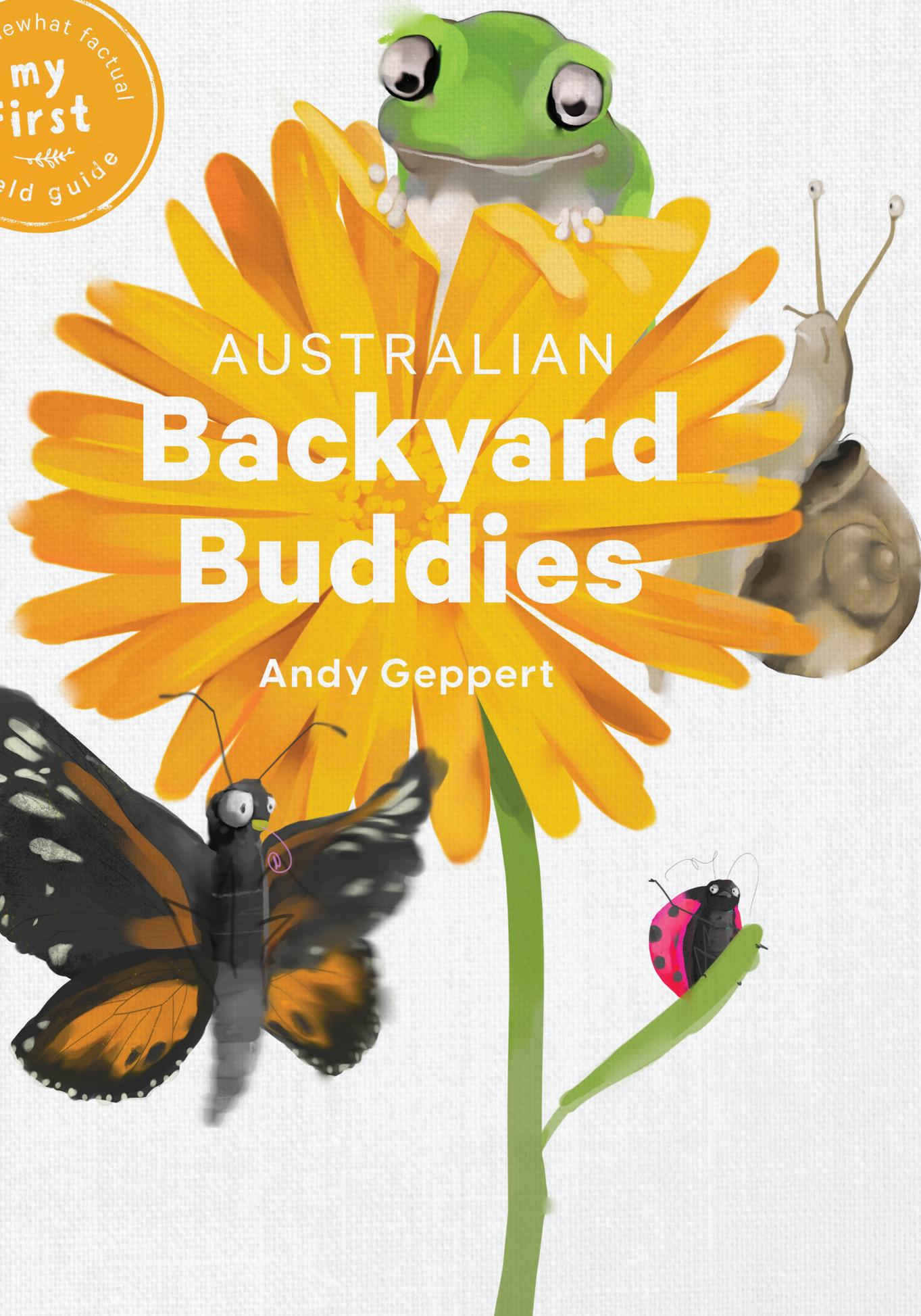


# TEACHERS RESOURCES



AUSTRALIAN  
**Backyard  
Buddies**

Andy Geppert



# AUSTRALIAN Backyard Buddies

**Andy Geppert**

**Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright**

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# INTRODUCTION

*Backyard Buddies* is a beautifully illustrated somewhat factual introduction to the hoppy, crawly, wriggly, buzzy, fluttery critters that call your backyard home. It is the perfect companion to *Backyard Birdies*.

Each double-page spread contains a description of the buddy, an indication of its size, a 'Top Tip', an explanation on whether it is okay to touch the creature, other facts, such as its favourite plant (if it has one), its colours, and what time of day it might appear.

The text also offers amusing jokes about each of these eleven backyard buddies. This is a work of creative non-fiction which entertains as much as it informs. It will encourage students to enjoy observing creatures in their backyards or local environs and identify the types of buddies which can be found in their own backyards. It also includes a glossary of terms. Andy Geppert's sense of humour makes even the latter an hilarious reading experience in this highly engaging text.

## THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes are covered in this book which might be related to the Australian Curriculum, including:

### HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

Several themes are relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/hass/>

**Activity:** Investigate how one of the backyard buddies in this book adapts to their environment.

**Discussion Point:** Invite students to observe the ecology of the environment in their own backyards. Apart from the backyard buddies included in this book, what other forms of wildlife do they observe in their own backyard? Make a list and then collect facts about each creature.

**Discussion Point:** How do human beings interact with creatures in their home environment? Very often, because of landscaping and garden design, home-owners view backyard creatures as pests. How can we live harmoniously in our own backyards? Invite students to discuss the ways in which creatures might enhance a backyard rather than being considered a threat or a nuisance.

**Discussion Point:** Some backyard buddies are considered dangerous, and are killed by human beings, for example, spiders. Research and discuss dangerous creatures that are found in backyards and how we should approach them.

**Discussion Point:** Camouflage protects several creatures depicted in this book, for example, moths. Observe other forms of camouflage depicted in the book and found in your own backyard.

## SCIENCE

Several themes are relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/science/>

### BACKYARD BUDDIES

**Discussion Point:** Choose one of the backyard buddies in this book, and research it further. Then share your findings with members of your class.

**Discussion Point:** Create a 'fact file' on each of the backyard buddies in this book. Every time you discover an interesting fact, add it to the file.

**Discussion Point:** Create an alphabet of backyard buddies including those in this book and add a fact to each entry. [See **Worksheet 2.** below.]

**Discussion Point:** What are the collective nouns for any of the creatures in this book?-

**Activity:** Investigate the lifecycle of one of the backyard buddies in this book.

**Activity:** Read stories about human beings interacting with creatures in their backyards.

**Activity:** Read some picture books which explore our relationship with other backyard buddies or creatures. See **Bibliography.**]

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

This is relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/>

The text of this book might be studied in relation to the following aspects:

**Activity:** This is an expository text, so it is a type of non-fiction text which investigates and explains a particular subject. Discuss the elements of expository writing with your students then invite them to choose a buddy and write an expository text about it.

**Discussion Point:** Humour is one of the elements of this text which is important to how it conveys information, for example, 'Ladybugs belong to an unusual group of creatures that actually like coriander.' or 'TOP TIP: When thinking up a name for your new spotty little friend, remember that not all ladybugs are ladies! So, feel free to call it Keith.' (p 2) Another example of humour, is the inclusion of a creature which is not actually an insect or any other form of living creature – a pet rock. What other examples of humour did you discover in *Backyard Buddies*?

**Discussion Point:** The collective noun for ladybugs (ladybirds) is 'a loveliness of ladybugs'. What other collective nouns for each of these backyard buddies can you discover?

**Discussion Point:** On p 24 some words are explained. Discuss this list with your students.

**Activity:** Test your students' **comprehension** by asking them questions about the written and visual text. [See also **Author/Illustrator's Notes** below.]

## VISUAL LITERACY

This is relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/visual-arts/>>

The visual text of a book combines with the written text to tell the story using the various parts of the book's design and illustrations, as explored below:

**Activity:** The **cover** of a book is an important part of its message. Identify the backyard buddies which feature on this cover and then design your own cover featuring 'buddies' who live in your backyard (or verandah or windowsill)!

**Activity:** The **endpapers** feature silhouettes of backyard buddies with a contents page to show which page that particular creature appears in the book. Design endpapers featuring other buddies not included in this list. [See **Worksheet 4** below.]

**Discussion Point:** The **title page** contains a humorous image of a bee dressed in clothes sitting on a chair. Why did the author depict the bee in this way? What does it suggest about the text to follow?

**Discussion Point:** The **format** of the book is square. What effect does format have on the meaning made in a book?

**Discussion Point:** How does the **layout of the storyboard** and the **format and design** of the book influence your reading of it?

**Discussion Point:** Creating characters entails studying **facial expressions and 'body language'**. What do these images suggest about the buddies in this book?

**Activity:** The **medium or style** employed is sketching and digital illustration. 'My technique is one that blends hand sketching with a soft watercolour feel.'

'Interview with illustrator Andy Geppert' *Sweets Workshop*

<<http://sweetsworkshop.blogspot.com/2011/01/interview-with-illustrator-andy-geppert.html>>

Invite students to examine the artwork and then to create an image in a similar style.

**Discussion Point:** The **colours** used in this book are largely pastel shades. Invite students to choose a buddy to draw and then choose a colour palette to paint it, based on research into what the buddy actually looks like.

**Activity:** Invite students to draw, paint, or collage an image of a buddy they wrote about above. Create a classroom mural using all the images. [See also **Worksheet 1** below.]

**Activity:** Create a graphic novel/comic version of a scene in this book.

## CREATIVE ARTS

There are many creative activities suggested by this text:

1. Create a **classroom display** of the images that students have drawn of backyard buddies.
2. Create an **origami butterfly** out of coloured paper. See: 'Easy Paper Butterfly Origami – Cute and Easy Butterfly' by Art and Craft Gallery *YouTube* July 18, 2019 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N94a0Hfyhug>>
3. Create a **mask of a bee**. [See **Worksheet 5**.]

4. **Create a poster** to advertise this book.

5. **Create a Book Trailer** to promote this book. [See **Bibliography**.]

## **LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES**

Several themes are relevant to the following Curriculum Area:  
<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/technologies/>>

**Activity:** Research the topics above online.

**Activity:** Research the author/illustrator online. [See **Bibliography**.]

## **MATHEMATICS**

Several themes are relevant to the following Curriculum Area:  
<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/mathematics/>>

**Activity:** Have fun counting things in this text.

**Activity:** See **Worksheet 3** below for mathematics activities.

## **FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH**

- Research the work of Andy Geppert. Compare this to his other books.
- Students might research this book in comparison to reading other picture books such as those listed in the **Bibliography**.
- Investigate any other topic not covered in these notes which you consider is suggested by this text.

## **CONCLUSION**

*Backyard Buddies* is a great companion to *Backyard Birdies* and should provide both information and entertainment for young nature observers. Andy Geppert's approach is to combine sound research with humour and insight in a heady concoction which will engage both students and their teachers in a vibrant process of discovery.

## AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTES

*Backyard Buddies* is the second book in a series that encourages outdoor exploration and play, featuring some of our most quirky and interesting crawly, wriggly, buzzy and hoppy critters. There's a coriander-loving male ladybug, a very slow-moving snail and possibly the funniest of our buddies ... a pet rock.

I hope *Backyard Buddies* gets young minds racing with excitement and wonder as they explore their backyards and school playgrounds with wide eyes.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Andy Geppert is an award-winning Art Director turned award-winning picture book artist and author. As a one-of-a-kind storyteller Andy takes his readers on a journey to discover some unique and beautiful characters while also discovering themselves. His stories captivate with delicately crafted illustrations which depict themes that are emotionally relevant and profoundly important to his readers' young lives. His work has been awarded the prestigious Crichton Award for new illustrators for his work on *Little Big Tree*. His follow up picture book *Meep* was selected as a Notable Book by the Children's Book Council of Australia. Andy currently works and resides in Brisbane Australia.

See his website: <https://www.andygeppert.com/>

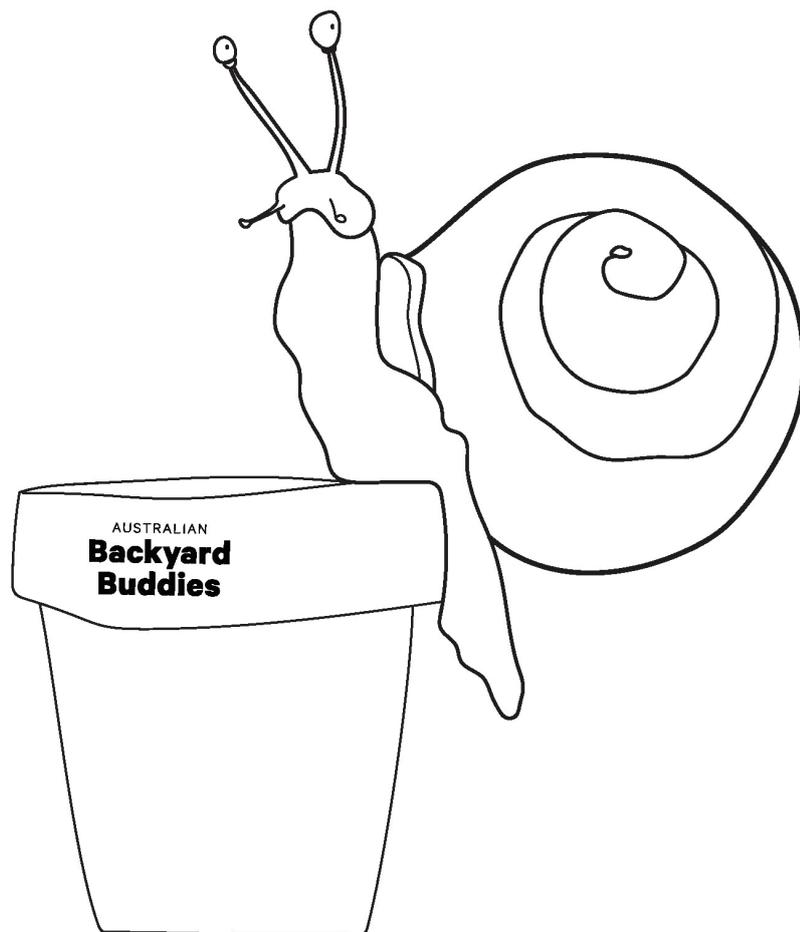
See also: 'Featured Artist: Andy Geppert' *The Finders Keepers*  
<<http://www.thefinderskeepers.com/blog/2010/06/featured-artist-andy-geppert/>>

'Interview with illustrator Andy Geppert' *Sweets Workshop*  
<<http://sweetsworkshop.blogspot.com/2011/01/interview-with-illustrator-andy-geppert.html>>

# WORKSHEETS

## WORKSHEET 1. DRAWING ACTIVITY

Finish this image by colouring it in and then create a collage by filling in the background.



## WORKSHEET 2. ALPHABET OF BACKYARD BUDDIES

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

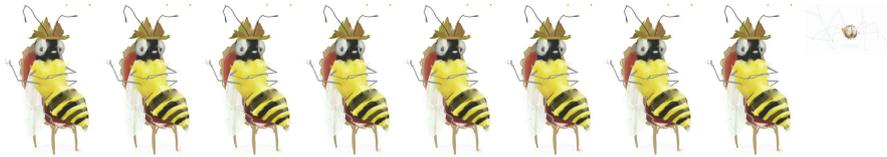
## WORKSHEET 3. MATHS



1. How many moths are there above?
2. Multiply the number of moths by ten and what do you get?



3. How many ladybugs are there above?
4. If twenty-two ladybugs joined the ones above, how many would there be?



5. How many bees would you have if you took two away from the group above?
6. Divide the bees above by three and how many would you have?



7. Multiply the spiders above by five and how many would you have?



8. Divide the snails above by two and how many would you have?



9. Take ten butterflies from those above and how many would be left?

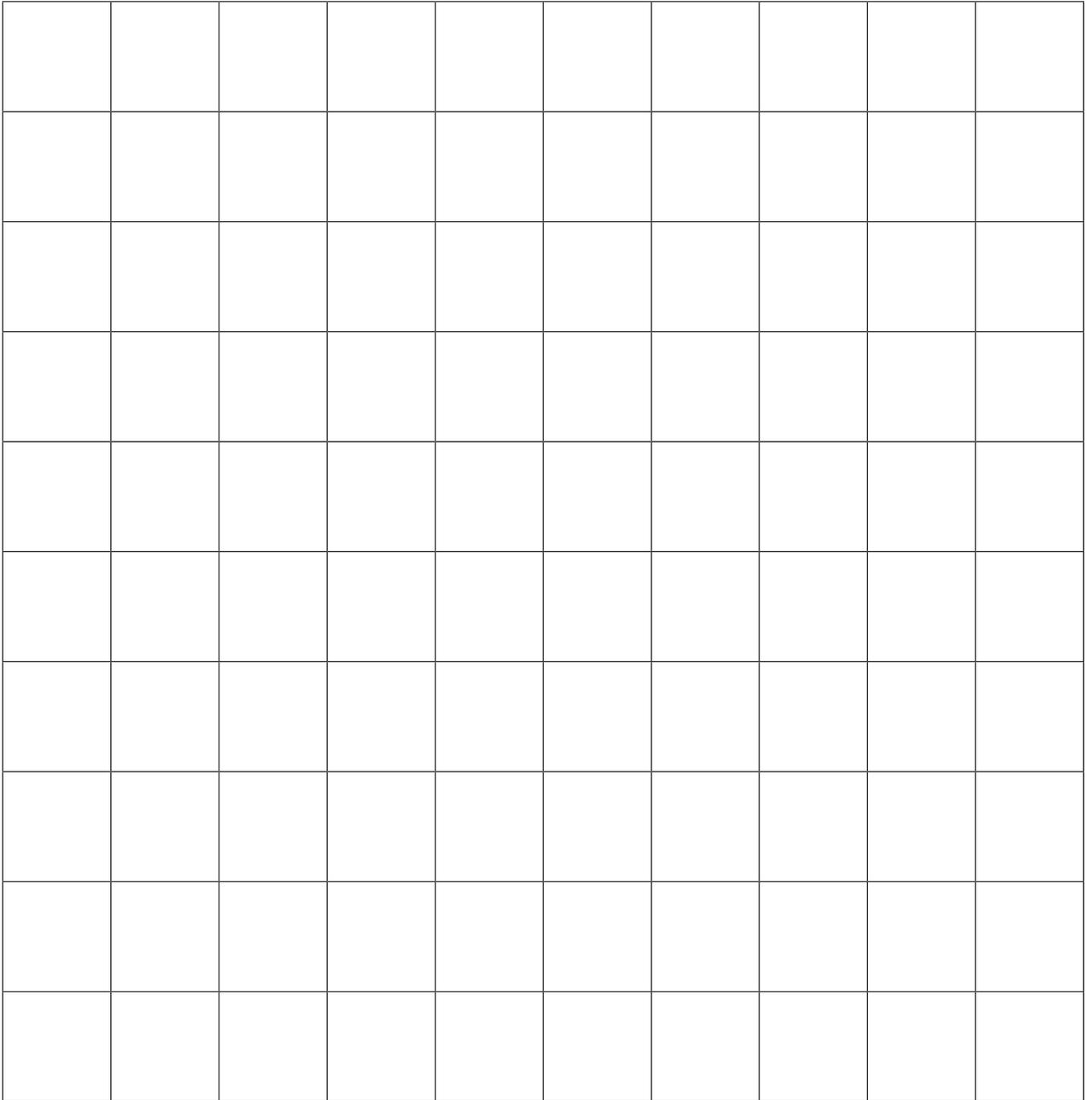


10. Add sixteen frogs to those above and how many would you have?

**ANSWERS:** 1. Nine. 2. Ninety. 3. Ten. 4. Thirty-two. 5. Seven. 6. Three. 7. Thirty-five. 8. Three. 9. Four. 10. Twenty-three.

## WORKSHEET 4. BACKYARD BUDDIES ENDPAPERS

Draw images of the backyard buddies depicted in this book. Then photocopy and reduce the size of the images so they fit on this grid. Cut them out and paste into the grid. Or you could design on a computer if you have access to a design program.



## WORKSHEET 5. BEE MASK

Enlarge the mask below on A3 craft paper and cut it out, including the eyes. Decorate it then add elastic to the sides so you can wear it.

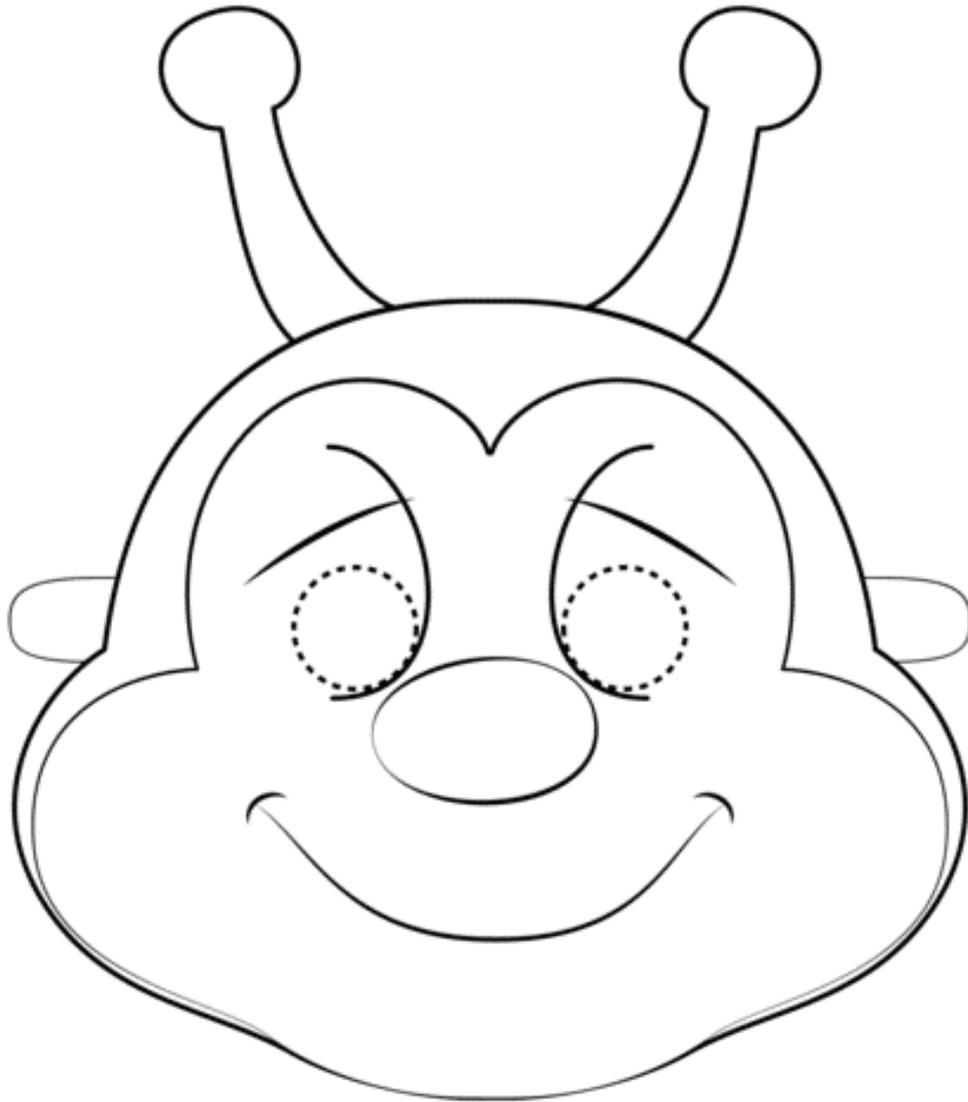


Image from: 'Bee Mask' *Super Coloring*  
<<http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/bee-mask>>

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## WEBSITES – TEACHING RESOURCES

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<<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/frogs/>>
- Backyard Buddies*  
<<https://backyardbuddies.org.au/>>
- 'Bee Mask' *Super Coloring*  
<<http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/bee-mask>>
- 'Easy Paper Butterfly Origami – Cute and Easy Butterfly' by Art and Craft Gallery *YouTube* July 18, 2019 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N94a0Hfyhug>>
- 'Insects' *Australian Museum*  
<<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/insects/>>
- 'Reptiles' *Australian Museum*  
<<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/reptiles/>>
- 'Spiders' *Australian Museum*  
<[https://australian.museum/learn/animals/spiders/?gclid=EAlaIqobChMlvO\\_-vvae9wIVTTVyCh1N2wQIEAAYASAAEgL26PD\\_BwE](https://australian.museum/learn/animals/spiders/?gclid=EAlaIqobChMlvO_-vvae9wIVTTVyCh1N2wQIEAAYASAAEgL26PD_BwE)>
- 'Worms' *Australian Museum*  
<<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/worms/>>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

**Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM** operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021, she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.