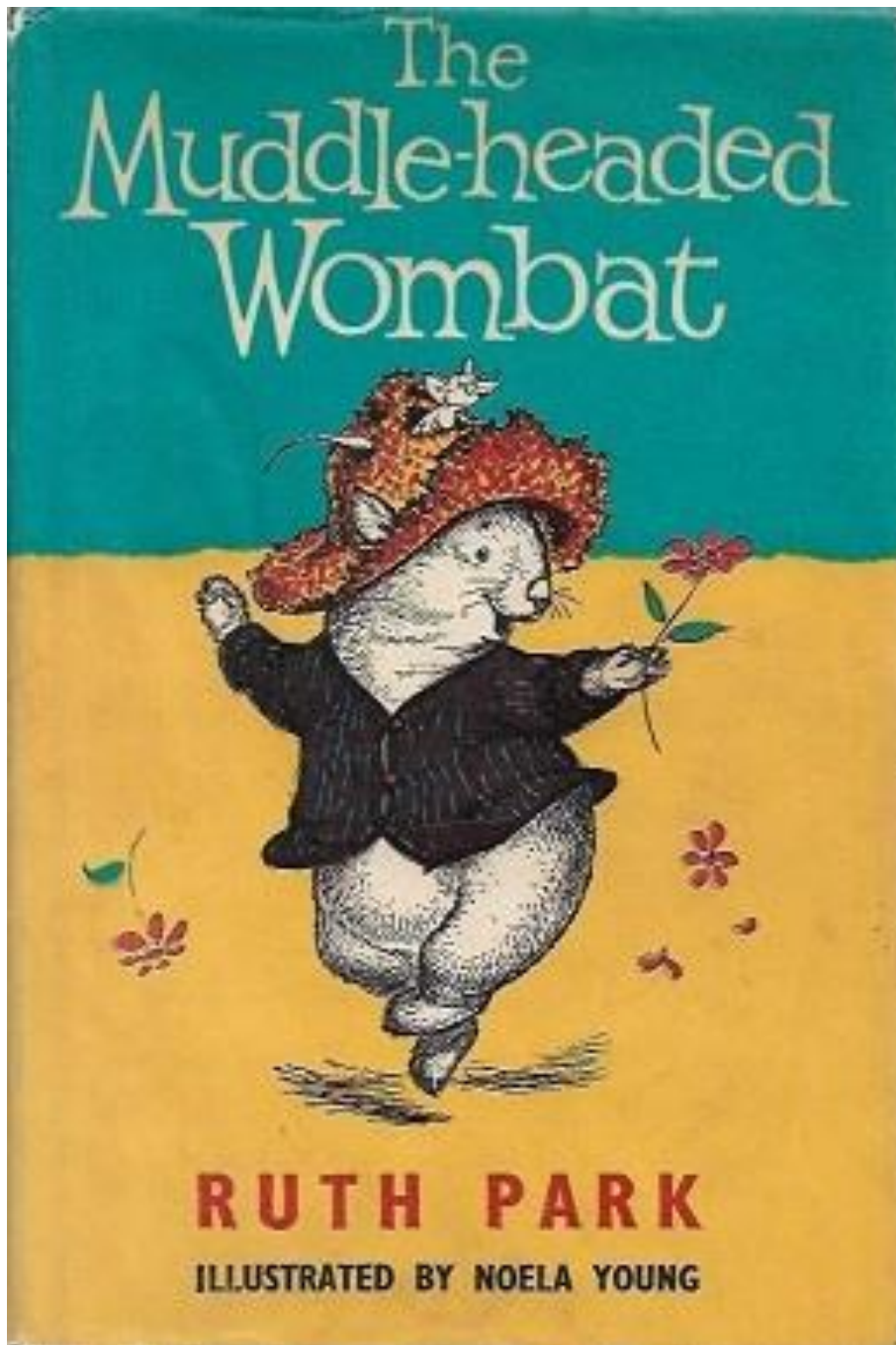


THE MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT



By Ruth Park

About the Book

The Muddleheaded Wombat (Refer image) combines, in one edition, four of Ruth Park's much-loved classics: *The Muddleheaded Wombat* (1962), *The Muddleheaded Wombat on Holiday* (1964), *The Muddleheaded Wombat in the Treetops* (1965) and *The Muddleheaded Wombat at School* (1966). Featuring one of Australia's most adored children's book characters of all time, these stories have never been out of print.

Wombat and his inseparable friends - the motherly and practical Mouse and the proud Tabby Cat began their careers in a daily children's serial on ABC radio. The series ran for 3129 episodes. The popularity of the series (which ended when the Children's Hour was cancelled in 1971) led Ruth Park to write her *Muddle-Headed Wombat* books.

This first book features the original line drawings by Noela Young, bringing alive the adventures of Wombat and his first- and second-best friends, Mouse and Tabby Cat.

The story starts with Wombat being all alone and trying to find friends. He finds a scarecrow who doesn't appear to want wombat style friendship and then he comes across a little bush mouse (a marsupial mouse) who is crying because she has lost her glasses. Her sorrow moves kind-hearted Wombat to tears and he carefully looks and helps her find them.

They find a lost cat, Tabby, at the police station (he is a very complicated character) and the troupe of three is complete for the rest of the series. More adventures happen in the book including the three joining the circus, building a treehouse and them eventually getting the bike that they have wanted since the beginning of the story.

It's a gentle tale and there are funny laugh out loud moments. (My students certainly laughed out loud at Wombat's antics) The series is deservedly an Australian children's classic. This unit plan is designed for grade 2-4 (Younger and older students will still enjoy it) You might need to search around for the texts I used but they will probably be in your school library or you'll find them like me in a second hand book store.



About the Author

Rosina Ruth Lucia Park AM (1917 – 2010) was a New Zealand–born Australian author. Her best known works are the novels *The Harp in the South* (1948) and *Playing Beatie Bow* (1980), and the children's radio serial *The Muddle-Headed Wombat* (1951–1970), which also spawned a book series (1962–1982).



Muddle-headed Wombat resources at Canberra University:

[https://library.canberra.edu.au/discovery/search?query=any,contains,muddle%20headed%20wombat&tab=Everything&search_scope=MyInst and CI&vid=61ARL CNB:61ARL CNB&mode=Basic&offset=30](https://library.canberra.edu.au/discovery/search?query=any,contains,muddle%20headed%20wombat&tab=Everything&search_scope=MyInst%20and%20CI&vid=61ARL_CNB:61ARL_CNB&mode=Basic&offset=30)

About the Illustrator

Illustrator Noela Young began illustrating books in the 1950s, for writers including Hesba Brinsmead, Christobel Mattingley, Ruth Park, Patricia Wrightson, Emily Rodda and Margaret Wild. She was best known for her illustrations for Ruth Park's 'Muddle-Headed Wombat' series.



Young has illustrated over 70 books. Her most well-known works include *Something Special* by Emily Rodda (Angus & Robertson), *Pigs Might Fly* by Emily Rodda (HarperCollins) and *Grandpa* by Lilith Norman (Margaret Hamilton Books).

About the unit

This unit focusses on *The Muddle-Headed Wombat and the Invention* which was first published in the 1970s as a large format picture story book. Noela Young also illustrated this version. (You may have this book in your school library, they were very popular at the time) They can be found in second-hand bookstores (as this one was) and online. I will also read from *The Muddle-headed Wombat* anthology published by Angus and Robertson and still in print.



MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

- How does Ruth Park describe the creek at the start of the story?
- Who did the Wombat get a letter from?
- Write a letter as Wombat back to Tabby about an invention
- How do Mouse and Wombat try to keep cool in the heat?
- Create a Wanted Poster for the hungry bandicoots.
- Create your own invention using the materials made available.
- Tabby is wearing 70s style hippy clothing. (The story was originally written in 1975) What would he wear today? Illustrate him.
- Design an alternative cover for *101 Things a Young Wombat Can Make*
- What does 'haughtily' mean?
- What did they call their invention and who drove it?
- Who did they visit? What did they want from him? Draw his strange house.
- What did Tabby end up having to wear?
- Wombat loves making and remaking cubbies, what sort of cubby did Wombat have in the end of the story?
- Write your own Muddle-Headed Wombat story
- Make your own Wombat information poster.



MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

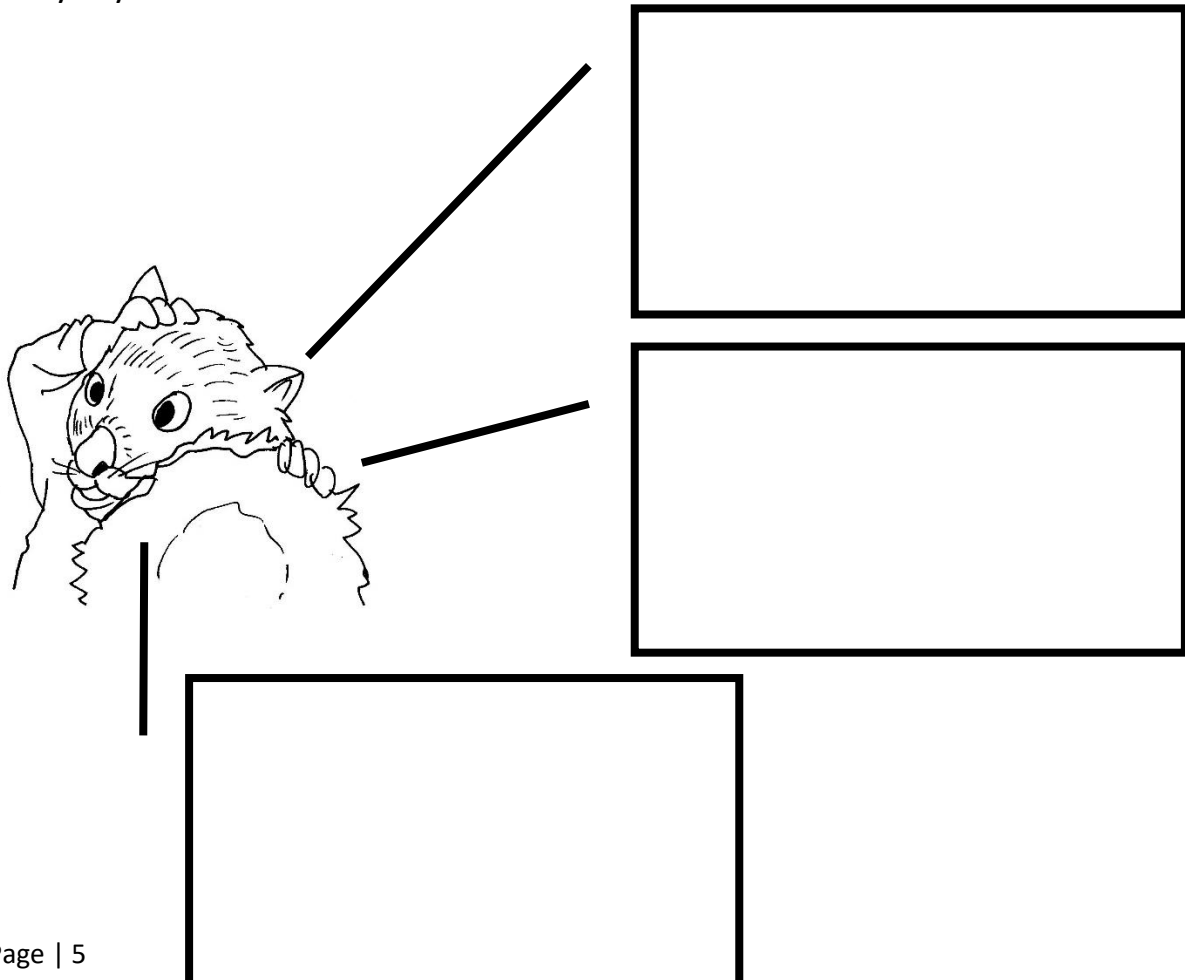
Silly Spelling

Spell these words from the story correctly

Loverly	
Terribubble	
Horribubble	
Awfullous	
Vegetabubbles	
Treely ruly	
possumy	

Look closely at Park's spelling of these words. Notice how she changes them to make them sound funny.

Try to create some of your own and see if your friends can work out what they really say.



The illustration shows a line drawing of a wombat's head on the left. Three lines extend from the drawing to three empty rectangular boxes on the right, intended for students to write their own silly spellings. The boxes are arranged in a 2x2 grid with the bottom-right cell missing.

Compound words

Highlight the two words that make up these compound words from the story

postman

dryclean

meanwhile

everyone

fearless

whatever

toenails

waterlilies

handsome

Lunchtime

understood

mangrove

Capital letters

(What words from the story are proper nouns and should have capitals?)

muddle-headed wombat

drought

zipper

pendant

bandicoots

big bush creek

uncle bobtail

cubby

101 things a young wombat can make

billyboat

tabby cat

clever old man

mouse

frog

Punctuation sentences

Include talking marks, some capital letters, exclamation and question marks

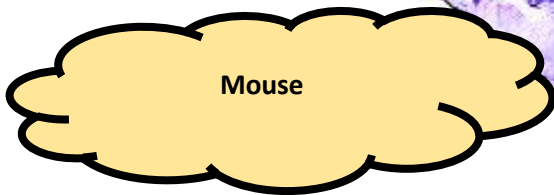
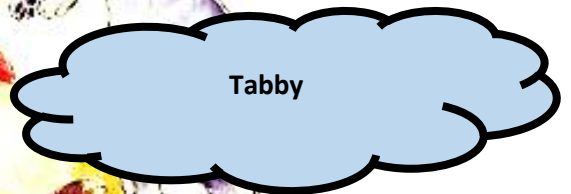
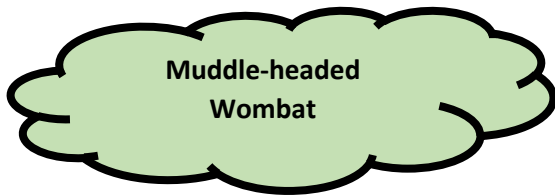
1. Please, please, clever old man pleaded
Mouse
2. Why are people so mean to cats said
Tabby.
3. If we give you that terribubbly nice
present, will you make a spell asked
wombat
4. Wheeeee shouted Mouse
5. Aren't I a fantastic driver said tabby.
6. Foolish mouse sneered Tabby. He won't
make a spell. He was just pretending.



MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

Character profiles

Illustrate these characters from the story and write about their personalities. Include (or make it part of your illustration) an example from the story to illustrate how they act and think.



MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

Sequencing



Wombat was angry that his silly old plane wouldn't start.

Wombat looked for the zipper so he could take off his fur.

The Clever Old Man didn't want rain.

Tabby drove the invention into the little creek.

Tabby moaned that the rain went right through his fur.

The three friends sailed down the flooded creek.

MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

Sequencing



Wombat was angry that his silly old plane wouldn't start.

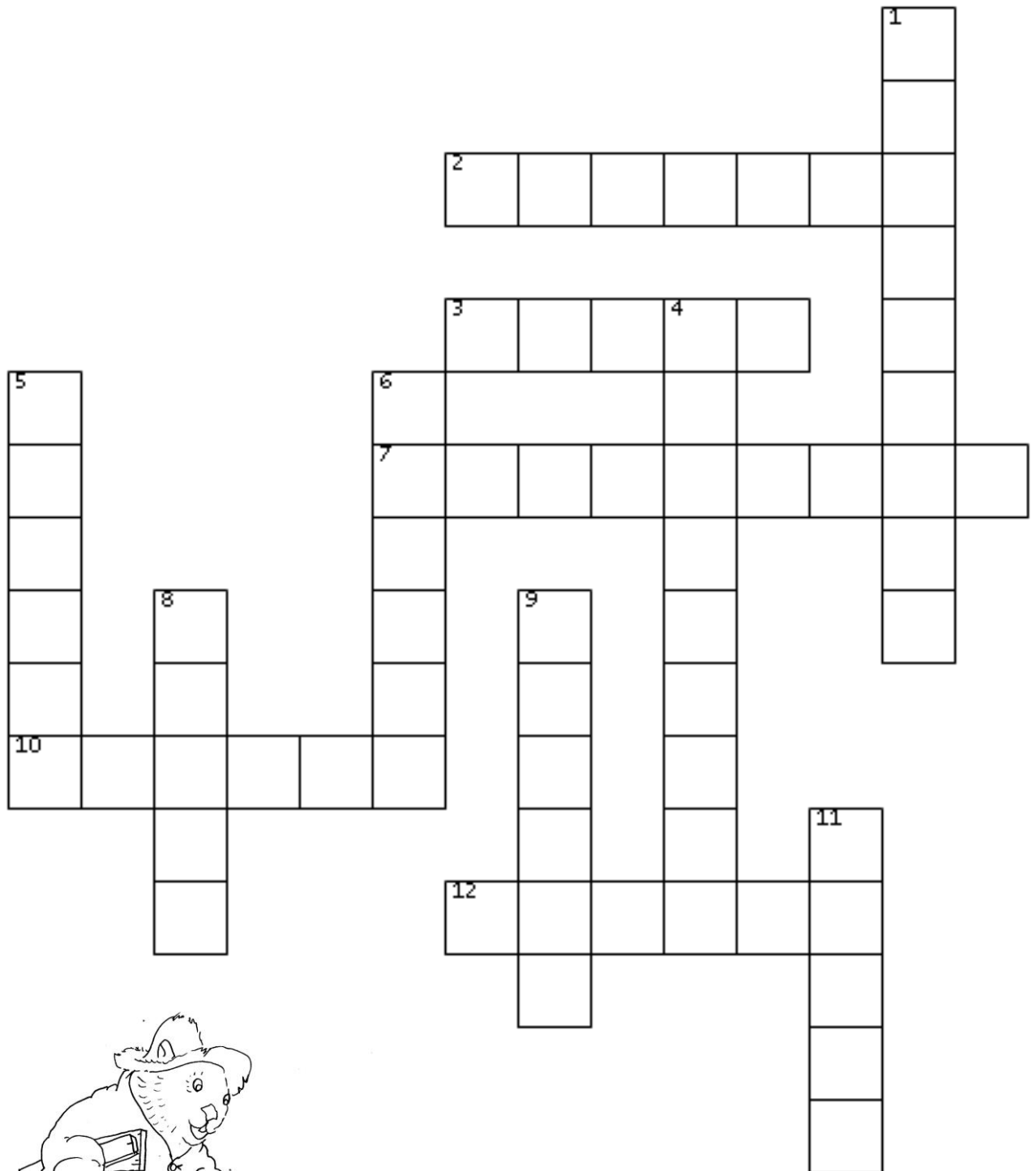


Tabby drove the invention into the little creek.

Mouse had a shower under a dripping tap.



MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION



ACROSS

- 2. Tabby went to visit Uncle
- 3. Wombat had been building ahouse for ages.
- 7. Wombat began building an(but it wouldn't fly)
- 10. They thought theOld Man could help end the drought.
- 12. Wombat got a in the mail from Tabby.

DOWN

- 1. Tabby drove theon the lagoon.
- 4. They ate Wombat's cardigan
- 5. Tabby was dragged out of thebasket.
- 6. Wombat looked for the on his back.
- 8. They wanted the Clever Old Man to make a rainto stop the drought.
- 9. Mouse had aunder the garden tap.
- 11. Big Bush sank lower and lower in the drought.



MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

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

Find

billyboat clever cubby
drought letter mouse
shower tabby wombat

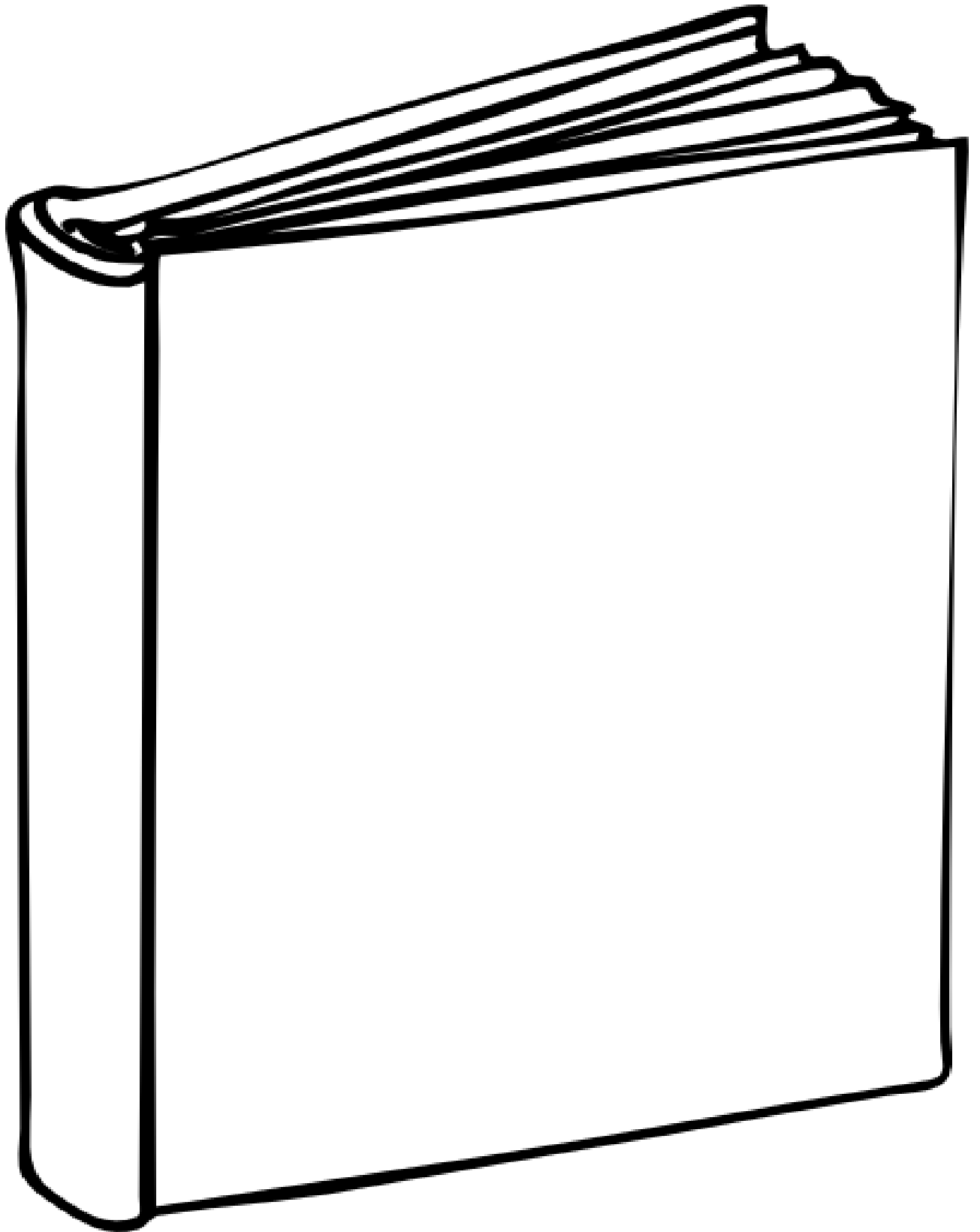


*Words can go in any direction.
Words can share letters as they
cross over each other.*

MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

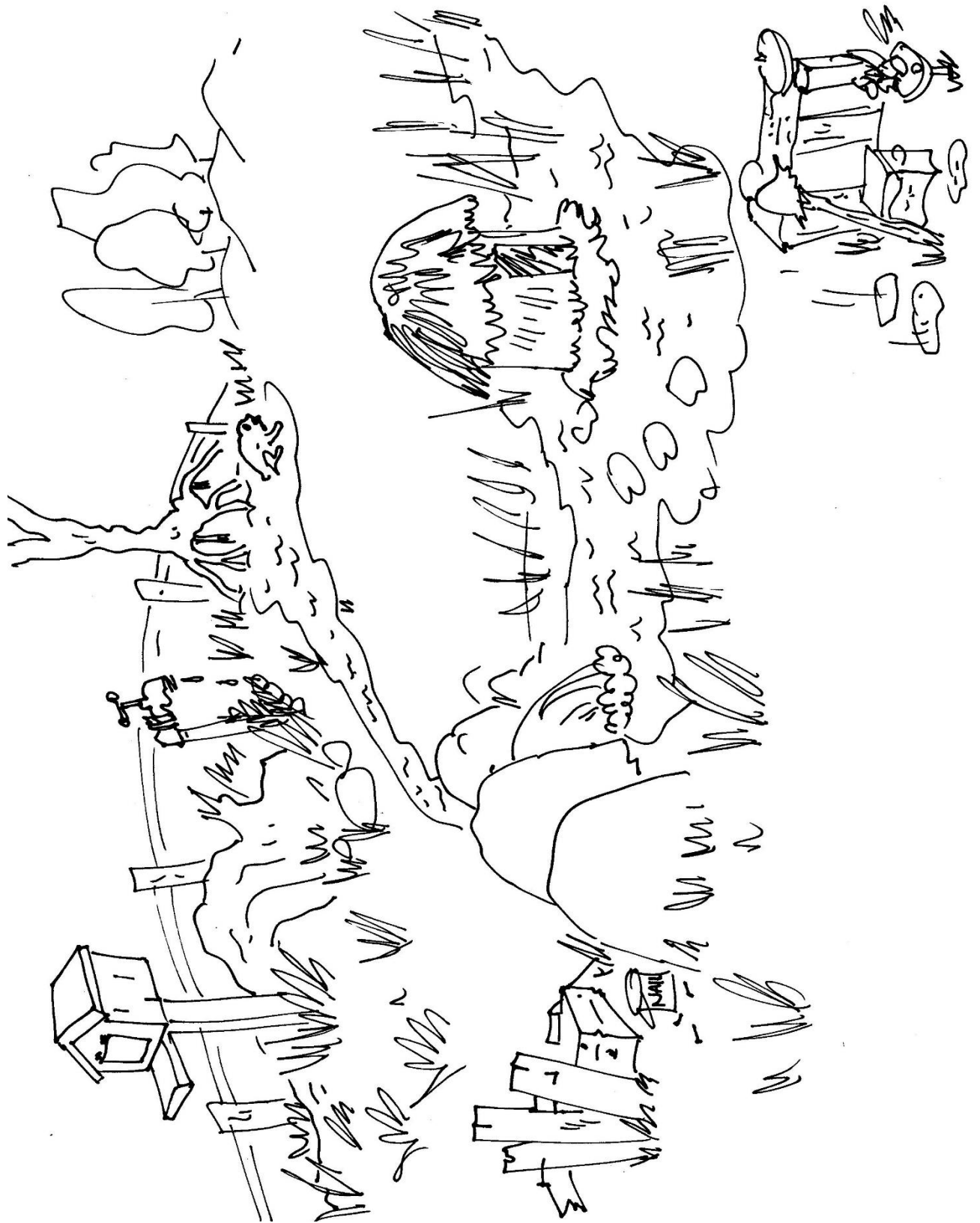
WANTED

MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION



MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

Story map



Draw some fun, colourful and detailed pictures connected with places in the story and add them to the map.



(Places to label include: letter box, tap, cubby, big bush creek, gully, waterfall, lily lagoons and the Clever Old Man's house)

WOMBAT PROJECT

Create a poster project about wombats.

Decide on whether you want to create a project about wombats in general or to look specifically at one type or even extinct megafauna wombats.

Once you decide, write 5 fact questions and their answers (in rough draft form) once corrected type your information and add images in text boxes

Include your heading in a text box and glue it all onto A3 card.

Don't forget your own illustration.

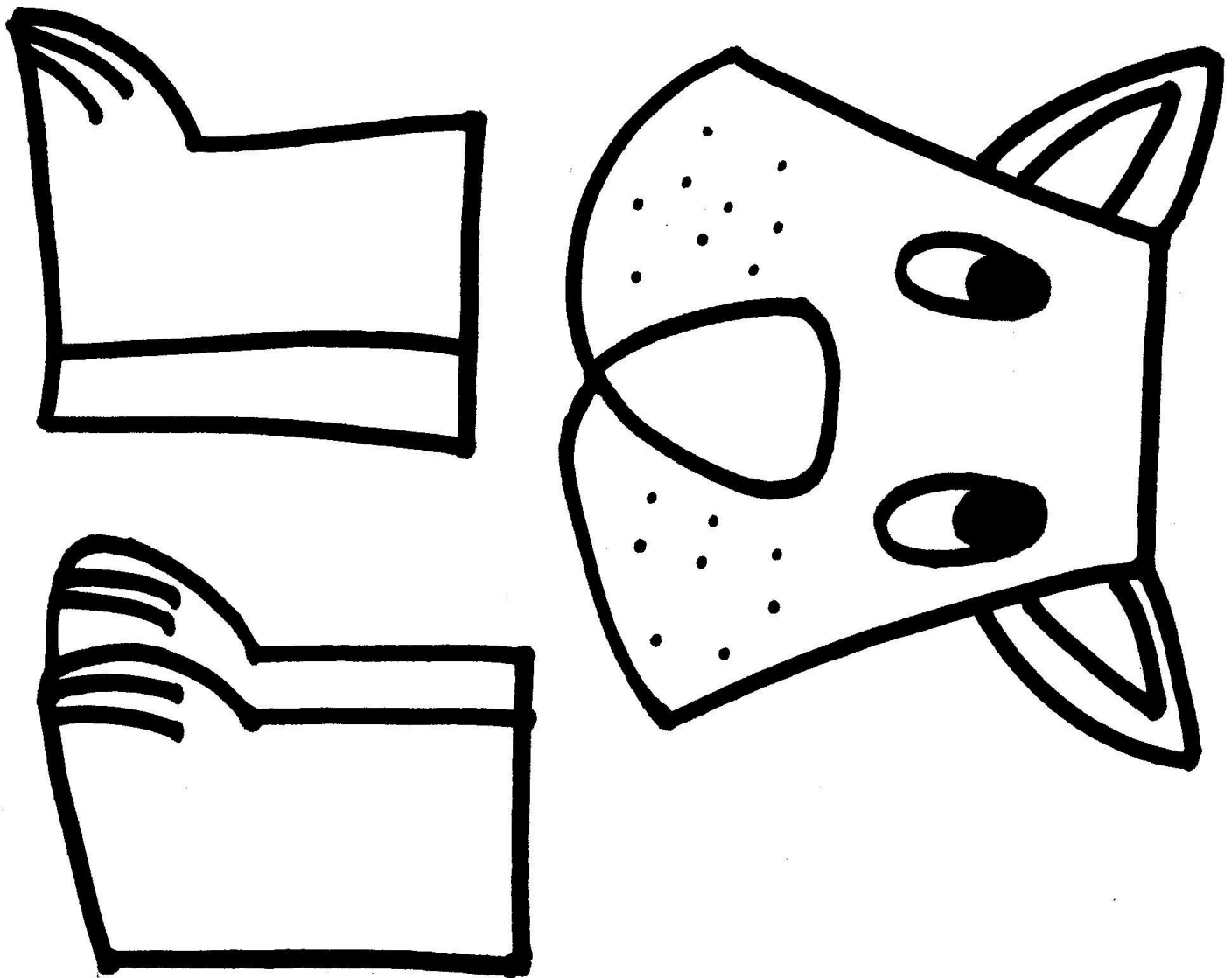


MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

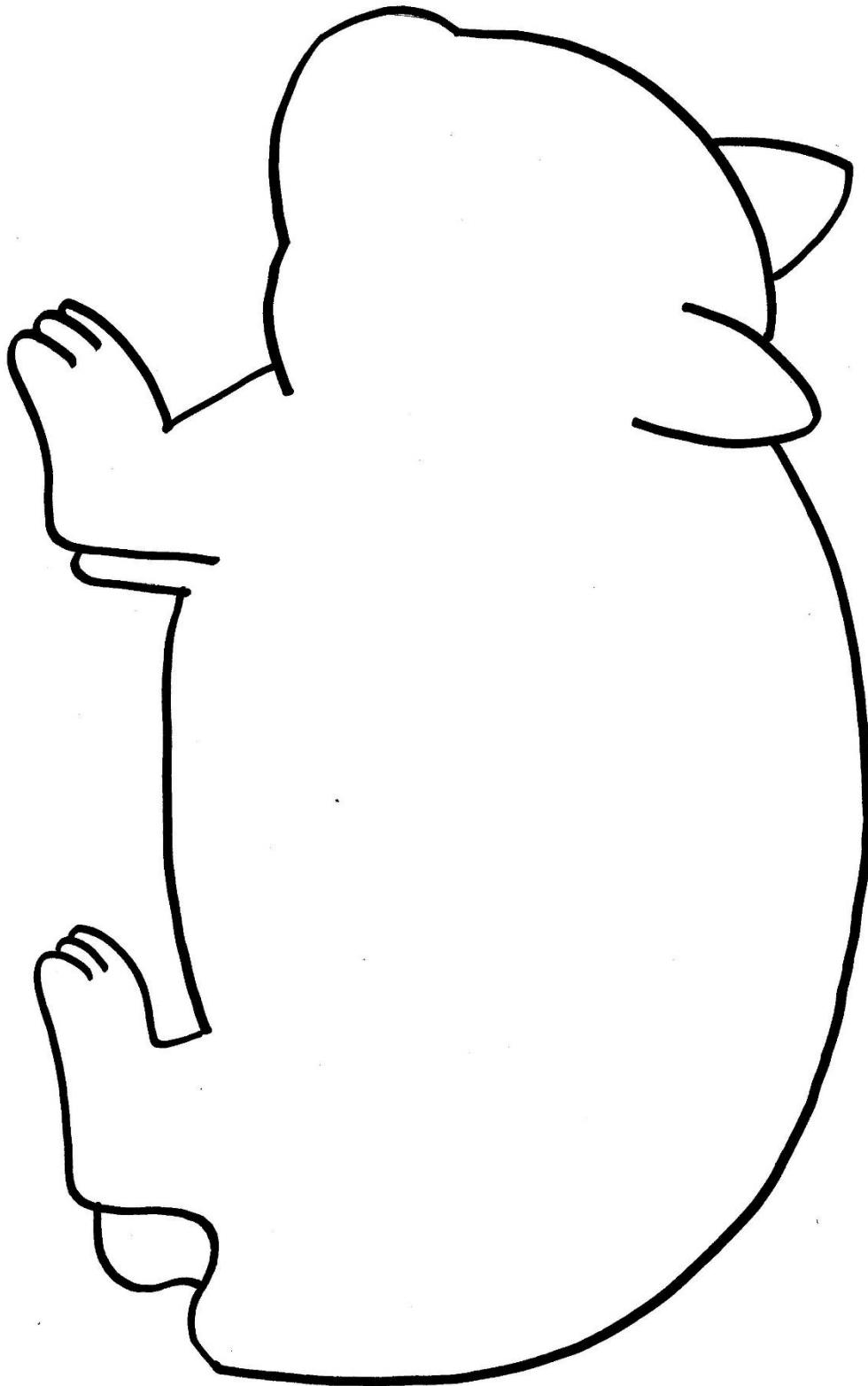


Art tasks (paper plate wombat)

Paint to paper plate and face leg templates and glue together. Add shredded green paper if you want to look like your wombat is eating



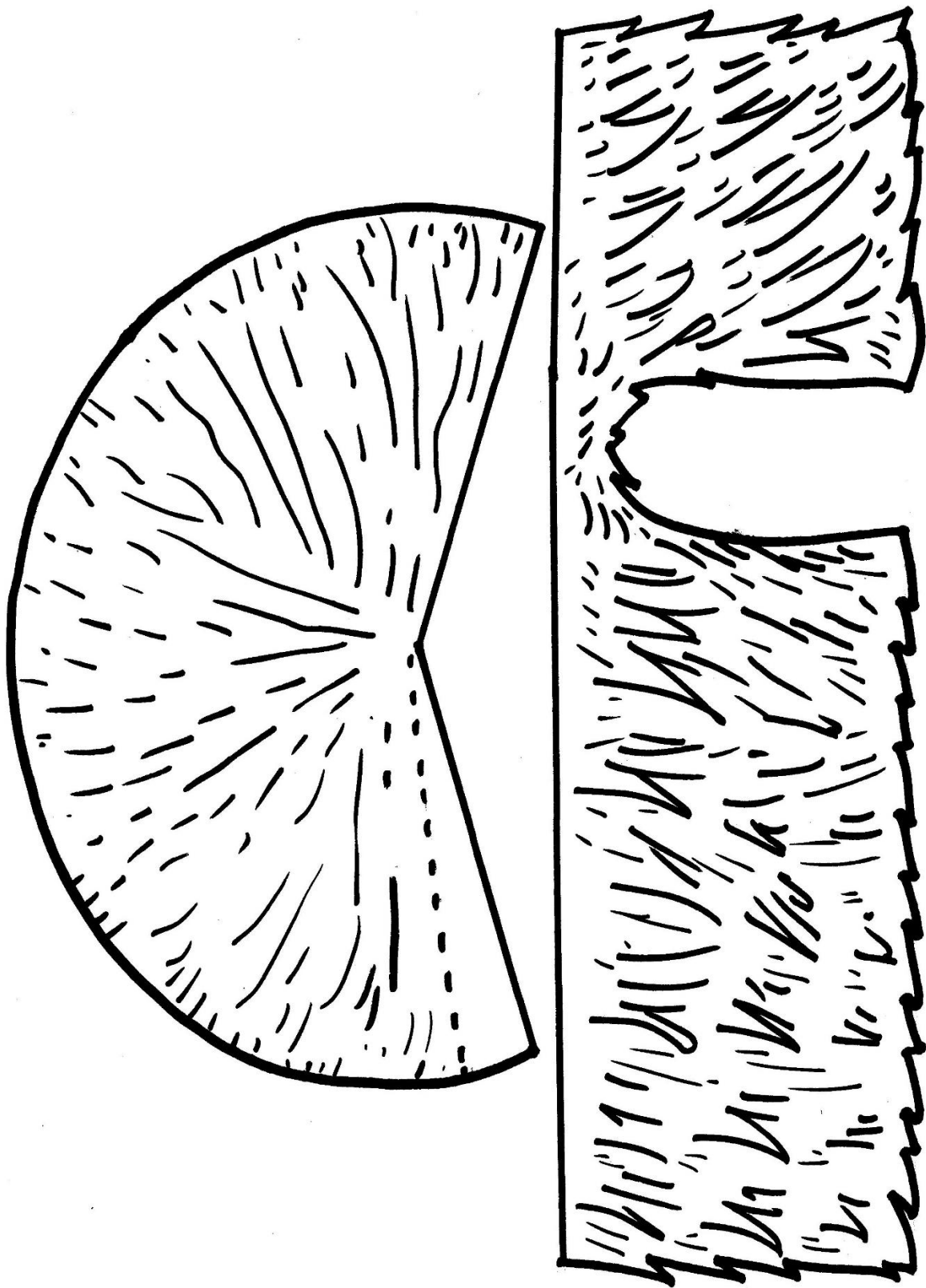
MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION



Cut strips of coloured or patterned

paper and cut a fringe on one side and glue the strips onto the wombat template and trim around the template. Add the nose with a black sharpie and glue on a goggle eye.

MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

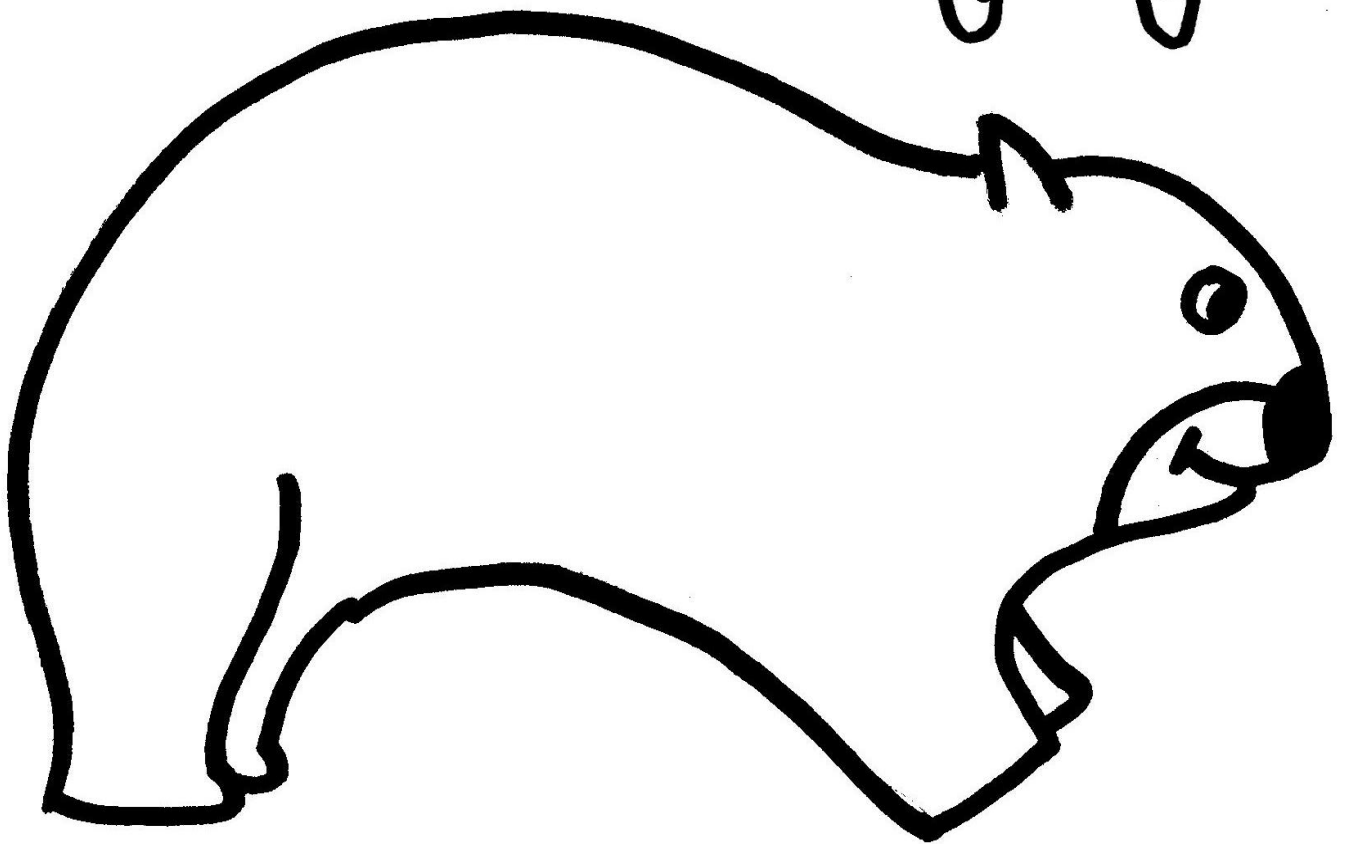
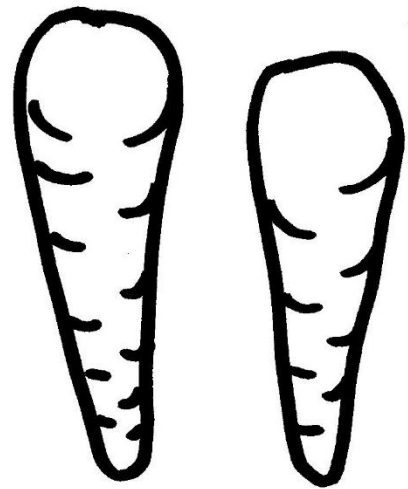


The Clever Old man's floating hut. Use the Clever Man image with the hut model if you wish.

The Clever Old Man

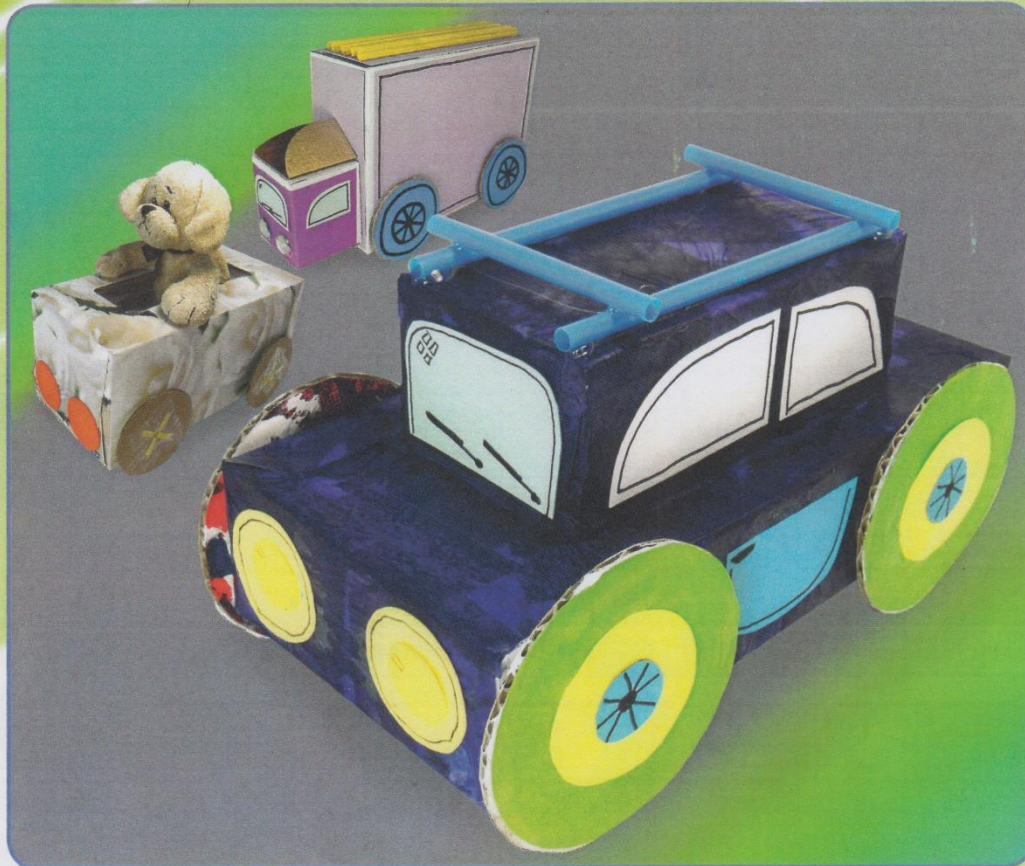


An alternative paper plate Wombat



MUDDLE-HEADED WOMBAT AND THE INVENTION

CARDBOARD CAR



NOTES

Make a cardboard car with rotating wheels that drive the car along.

This project illustrates how to construct a cardboard wheel and axle structure similar in principle to those used in actual vehicles.

PREPARATION

It is important to ensure that the wheel holes are in the same position on each side of the box. This ensures the car will roll evenly.

Remove the section of straw with the kink that bends the straw.

Make the straw axle slightly wider than the box so the wheels do not scrape the sides.

Small, dry food containers make excellent car bodies. The size and shape of the box is only limited by the length of the straw (minus the kink).

MATERIALS

- box cardboard
- plastic drinking straws
- scissors
- small boxes (e.g. food containers, tissue boxes etc.)
- permanent marker
- sharp pencil
- tape
- coloured paper
- decorations, paint
- Blu-Tack™ or similar
- cup or glass for tracing shapes for wheels
- ruler

CARDBOARD CAR CONT.



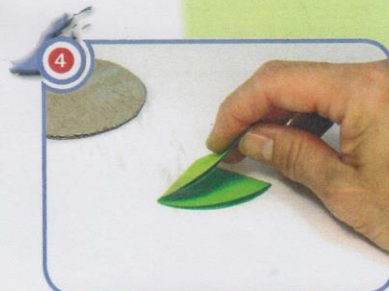
Trace four circles onto a sheet of box card.



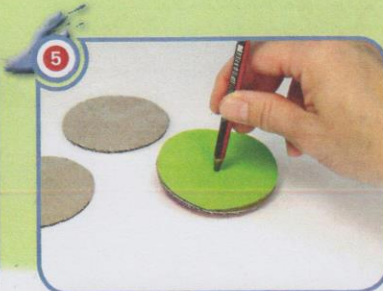
Cut out the circles.



To find the centre of the circle, trace and cut another circle from a sheet of paper.



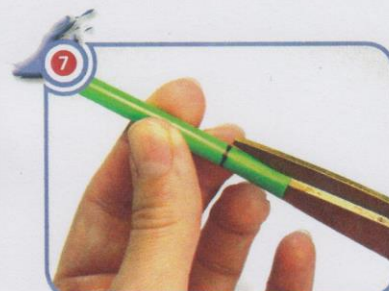
Fold the paper circle into quarters. Where the folds intersect is the centre point.



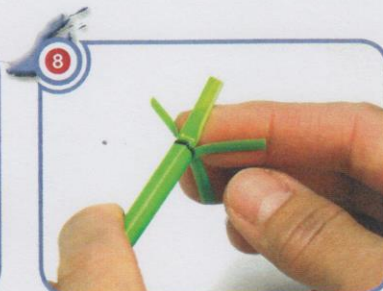
Position the paper circle over the card circle and punch through the centre with a sharp pencil. (Place a blob of Blu-Tack™ underneath.)



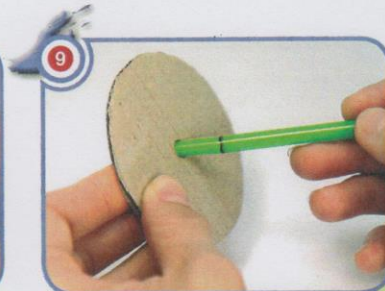
Use a permanent marker to mark a line around the top of the straw approximately 1 cm to 1.5 cm from the end.



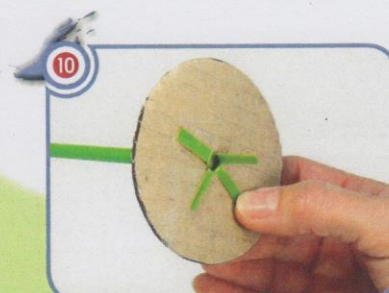
Snip four cuts evenly around the top of the straw, stopping at the marker line.



The end of the straw can now be flattened down to form four strips.



Poke the cut end of the straw into the wheel hole.



Fold the plastic strips so they lie flat on the cardboard. Use small pieces of tape to secure the strips.



Tape the cardboard box closed.



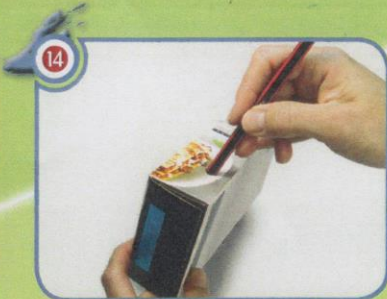
Measure four spots onto the bottom corners of each side of the box. Make sure the spots are in the same place on each side. Alternatively, make a template (see next step).

CARDBOARD CAR CONT.



13

Make a template with a hole in the position you would like the wheel axle to pass through. Line the template up to the sides of each corner and mark.



14

Poke four holes into the sides of the box at the marked positions. Push a slightly larger object through so the wheel holes are bigger and the straw can roll easily.



15

Poke the axle through both holes.



16

Trim and mark a line around the straw, leaving a little space between the side of the box and the line.



17

Cut slits into the straw as in Step 7.



18

Thread the second wheel onto the straw.



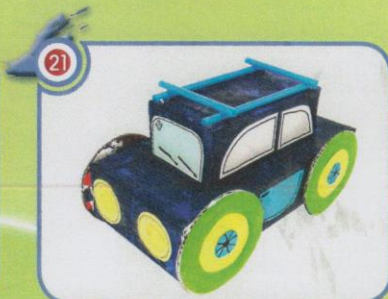
19

Fold down the strips and tape to secure.



20

Do the same with the remaining axle. Now the wheels will rotate and the cardboard car can be pushed along.



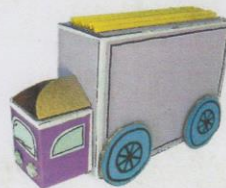
21

Add a smaller box to the top of the car. Paint and add decorations including: papier-mâché (coloured tissue paper), cut paper shapes and a roof rack made out of plastic straws.

ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTIONS



Use the hole in a tissue box to sit a small toy, figurine or cardboard character.



Glue a small box to the front of a larger box to make a truck.



Images to use





Wombats

CLASS: Mammalia
 ORDER: Monotremata
 FAMILY: Tachyglossidae

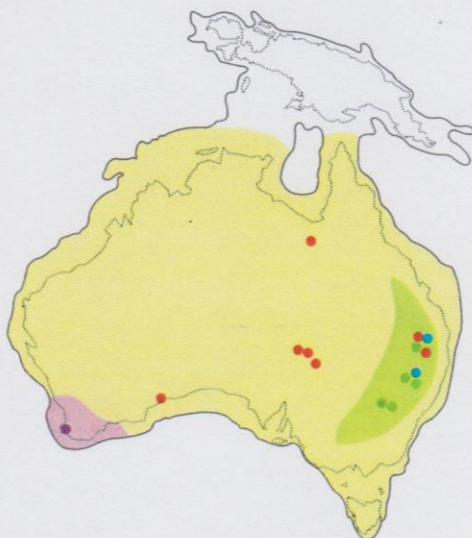


EXTINCT SPECIES

		LENGTH	WEIGHT
Giant Wombat	<i>Phascolonus gigas</i>	1.70 m	200 kg
Large Wombat	<i>Ramsayia magna</i>	1.30 m	100 kg
	<i>Phascolomys medius</i>	1.10 m	50 kg
	<i>Vombatus hacketti</i>	1.00 m	35 kg

LIVING COMPARISONS

Common Wombat	<i>Vombatus ursinus</i>	0.98 m	26 kg
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The Giant Wombat, *Phascolonus gigas*, was one of a number of fossil wombats described by Richard Owen at the British Museum in 1872. A few years later, the director of the South Australian Museum, Edward Stirling, and his colleagues found a more complete skull at Lake Callabonna. At twice the height and girth of the living Common Wombat, but with the same sturdy build and strong digging legs, the Giant Wombat must have been a formidable creature to encounter.

- *Phascolonus gigas*
- *Phascolomys medius*
- *Ramsayia magna*
- *Vombatus hacketti*



Palate of *Phascolonus gigas* from Lake Callabonna

Apart from their large size, Pleistocene wombats probably had very similar lives to modern wombats. They were grazers and probably dug for roots and tubers in forested areas, just like modern wombats do. While *Phascolonus gigas* appears to have been better adapted to grassland areas, the other wombats lived in woodland areas.

Modern wombats live in vast, complex warrens, but it is unlikely that wombats over about fifty kilograms could have done so. A burrow big enough for *Phascolonus gigas* would have been one metre in diameter, big enough for a child to walk inside standing upright. A long tunnel this size would collapse in most soil conditions. Other large mammals that utilise underground dens, like bears, tend to build simpler dens rather than complex warrens, and often utilise natural features such as fallen or hollow trees and rocks to support their dens. Grizzly Bears, for example (which are about the same size as the Giant Wombat), typically dig their dens about two metres into a slope, with a narrow entrance widening out into a bigger chamber.

Ramsayia magna was not quite as big as *Phascolonus gigas* but was probably still very much bigger than a modern wombat, while *Phascolomys medius* was only twice the size. Not all of the Pleistocene wombats were giants though. *Warendja wakefieldi* was a small, narrow-muzzled wombat found in western Victoria and South Australia which probably only grew to about half the size of modern wombats (about ten kilograms). Its slender form has led some scientists to suspect it may even have been able to climb trees.



The Muddle-headed Wombat



MUDDLE-headed Narrative

Write your own Muddle-headed Wombat story.

Include his first- and second-best friends (Mouse and Tabby Cat)

Make sure he gets into strife and make sure the characters stay 'in character'. (Mouse should always be the wise, knowledgeable one, for example)

Use some muddle-upped words as well.

You might consider introducing a new character to the story?

Make sure you describe the setting and try using some metaphors (Wombat is a walking disaster area' and similes 'The creek was as dry as a desert'.)

Rough draft paper has been provided. We will type up our good copy.



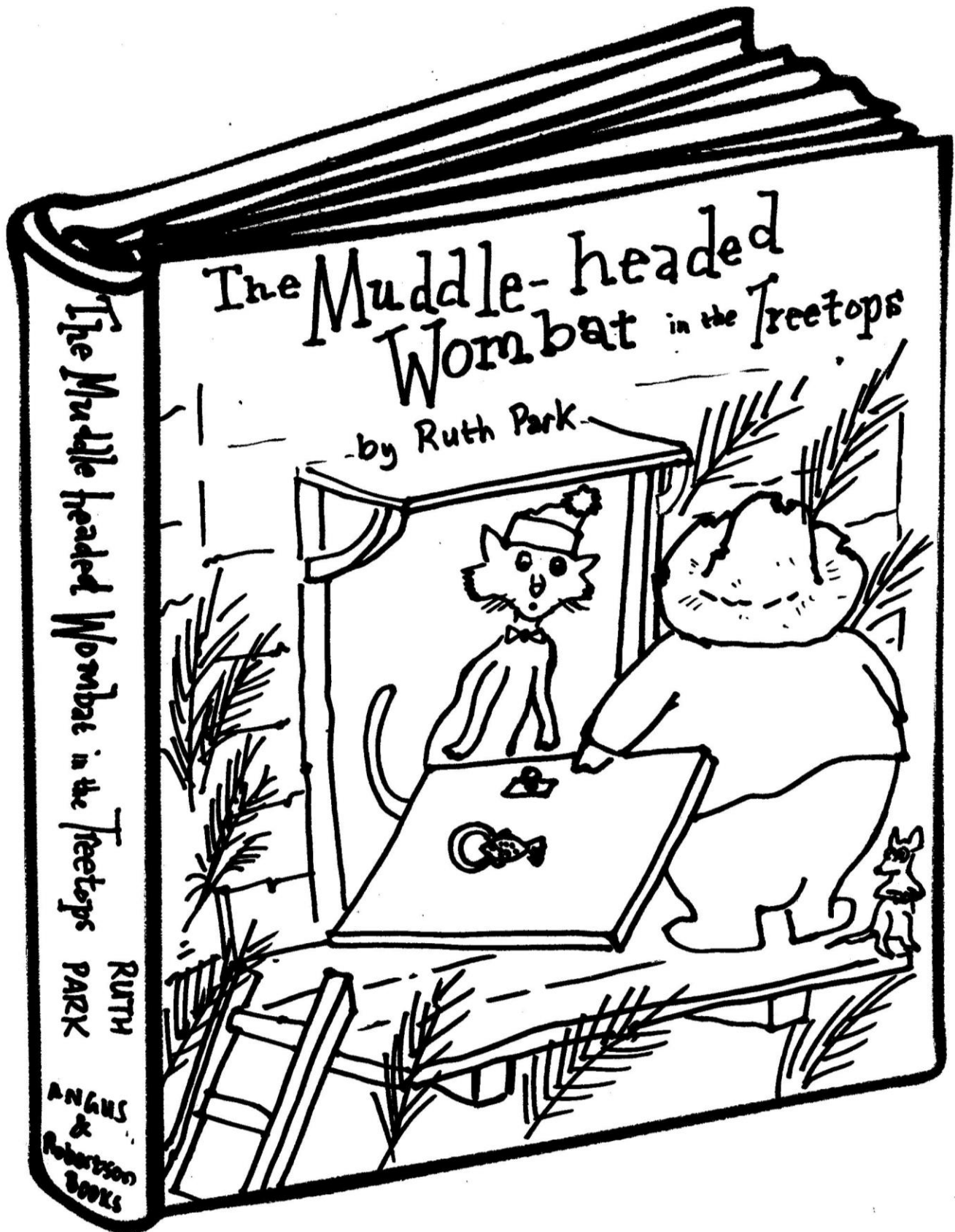
Make some cubby's



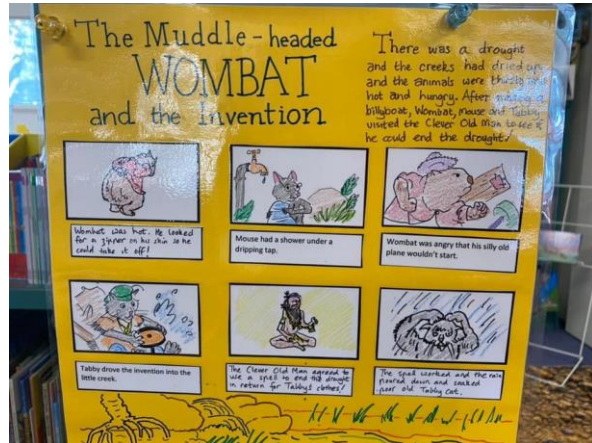
Wombat and his friend's image to use.

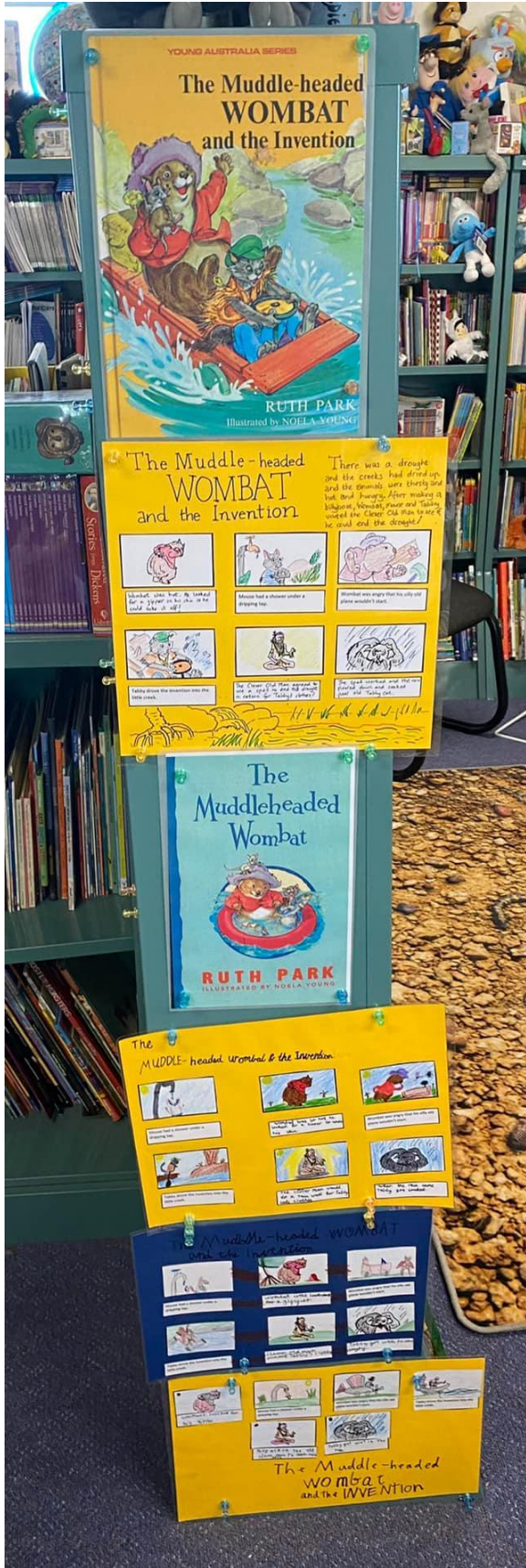


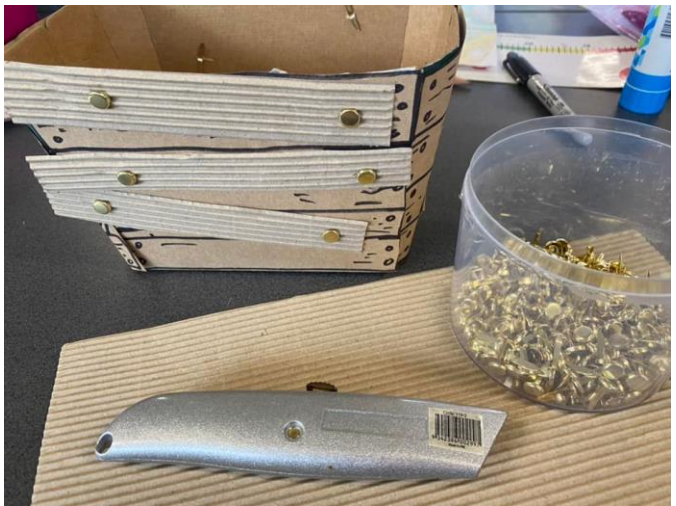
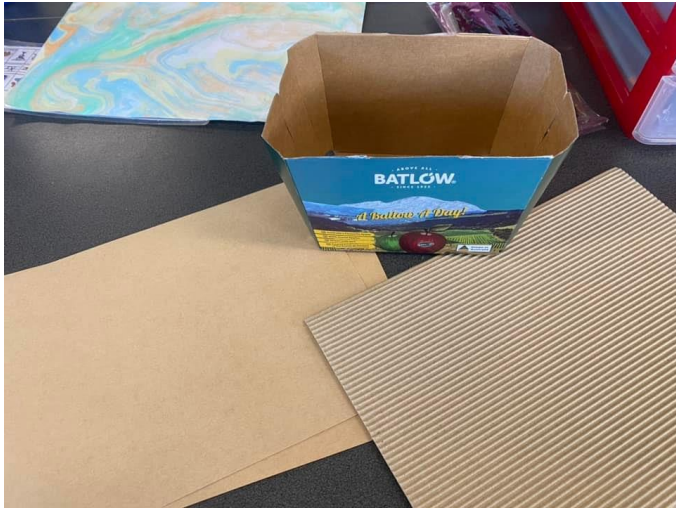
Sample alternative book cover



Student work and photos of work samples.





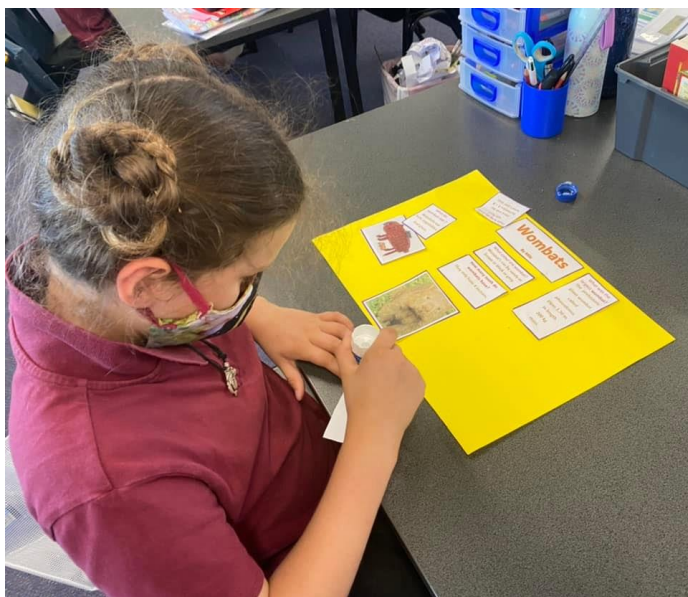
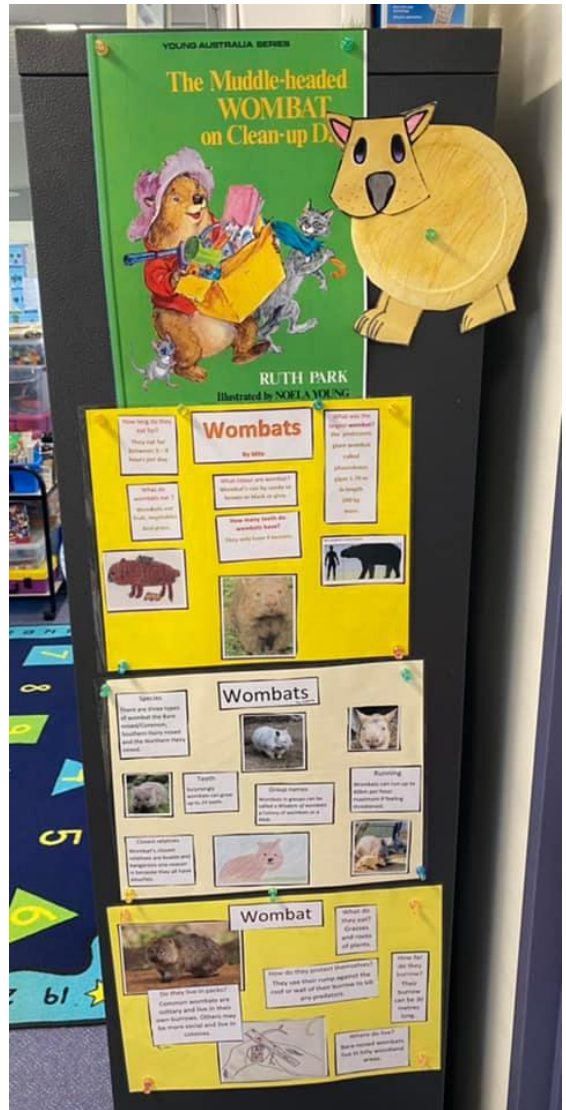


Studying the Muddle-headed Wombat provides a great opportunity to invite a wildlife expert to visit the school.(or visit a wildlife park) Because snakes are a problem at our school in summer we had Mike from Black Snake Productions come out to talk to us about snake safety and introduce us to some native venomous snakes... to stay away from.



How to apply a pressure bandage if bitten and handling a blue-tongue lizard





About this off-site unit

This unit contains a unit plan with associated worksheets

A research task (A3 card has been provided for the good copy) Children will need access to the internet or books for research. Information should be typed into text boxes (we have done this before at school) or written into ruled up boxes. With the title it should all be arranged and glued onto the card provided

A narrative writing project. (Lined rough draft paper has been provided (or it can be used as a good copy if they can't type and print off at home)

Art material (straws, paper plates, A4 patterned paper A4 coloured card) Templates printed on card have also been provided.

You should still have coloured pencils. Textas, crayons, water colour paint, glue sticks at home but I can provide extras to pick up if required.

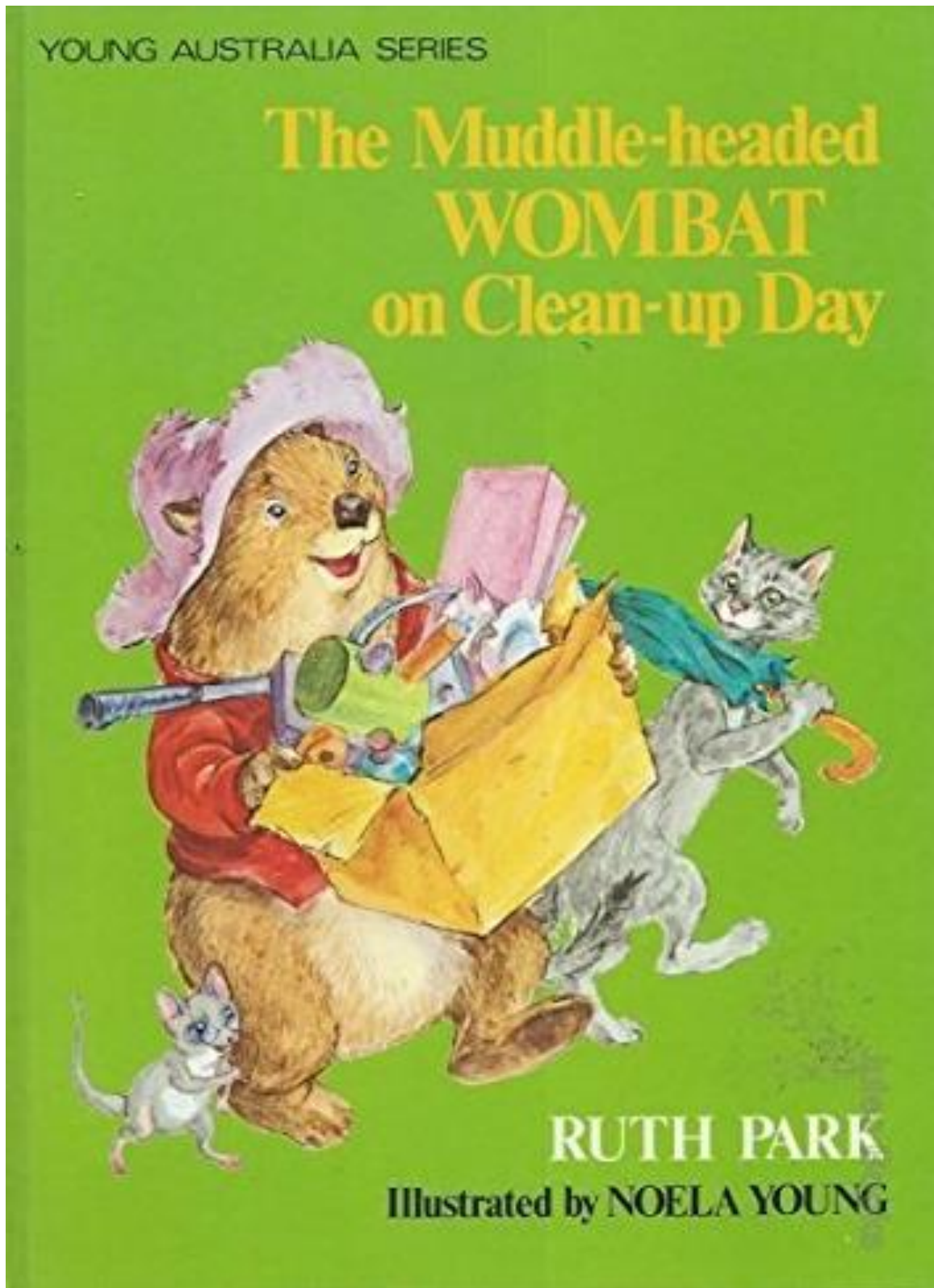
You will need to provide a box for the model 'car'.

This should be sufficient reading/writing and research work for 5-10 school days depending on the effort you put into your work. The book will be read by me and downloaded onto the school's Facebook page. (The follow-up unit to this is the Wind in the Willows unit)



BONUS ACTIVITIES for

The Muddle-headed Wombat on Clean-up Day



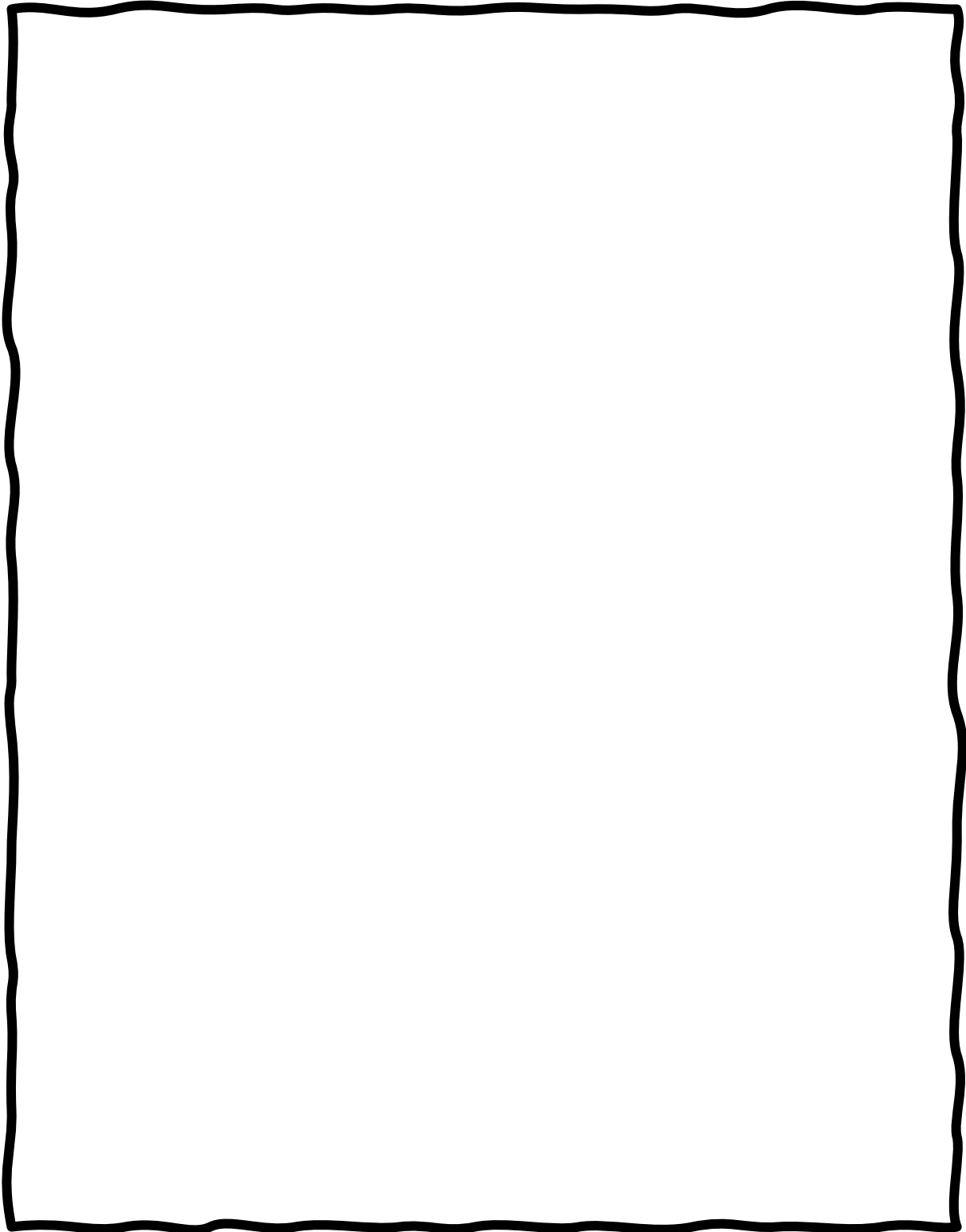
Muddle-headed Wombat in Clean-up Day

Create a list of chores for you to do at home or school to keep your home/school clean.

Job	Description of job	How often the job needs to be done.	Payment?

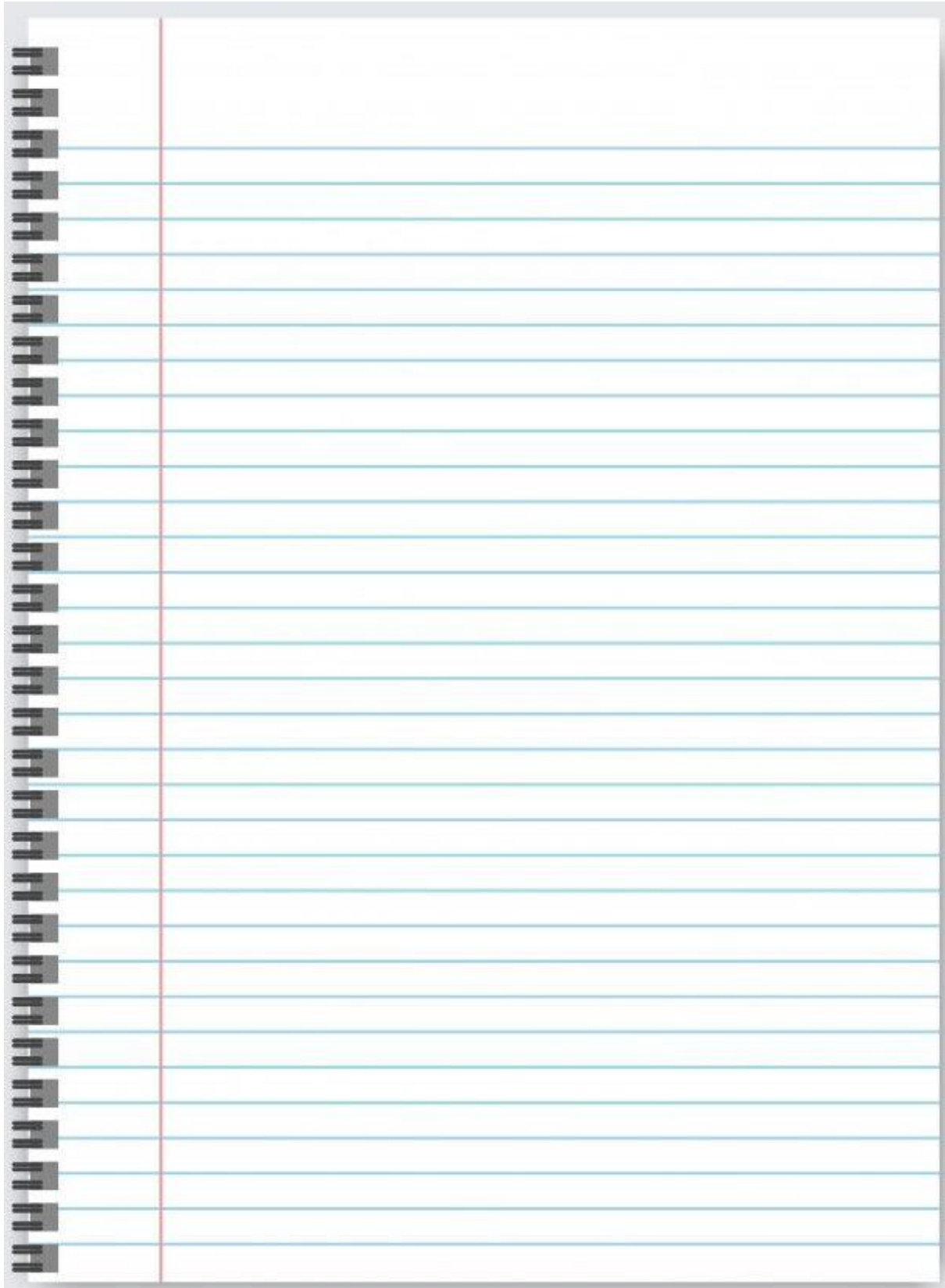
Muddle-headed Wombat in Clean-up Day

Write the notice that is hanged on the big cabbage tree (by the humans) about 'Clen-Up Day' in Big Bush.



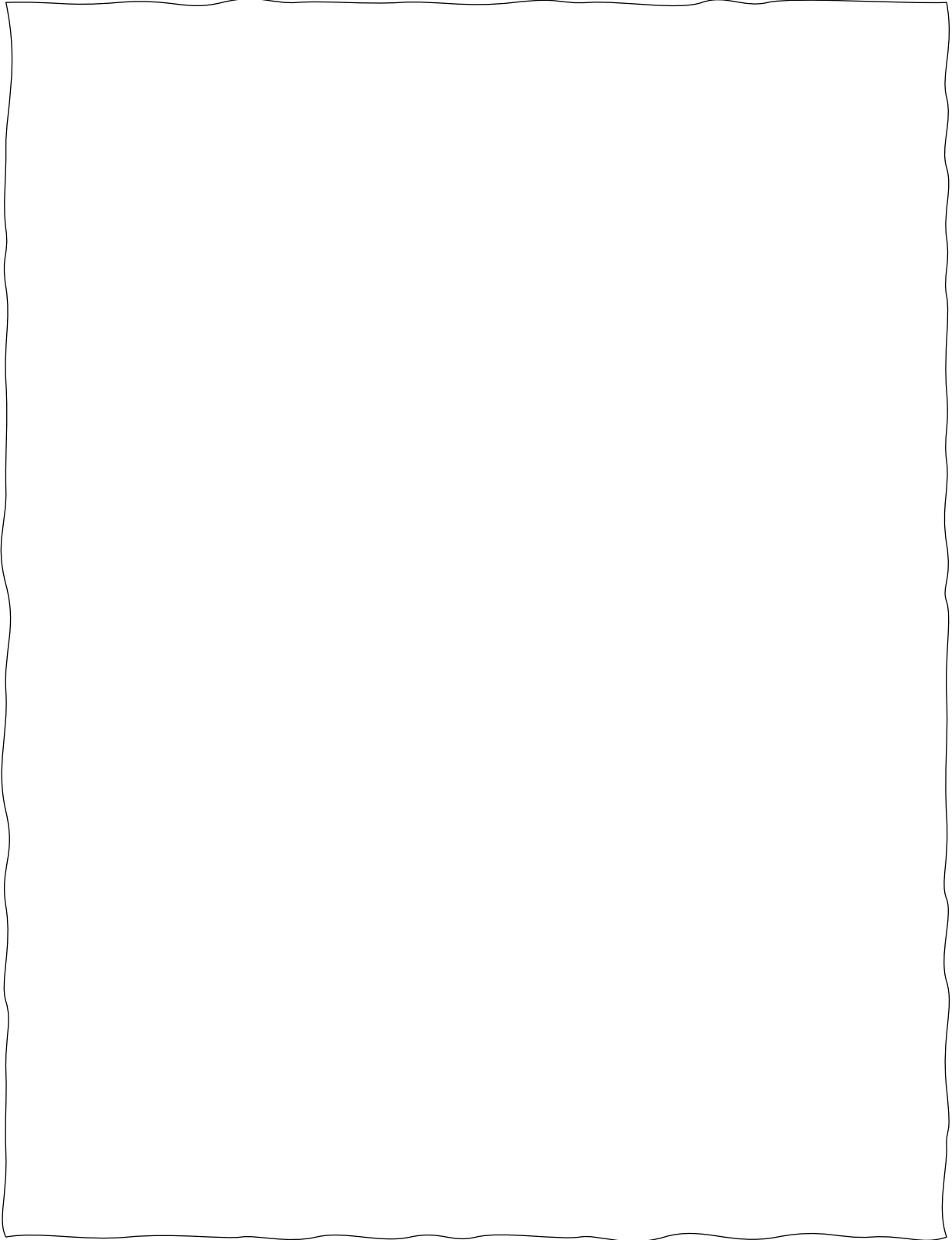
Muddle-headed Wombat in Clean-up Day

If you had a big clean up day at home, what would you throw out? Make a list.

A spiral-bound notebook with a red margin line and blue horizontal lines for writing. The notebook is oriented vertically and has a grey cover visible on the left side. The pages are white with a red vertical line on the left side, creating a margin. There are approximately 25 blue horizontal lines across the page.

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Create your own 'Keep Big Bush clean' poster



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In this story Tabby says he enjoys a little 'stickybeaking'. Stickybeaking means to *pry into other people's affairs*

Match up these Australian slang words with their meanings

Australian slang word	Its meaning
Barbie	friend
Billabong	Barbecue
Bludger	Something that's true
Cobber	fool
Dead set	Pond in a dry riverbed
Drongo	Hard work
Hard yakka	Interior of Australia
No worries	sunglasses
Outback	food
Sunnies	happy
Tucker	lazy
stoked	No problem

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Tabby and Wombat caught....'rubbish fever'

What is rubbish fever. Fill out this doctor's report about catching it. What might the treatment be?

TREATMENT FORM

BIG BUSH HOSPITAL

Name of illness:

Patient's name:

Symptoms:

.....

.....

Treatment:

.....

.....

Vet's name:Date:

Photo of the animal displaying the illness.

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In this book a bandicoot tries to take Mrs. Koala's old sponge cake as a doorstep, and he is described as a 'small shabby animal'. Ruth Park describes them in a similar unflattering manner in other stories. Find out 4 facts about this poor maligned animal.

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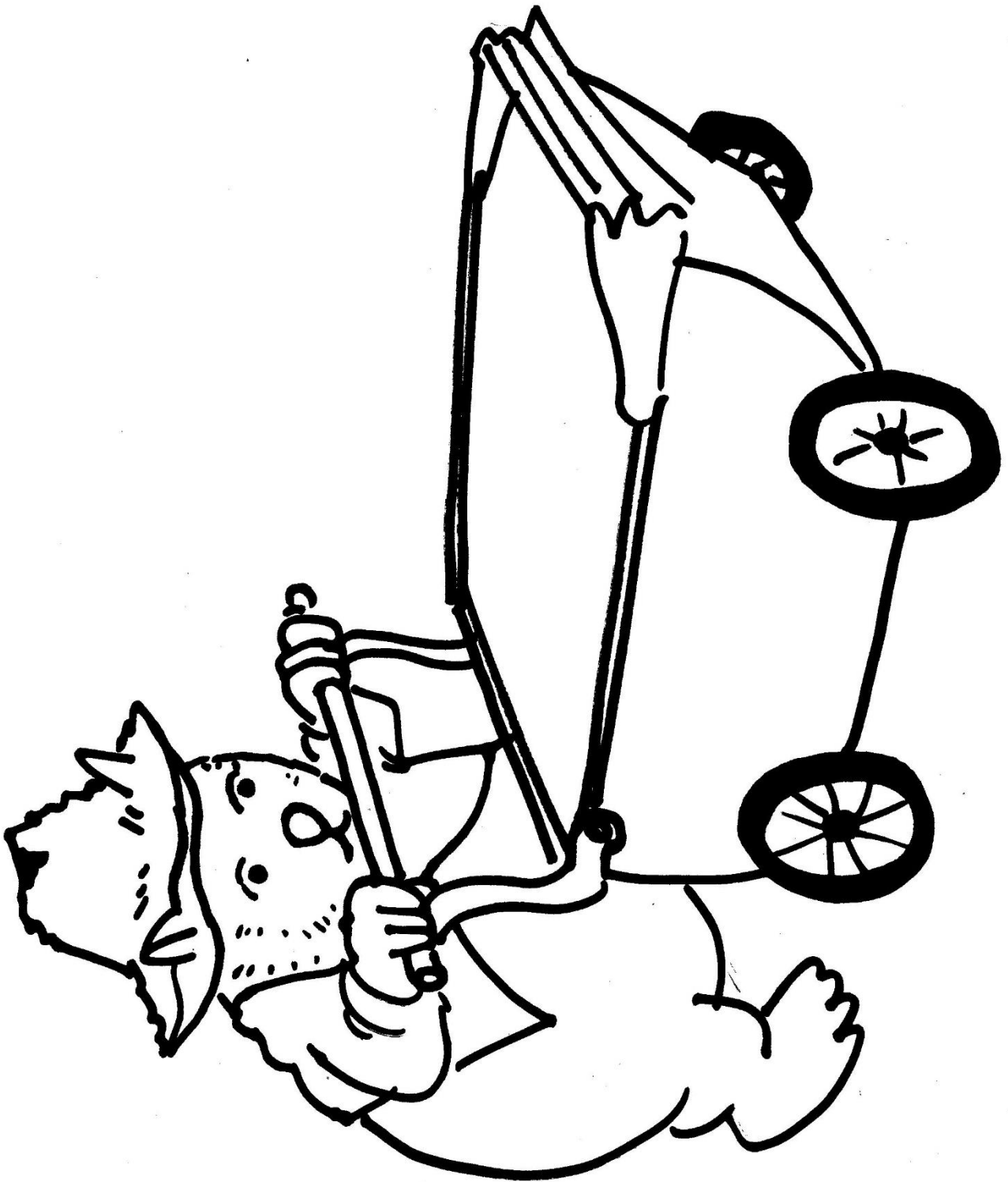


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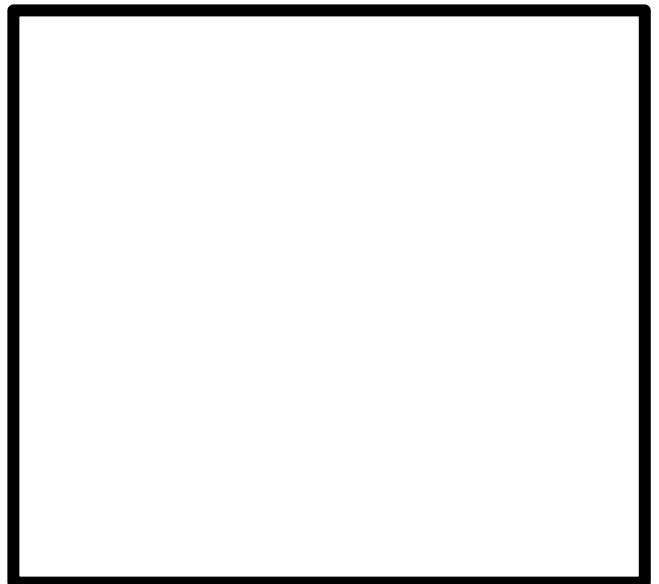
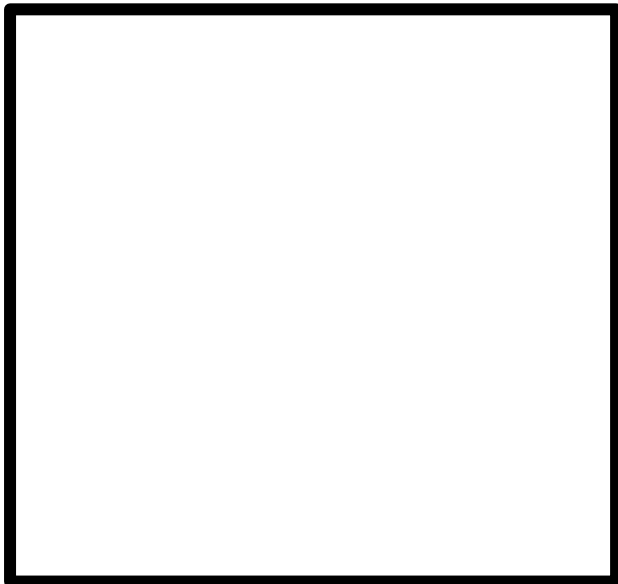
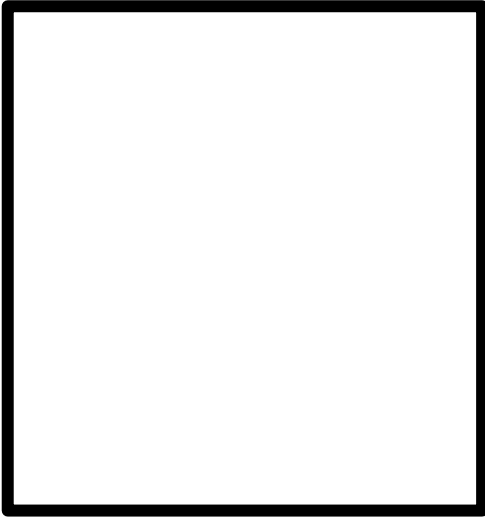
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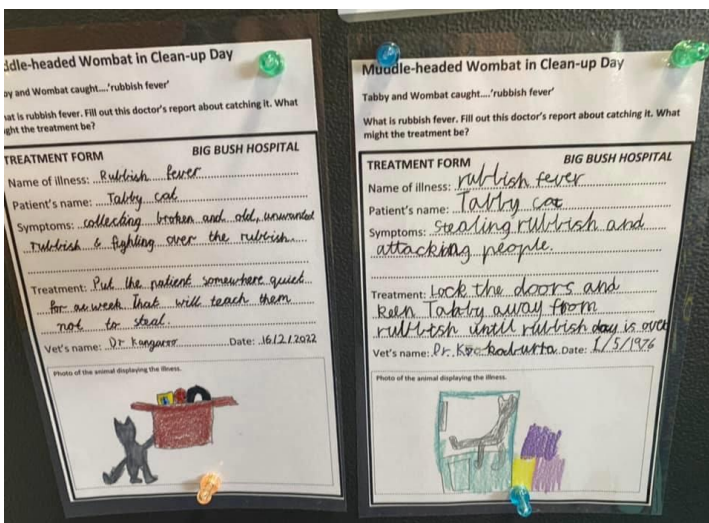
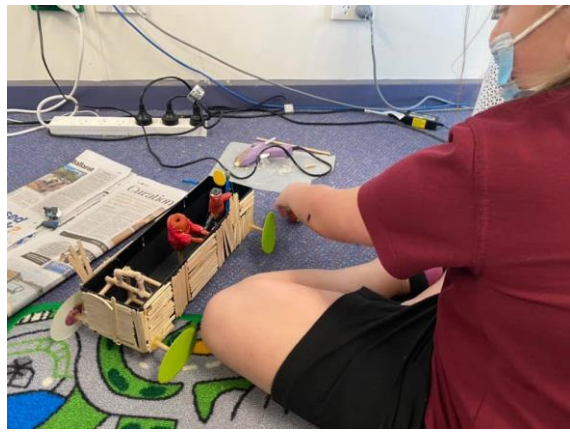
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Fill the old pram with rubbish that Wombat and Tabby might have collected.



Muddle-headed Wombat in Clean-up Day (Comic)







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