family life? To their school? To their community?

## HASS

The family in this story experience a lifestyle influenced by their geographical location. ie. they live near the ocean, and so they spend time on it.

Have students reflect on their own geographical location, and how the location of the place they live, affects their personal activities and hobbies.

Do they often travel to another location and how does this affect their activities when they go there?



## English

In this story, the narrator reflects on the fact that 'bin day is two days away.' Why is this important?

Express to the students that there are no right or wrong answers. Ask them what they believe the message of the book is?

- Do books need to have messages for the reader?
- How many different messages can we find?

The author wrote this story, about her childhood memories. Ask students to reflect on their earliest memories, and something they currently enjoy doing with their family that they think they will one day look back on fondly.

## Personal reflection

Have students complete a *Think Pair Share* with their peers, to discuss family traditions in their home and life.

- Do they do any particular activities with one parent?
- Do they share traditions with other families?

You may wish to collect these activities on the whiteboard and talk about them in more depth with students.

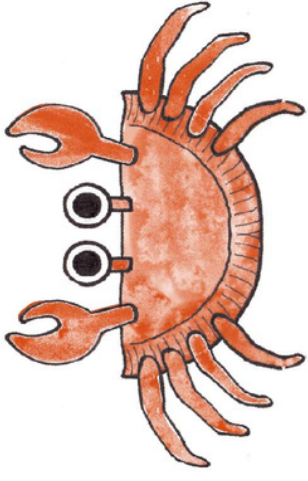
This could then become a creative writing exercise for journaling, or a gratitude journal activity.



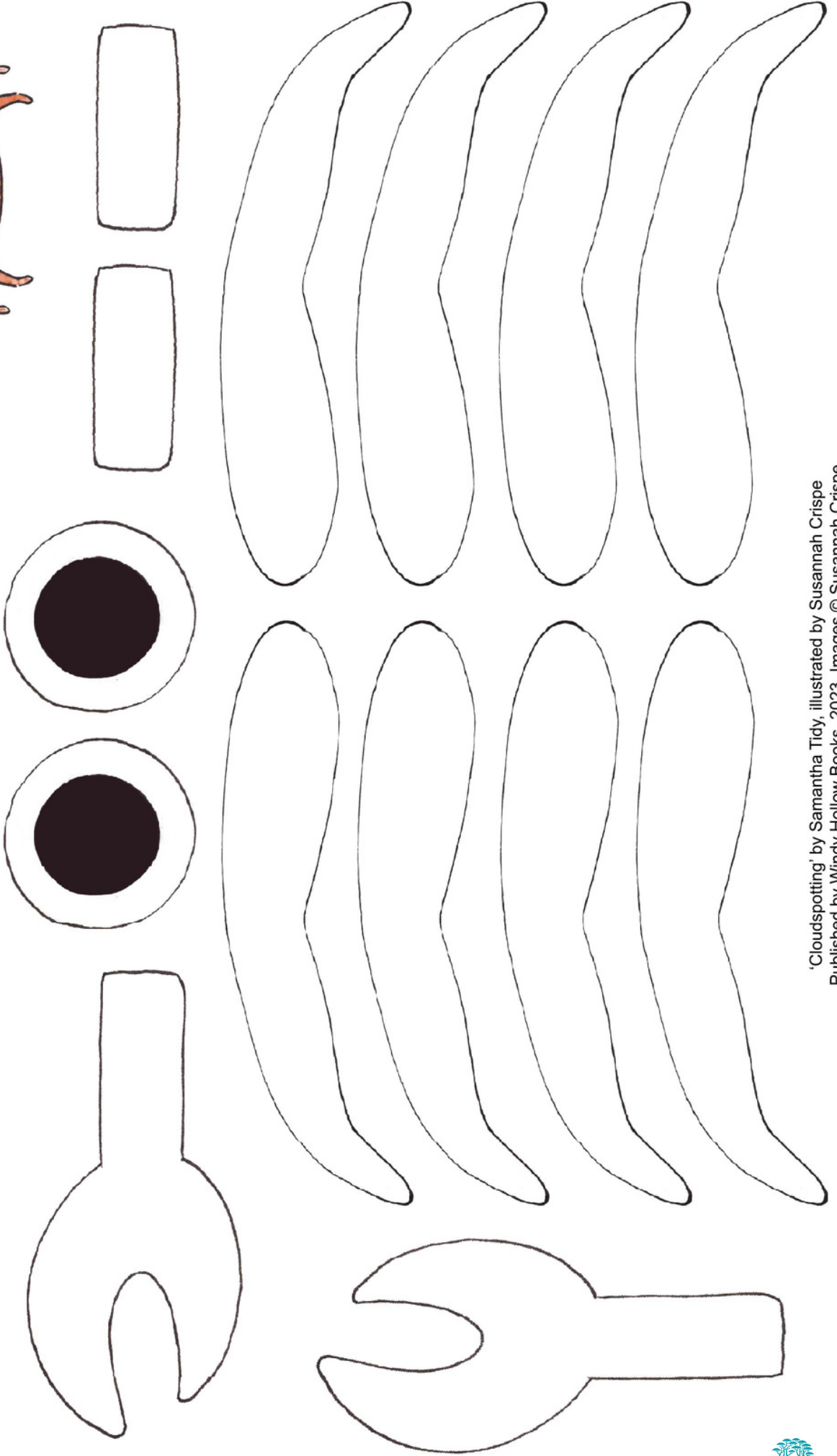
# 'CLOUDSPOTTING' COLOURING



# PAPER PLATE CRAB



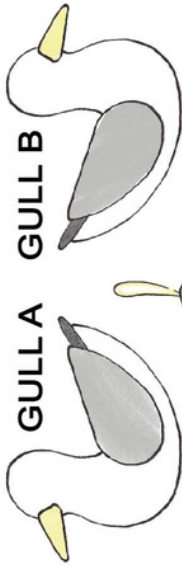
1. Cut a paper plate in half
2. Decorate, paint or colour in the legs, eye stalks, pincers and your half plate
3. Cut out the legs, eyes, eye stalks and pincers, and glue onto the plate.



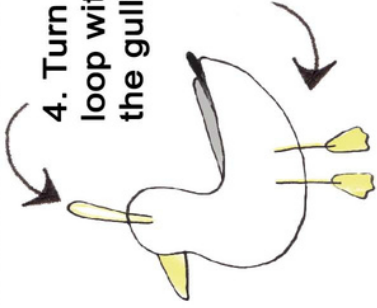
# SEAGULL HANGIE

1. You will need white, grey, black and yellow felt, yellow ribbon or wool, googly eyes and fabric glue.
2. Use the templates to cut out TWO of each shape from the coloured felt

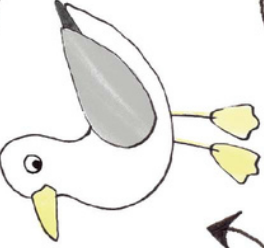
3. Glue a wing, tail feather and beak to each body, doing one in reverse so they look like mirror images (GULL A and GULL B)



4. Turn one gull over, and make a hanging loop with a ribbon and glue the ends onto the gull's head



5. Attach two pieces of ribbon for legs, gluing the felt feet to the other ends



6. Glue the two halves of the gull together and attach googly eyes to each side.

