

# Mindful Explorations

## The Land Down Under



Western World Collection #1

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# Grandma's Golden Wattles

by Tresa Fowler  
illustrated by Ksenia Matiikiv

After six hours of driving, Liam was relieved to pull up in front of his grandparents' home. He slid out of the back seat, rolled his neck and shoulders, and ran around to the back of the car. From the boot, he lifted the bouquet he had carefully placed on top of the suitcases that morning. He was glad to see the bright yellow pom-pom blooms didn't look too wilted. Golden wattles were his grandma's favorite flower, and he was excited to give them to her.

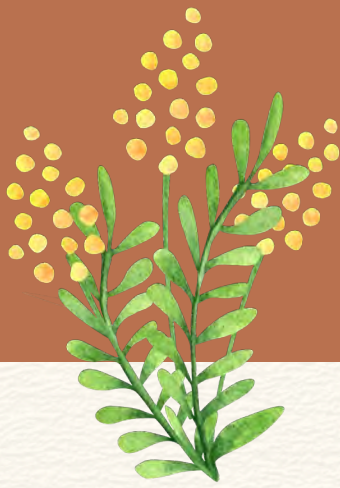
Liam loved hearing his grandma's stories of growing up on the coast of southwestern Australia, and whenever she talked of her childhood, she always mentioned the golden wattle trees in the front yard of her childhood home. He knew she loved the cheerful blooms that would arrive each September at the beginning of spring. Now, though, she lived so far inland that the golden wattle tree she had planted in her front yard struggled to thrive outside of its natural biome.

For the surprise bouquet, Liam's grandma rewarded him with a genuine smile and an extra squeeze. She arranged the charming flowers in a pretty white vase and set them on the dining table. She then told him about how her ancestors, members of the Koori tribe, used golden wattle leaves in medicines for coughs and colds. They also used the tree's sap to heal cuts. Sometimes they would grind the seeds into flour for bread. Liam was particularly interested to learn that golden wattle wood was used to make boomerangs.

But the coolest use of golden wattle came after dinner, when his grandma served dessert.

She brought out small green bowls each containing a scoop of creamy white ice cream with brown flecks. It was wattleseed ice cream, and Liam savored the roasted nutty, spicy goodness. He was so happy his grandma loved golden wattles!





# Golden Wattle Art Project

The golden wattle, or *Acacia pycnantha*, is Australia's national floral emblem and symbolizes unity and new growth. The leaves and flowers display Australia's national colors of green and gold.

## Supplies:

- white paper for background (or colored paper, if preferred)
- brown marker (or paint, crayon, etc.)
- green marker (or paint, crayon, etc.)
- yellow crepe or tissue paper
- pencil
- liquid school glue



## What's a Koala?



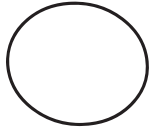
Have you heard of koala bears? Even though they are furry and walk on all fours like bears, koalas are not bears at all—they are marsupials. Like other marsupials, such as kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, and Tasmanian

devils, koala mothers give birth prematurely and usually carry their babies, or joeys, in a pouch until the joeys are old enough to survive in the world.

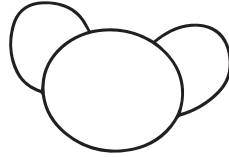
Koalas spend most of their time in trees and sleep up to 20 hours a day. When they are awake, which is usually at night, they are either eating or searching for food. Koalas love eucalyptus leaves and will eat up to 1.5 pounds of them a day. These animals like to live alone along the eastern coast of Australia.

# Let's Draw a Koala

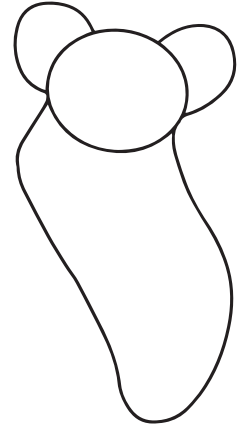
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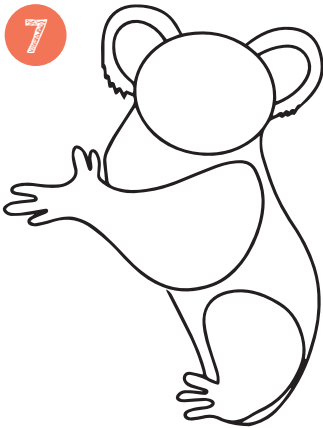
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# WALLY'S DISCOVERY

by Tresa Fowler

*Is that what I think it is?* Wally squinted and craned forward to get a closer look. He was so confused. The small creature, which had scooted behind a bush, had looked like a baby penguin. But it couldn't be. Penguins only lived where it was cold. At least that was what Wally had seen in pictures. On the beach in southern Australia where Wally was spending the afternoon, it was warm enough for shorts and a T-shirt.

Wally stealthily tiptoed toward the thicket of bushes. He crouched down and peered through the short branches. Suddenly he saw two bright blue eyes staring back through the leaves. With a gasp, Wally fell backward onto the soft sand. The sound startled the small creature, and it darted from its hiding spot. It turned toward Wally and, as if annoyed, made a squawking sound that seemed far bigger than the creature actually was. It then quickly waddled to the shallow ocean water and slid in with hardly a splash.

It was a penguin! Wally could hardly believe it. It was tiny compared to the penguins he had seen at the aquarium. And its feathers were a stunning shade of blue. Wally's dad always told him questions were good, and that was convenient because so many questions tumbled around in Wally's brain:

- Do some penguins live in warm climates?
- Why are this penguin's feathers blue?
- What are the advantages and challenges of being so small?
- What does it eat?
- Does this species live anywhere else in the world?

Wally raced back up the beach. He couldn't wait to tell his dad about the tiny, adorable penguin. Plus, he was anxious to start his research. Learning about animals was one of his favorite things to do. He had books to read and sketches to draw in his nature journal. He couldn't wait to get started on his new project!

# Australia





# The Boomerang Duel

by Tresa Fowler  
illustrated by Lisa Dzierzon

I made a mistake, a silly mistake, and I regretted it immediately. It wasn't like me to be rude, but I lost my temper and called a fellow traveler an ugly name. He was understandably angry with me and challenged me to a fight. A duel. I didn't know people still dueled in 1910! What had I gotten myself into?

Since we were both visiting Australia, our amused friends decided we were to fight

with boomerangs, not guns. We stood 20 paces from each other in an open field. A stack of boomerangs was placed beside each of us, and shields were thrust into our hands.

As I had insulted him, my opponent threw the first boomerang. I responded in kind, and we then proceeded to throw at will. Of course, neither of us had any idea how to throw a boomerang effectively, and it must have been quite comical to see boomerangs flying in all directions.

