



Play
School

Story Time

PlayWorld

Ideas for Educators

In this episode of Play School Story Time, Ellie Cole shares 'The Beach Wombat' by Susannah Chambers & Mark Jackson.



Pedagogical characteristics

Selecting a story for the *Conceptual PlayWorld*

Story: The Beach Wombat

Written by Susannah Chambers and illustrated by Mark Jackson

Publisher: Allen and Unwin Children's, 2019

Pedagogical practices

- Select a story that is enjoyable for children and adults.
- Build drama for the characters in the story.
- Build empathy for the characters in the story.
- Choose a plot that lends itself to introducing a problem situation.
- Be clear about the concept(s) and its relation to the story and play plot to be developed.
- Choose adventures or journeys that spring from the plot.

Conceptual PlayWorld in action

- **Story summary:** This book is about a wombat experiencing life in a national park. The story can be used to learn about wombats and other nocturnal animals.
- What adventures does the wombat get up to? This wombat likes to play in the sun and sand, but most wombats emerge at night to forage for food and dig tunnels.
- **Problem situation:** The wombat could be a baby, who ventures out during dawn and loses his way. Who do baby wombats live with?
- **Concept:** Nocturnal animals (adaptation for survival).
- **Possible plot extension:** Other nocturnal animals could come out at night and help baby wombat. Children can pretend to be nocturnal animals and help the wombat get home before sunrise.

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Pedagogical characteristics

Designing a *Conceptual PlayWorld* space

Pedagogical practices

- Find a space in the classroom or outdoor area suitable for an imaginary *Conceptual PlayWorld* of the story.
- Design opportunities for child-initiated play in ways that develop the play plot further or explore concepts and make them more meaningful.
- Plan ways for children to represent their ideas and express their understandings.

Conceptual PlayWorld in action

- Turn an outdoor space into a national park full of nocturnal animals.
- Children can pretend to be the baby wombat character exploring on its own, or other nocturnal animals sleeping during the day. What adventures do they get up to during the night? Investigate the characteristics of nocturnal animals e.g. eyes & sight, claws, sense of smell.
- Create animal puppets to use in shared play and include their nocturnal adaptations e.g. owl's big eyes, wombat's long claws for burrowing in the dark, or bat's ears to help find their way at night.

Entering and exiting the *Conceptual PlayWorld* space

- Plan a routine for the whole group to enter and exit the *Conceptual PlayWorld* of the story where all the children are in the same imaginary situation.
- Children choose characters as they enter into the imaginary situation
- Educator is always a character in the story.

- To signify entering and exiting the imaginary situation together, pretend to crawl through a wombat tunnel made using playground equipment.
- Children and adults choose to be characters e.g. the lost baby wombat; or wombat's family (a group of wombats is called a wisdom/mob/or colony); or other nocturnal friends (e.g. koalas, bilbies, bats, owls, possums).
- Pretend to be 'experts' e.g. wildlife biologists who study animals or park rangers protecting the park.

Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario

- Problem scenario is not scripted, but a general idea of the problem is planned.
- Problem scenario is dramatic and engaging.

- Receive a letter from the Wombat in the story: *"Dear Children, I need your help. I ventured out of my burrow for the first time and got lost. I need to hurry back before my Mummy finds out. Please send my nocturnal friends to help me find my way home before sunrise. They will know how to find their way in the dark. Love from baby wombat"*.



Pedagogical characteristics

Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario
(continued)

Planning educator interactions to build conceptual learning in role

Pedagogical practices

- The problem invites children to investigate solutions to help the play in the *Conceptual PlayWorld*.
- Be clear about the concepts that will be learned from solving the problem situation, through children's play.
- Educators are not always the same character. Roles are not scripted.
- Plan who will have more knowledge and who will be present with the children to model solving the problem. Educators can take on different roles for the *Conceptual PlayWorld*. Plan your role to be either **equally present** with the children, or to **model practices** in a role, or to be **needing help** from the children. Your role can also be **together with** the child leading, where educators support children to act out the role or solution together.

Conceptual PlayWorld in action

- Children can focus on being nocturnal animals and their adaptations.
- Investigate how adaptations help nocturnal animals e.g. Why do some animals see better at night?
- Pretend to be baby wombat with its big nose to the ground smelling the grass, shrubs, roots, and vegetables.
- Plan for your role in the *PlayWorld* by choosing one of the following:
 - 1. Be equally present with older children** - e.g. "Let's learn about nocturnal animals together".
 - 2. Model practices in a role** - e.g. "I'm a Wildlife Biologist. Did you know wombats have an excellent claw for burrowing in the dark?".
 - 3. Seek help from the children** - e.g. "Can you tell me which animals would ne awake during the night to help the Baby Wombat?".
 - 4. Act out the role together with the child leading** - e.g. "Let's pretend to be the baby wombat together. We can dig tunnels at night and sleep during the day".

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