



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

6-plus - lower to middle primary

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, Science (Prep to 3-4)
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and creative thinking, Personal and social capability
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Sustainability

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- To develop knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading and viewing.
- To explore different text types.
- To learn that living things grow, change and have offspring. That there are similarities between different categories of animals, and different animals have different needs.
- To learn about caring and respect for animals.
- To understand that science involves observing, asking questions about, and describing changes in, objects and events.
- To understand that people use science to care for their environment and living things. And use information to predict future behaviour.
- To explore ideas around friendship, family, emotions and planning for the future.

THEMES

- Zoos, animals, the environment, sustainability and science
- Friendship and family

PREPARED BY

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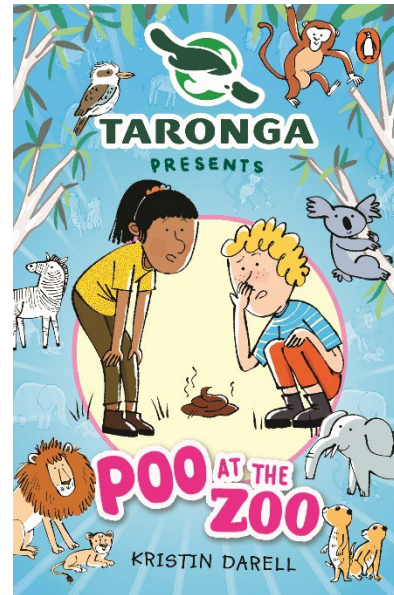
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Taronga Zoo Presents Poo at the Zoo

Written by Kristin Darell
Illustrated by Laura Wood

PLOT SUMMARY

The first in the ultimate animal-adventure series! From Australia's most popular zoo comes a wild junior fiction series, purrfect for animal lovers.

Sophia and Ollie have always wanted to work at Taronga Zoo like their parents so they're very excited when they find out that they can volunteer.

On day one they find out they will be working with the zookeepers . . . cleaning up after the animals. And when they find out their job involves poo, they're a bit disappointed. But there's more to 'poo patrol' than meets the eye and along the way they will get up-close and personal with all their favourite zoo creatures, big and small. And learn everything there is to know about one of their favourite animals, Mateo the koala.

There's a lot to learn before Sophia and Ollie are allowed to work at the Zoo. They're going to have to start at the bottom and work their way up!

In partnership with the world-class wildlife experts at Taronga Conservation Society Australia.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR and ILLUSTRATOR

Kristin Darell has been a passionate storyteller since she was a child. Whether it was making up adventures with her twin sister, or writing about the world around her, she was rarely found without a pen and paper in hand. As an adult, she made this passion her life. She worked as a broadcast news and sports journalist for major Australian news organisations for more than twenty years.

After the birth of her two children, Kristin re-focused her attention on writing for children. As an author, she has contributed to children's writing anthologies and is the acclaimed author of the Football Fever series with Football Australia and the Taronga Zoo presents series.

Kristin is a strong advocate for children's literature, working as the Program Manager for the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation. She lives on Sydney's northern beaches with her husband, two children, two dogs, pet snake and three-legged pygmy bearded dragon.

Laura Wood is originally from a small town in the north of Italy. She studied illustration in Melbourne, where she started her illustration career. She works in both commercial art and books for children. After a few years of travelling around the world, she now lives in Milan, Italy.

Paragraph

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Kristin says:

I am so thrilled and excited to share this book with you all because it brings together so many things I'm passionate about. There are the animals of course, all so different but equally amazing. Just like Ollie in the book, I've loved diving deep and learning new facts about Australian and exotic creatures. Working with Taronga Zoo has also helped me understand the vital role it plays in conservation and the tireless efforts by so many to ensure these animals are around for many generations to come.

It's true that as an author, a bit of me ends up in my stories, and I think the character Sophia is proof of that. Caring for animals and wildlife is a passion I share with my kids, and imagining a child with the same love was easy. Giving Sophia a best friend like Ollie who shares that love just makes the experience even more special. I firmly believe that when you find people who love what you love, you find a space to can be authentically yourself. Sophia and Ollie have that in spades.

So, the book has animals, an amazing setting and wonderful friends, but there's one final piece to the puzzle – these books are a whole lot of fun too! I hope you enjoy *Poo at the Zoo* and sharing it with your students ... and don't forget to share as many bad animal jokes as you can find!

Questions

1. Do you have a favourite activity you do with friends? Do you have hobbies or interests that bring you and your friends closer, like Ollie and Sophia?
2. The author worked as a journalist before becoming a children's author. She was lucky to do research, share information and write about things that really happened. Have you ever wanted to know all about something and done some research for yourself? Did you want to tell everyone what you found out? How did you tell them?
3. These books are made up (fiction) but also contain lots of facts. The author found lots of 'unexpected' facts while researching the books. What are some unexpected, quirky or interesting facts you know or have discovered?

WRITING STYLE

Kristin has a 'conversational' and humorous style.

This story is written in the past tense third person.

Kristin leaves lots of room for Laura's entertaining illustrations to tell the story and show lots of the humour.

The above writing techniques can be explored by students and Laura's illustrations are an excellent place to being discussions about visual literacy.

Questions and Activities

1. What do you think the word 'conversational' means. It's based on the word 'conversation' and the opposite of conversational is 'formal'. This is called the 'tone' of the writing.

Underline the words in the following paragraph that are 'conversational'. Could you re-write the text in a more 'formal' way?

Sophia glanced at them and then it hit her. This was a test. Her eyes darted to Ollie. He still looked like he'd rather not be there. She knew how easily he got grossed out - he was always trying to get out of helping with his little sister Katy's nappies. (Page 17)

Can you explain what makes the following dialogue 'formal'?



'Well, Soph,' Ollie said, his voice surprisingly calm.
'Thanks to that experiment, I can now confirm that
elephant poo . . . doesn't stink.'

Something between a snort and a laugh burst from
Sophia. Who was this person and what had he done
with Ollie?

'Yes,' she said. 'I believe your conclusion is correct.'
(Page 80)

2. Past tense means that the story happened in the past. The doing words (verbs) use the past tense version of the word. Can you change these sentences to make them present tense (happening now)?

The poo was heavy, and there was plenty of it, but the four of them got the job done quickly. (Page 82)

3. Third person means that the story is being told by a 'narrator' or storyteller, not in the voice of someone who is in the story. How would this paragraph be written if the book was 'narrated' by Ollie (in the 'first-person')?

'Three hundred!' Ollie's voice cracked. He swallowed. 'That's a lot of poo.'

'It sure is, and guess what? Your first job as volunteers is to count every single one.'

Ollie didn't even try to hide his horror. 'Count them?' he whispered.

'Like, one at a time?' Sophia was feeling a little queasy now too. (page 28)

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the illustration on the cover of the book. What do you think the story will be about?
2. The illustration is just one of the things on the front cover. What other elements can you find that create the full cover and why are they there?
3. What does the full cover tell you about the characters in the book? Are there any other things you can learn about the story?
4. Before reading the blurb on the back cover, write your own blurb, based on the cover. Include where the story is set, the characters'

names and what problems they are going to face in the story.

5. Now, read the blurb on the back. It includes information about the characters, the setting and the story. Did it make you want to read the story? How?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

- The book includes pages from Ollie's Fun Fact book at the end. Think about how the story and the Fun Facts pages are **different text types**? How is the 'tone' different? What makes one fiction and the other non-fiction? How is the text laid out? Are some elements missing from non-fiction (like dialogue or characters)?

Can you research some fun facts and write your own non-fiction fun facts list?

Can you write or tell a short fiction using those facts?

Imagine you are Sophia or Ollie and you get to take part in the Free Flight Birds experience? Write a diary entry describing what happened and what it felt like? You can experience the Free Flight Birds for yourself by visiting the Zoo or watching it at

<https://youtu.be/wFacO1W35Sk?si=3ecaPUQXJCTisL1n>

- Even though the book is fiction, do you have a better understanding about **how livings things grow, change**, feed and poop after reading it? What part of the story helped you to understand that? Which was your favourite animal? What did you learn about how that animal lives?

Can you draw a picture of your favourite animals and surround it with the facts you learned? Be inspired by visiting the Zoo or watching some of the Zoo's animals at:

<https://www.youtube.com/@TarongaSydney>
or <https://www.instagram.com/tarongazoo>

- What **similarities between different categories of animals** did you see? For example, what is similar about a koala and an elephant? What categories do they fit into? For example, are they mammals, reptiles, insects or fish? Are they warm-blooded or cold-blooded? Diurnal or nocturnal? Do they have fur, fins or scales? How many ways do you know to categorise animals? Can you research some more?

Choose two animals in the book. What are the differences between them? How can we use categories to talk about those differences and



understand **how different animals have different needs**.

An important word for categorising animals is 'species'. Can you find out what that means? Can you look up the 'species' names for the animals in the book?

Pair up and pretend you are giving a keeper talk, just like Sophia and Ollie. Choose two animals and talk about the similarities and differences between them and their care.

You can watch a real keeper talk at https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxwyYgy4x03jL1aNYWwOh3n_SIDwHBhfo&si=C1yWeCmZ81hlAm6V

- Working at the Zoo, Sophia and Ollie are learning **about caring for and gaining respect for animals**.

What did you learn from the book about how Taronga Zoo cares for their animals and how they are helping to look after animals that live in the wild?

Think about the 'enrichment' they do with the lions. The breeding program for the endangered Sumatran tigers. And the help they give the rescued koala joey. Share your thoughts with class.

Choose one of the videos at the link below and then share what you have learned as a talk, comic or drawing, story or non-fiction text.

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxwyYgy4x03jL1aNYWwOh3n_SIDwHBhfo&si=C1yWeCmZ81hlAm6V

- Sophia and Ollie are learning to be scientists. They are understanding **that science involves observing, asking questions about, and describing changes in, objects and events**. And that they can **use information to predict future behaviour**.

Re-read the sections about counting Mateo's poo and logging the number and the consistency and colour? Discuss as a group how they have observed, asked questions, and described the poo to come to a conclusion about how much Mateo has eaten and how well he is? How might they use this information to make a prediction?

The characters in the book sometimes use 'scientific terms'. How do you think you would find out what they mean? Read the following paragraph on its own, then read the section around it in the book. Highlight the words you don't understand. Can you use context clues to have a guess what they mean? Can you break any of the words down into smaller words that might help you understand?

'When a joey is shifting from milk to solid food,' Sam explained, 'the mum produces something called "pap". It's full of all the micro bacteria they need to get their gut ready for eucalyptus leaves.' (Page 99)

Practise using a dictionary to find out the meaning of the word and compare to your educated guess.

Look at the drawing on page 50. Can you find out some information on animal food or animal pawprints and create a game of Whose Food? Or Who's Pawprints?

- Ollie and Sophia understand that **people use science to care for their environment and living things** and they want to grow up to have jobs that help animals.

Have you heard of these jobs? Veterinarian? Biologist? Zookeeper? Pathologist? Look them up and write down what you think would be the good parts of the job and the parts you would enjoy less. Can you think of any other science jobs or animal jobs? What would *you* like to be when you grow up?

- The story explores **ideas around friendship, family, emotions and planning for the future**.

Sophia is not keen on giving a keeper talk, but she steps up, finds her confidence and is great at it. Ollie is very unsure about working with poo because he gets easily grossed out, but he is brave and gets so used to it.

How would you say they have changed because of the things that happen in the story? This is called 'character development'? Can you think of a time where you have worried about doing something but did it anyway? How did it turn out? Write a personal reflection.

Sophia sees the people at the Zoo as her 'Zoo family'. In what way are she and Ollie like family? Do you have friends who are as close as family? Or do you have family who feel like friends? These are your 'characters'.

Can you think of a time you have done something exciting with friends? Or a time you have disagreed with your friend/s? Or a time something surprising happened? This is your 'plot'.

Think about any action or 'conflict' and how it ended or what the solution to the problem was/might be. How did your characters react? Feel? Or plan to solve the problem? How did the action or conflict affect your characters or their friendship?

Where did this happen? That's your 'setting'.



What the 'point of view'? Whose eyes will you tell the story through? Yours (first person), or a narrator (third person)?

Now you have the five key elements to tell a great story about you and your friends (characters, plot, conflict, setting and point of view).

Bonus points if the story involves animals!

FURTHER THEMES

- Caring for animals
- Animal facts
- The environment, sustainability and conservation
- Science and nature
- Science and nature careers
- Australian native animals
- Learning and sharing
- Friendship and family
- Overcoming worries and dealing with change



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Party Animals
by Kristin Darell
Illustrated by Laura Wood

It's Ollie's birthday, and Sophia has a secret. She knows what he's getting for his birthday. It's AWESOME, but she's not allowed to tell him! And it's her job to get him there on time. But will Ollie think she's ignoring his special day? Or will Ollie get the wild and wonderful birthday he's dreamed of all year?

Book Two of this fun and funny series written in partnership with the world-class wildlife experts at Taronga Conservation Society Australia.

Baby Boom and Night Owls
by Kristin Darell
Illustrated by Laura Wood

Sophia and Ollie are zookeepers for a day . . . and there's a new addition to the family! The holidays have finally arrived and so have lots of new babies. Taronga's Wildlife Hospital is filled with excitement. If Sophia and Ollie might even get the chance to look after the cutest baby of them all!

Sophia and Ollie are zookeepers for a day . . . and a night! Their parents are working late and that's a great chance for Sophia and Ollie to become nocturnal. But what are those strange sounds? Ollie is jumping at every shadow! It's spooky in the dark, but when someone goes missing, Sophia and Ollie won't rest until they're found.

Books Three and Four of this fun and funny series.

Taronga presents All About Animals Activity Book

Embark on a wild journey of knowledge with the ultimate activity book from the world-class wildlife experts at Taronga.

Packed with puzzles, mazes, dot-to-dots, colouring in, funny jokes, animal fact files and more, this bumper book is the perfect companion to animal lovers, mini-wildlife adventurers and future zookeepers!

Part of a publishing program presented by the world-class wildlife experts at Taronga Zoo.



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Poo at the Zoo	Kristin Darell Laura Wood	9781761347436	Junior primary	\$14.99		
Party Animals	Kristin Darell Laura Wood	9781761347443	Junior primary	\$14.99		
Baby Boom	Kristin Darell Laura Wood	9781761347481	Junior primary	\$14.99		
Night Owls	Kristin Darell Laura Wood	9781761347498	Junior primary	\$14.99		
Taronga presents All About Animals Activity Book		9781761347450	Middle primary	\$9.99		
TOTAL						

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