



# LET'S BUILD A BACKYARD

Mike Lucas     Daron Parton

TEACHERS RESOURCES

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Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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# INTRODUCTION

Imagine designing and building your very own backyard! Written by real-life engineer and CBCA-Notables author Mike Lucas, and illustrated by New Zealand favourite, Daron Parton, *Let's Build a Backyard* offers young readers a range of skills to employ in creating a perfect outdoor space.

Slip on your overalls, pop on your hard hat and jump in the digger – let's build a backyard!

We dig, we build, we plant, we sow.

We make a place to play and grow.

You and me – one, two, three ... GO!

Work! Work! Work!

A fun look at creating a backyard from scratch; from moving the mud and building the fence through to planting a vegetable patch and adding in the compost (Poo! Poo! Poo!). *Let's Build a Backyard* is a high-energy, brightly illustrated picture book by a real-life engineer, and is the perfect companion to *Let's Build a House*.

## THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

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

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

### SCIENCE

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What aspects of science are raised in this text? For example, the creation of compost; the ecosystem of any backyard where animals and birds live in harmony with each other. Research any relevant aspect of science with your students.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** This book might be used in conjunction with biology units by conducting related activities such as creating a worm farm; exploring the ecology of a pond and its possible inhabitants; identifying birds and other forms of wildlife commonly found in suburban backyards, such as snails, lizards, and possums.

### 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/>> Investigate the following sub-topics using skills developed in this Curriculum Area relating to **INQUIRY AND SKILLS** and **KNOWLEDGE AND**

**UNDERSTANDING:**

1. *Develop Methodology and Research Using Primary and Secondary Sources;*
2. *Synthesise and Evaluate Evidence;*
3. *Present Evidence;*
4. *Develop Alternatives.*

## BACKYARDS

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Invite students to discuss what is in each of their backyards. (Some students might live in apartments or units so encourage them to identify an area near their home which could be discussed in this way, for example, a roof top terrace, a balcony garden, or a local park. See, for example, Christopher Cheng and Bruce Whatley's *One Tree* (2019).)

**ACTIVITY:** Invite students to imagine how their backyards might be transformed.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Discuss what animals (including birds) you might find in a backyard.

**ACTIVITY:** Read other picture books, fiction or non-fiction about backyards and compare to this one. [See **Bibliography.**]

## SUSTAINABILITY

**DISCUSSION POINT:** This book encourages children to study the propagation of home-grown vegetables and fruit. What lessons did your students learn about planting from this text?

**ACTIVITY:** Composting is a key component in ensuring that a home garden is healthy and vital. Your class might develop a class garden in order to put into practice some of the lessons conveyed in this book.

## 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:** Rhyming is used in this text to engage young readers. Encourage students to think of other words which might rhyme with three different rhyming series included in this text. [See **Worksheets 2 and 3.**]

**ACTIVITY:** There are several *sound* or *action* words in this text repeated three times. For example, Work, Chug, Squirm, Bang, Sing, Buzz, Drip, Yum, Croak, Poo, Hooray! What other sound or action words might be appropriate to this written and visual text?

**DISCUSSION:** In his **Author's Notes**, Mike Lucas says that: 'There are examples of alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia throughout the book - three very important tools used in writing poetry.' Locate examples of these literary devices and discuss with the class. For example, 'muddy mound' (alliteration).

**ACTIVITY:** Test your students' comprehension by asking them questions about the written and visual text.

**ACTIVITY:** Invite students to write a story about how they might create their own 'dream' backyard and what might be included in it. Encourage them to be as imaginative and creative as possible.

## 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. This cover contains a series of images relating to building a backyard. Identify the things you see there (for example, scarecrow, pavers, watering can). Then create your own cover for this book, including images of other things which one might find in a backyard.

**ACTIVITY:** The **endpapers** depict a garden fork, a watering can and a plant in a pot in a decorative repeated grid. Choose three other objects and create your own endpapers for this title.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** The **title page** depicts similar images to those on the cover. Identify all the objects on this page.

**ACTIVITY:** Creating characters entails studying facial expressions and 'body language'. What feelings are conveyed in the images of the father and child in this book?

**ACTIVITY:** Daron Parton employed mixed media for the illustrations in this text. [See **Illustrator's Notes.**] Encourage students to experiment with their art in a similar way.

**ACTIVITY:** The **colours** used in this book are bright primary colours. Invite students to draw, paint, or collage an image of the dream backyard they imagined in the story they each wrote above using this colour palette. Create a classroom mural using all the images. [See also **Worksheet 1.** below.]

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What birds did you identify in this visual text? Make a list.

**ACTIVITY:** Create a graphic novel/comic version of a scene in this book. [See **Bibliography.**] [See also **Worksheet 5.**]

## CREATIVE ARTS

There are many creative activities suggested by this text:

1. **Create a Diorama** depicting the backyard illustrated in this book.
2. **Design a decorative tile pattern and decorate tiles** to use as coasters or to create a decorative centrepiece to your backyard garden or outdoor table. [For instructions, see 'The Art for Kids That Everyone Will Enjoy: Best Tile Art Idea' *Natural Beach Living* <https://www.naturalbeachliving.com/tile-art-for-kids>>]
3. **Create a small model house** to attract wildlife such as possums or lizards or birds. Use an old wooden fruit box or packing case as the framework for your animal friends' house. Then add some creative 'extensions' to the framework.
4. **Create a Poster** to advertise this book.
5. **Create a Book Trailer** to promote this book. [See **Bibliography.**]

## **LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES**

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

**ACTIVITY:** Research the author and illustrator online. [See **Bibliography.**]

## **MATHEMATICS**

**ACTIVITY:** Have fun counting the many objects which appear in this visual text.

**ACTIVITY:** See **Worksheet 4.** for mathematics activities.

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

- Research the work of Mike Lucas and compare this to his other books.
- Research the work of Daron Parton and 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**

This entertaining and informative guide to building a backyard is a perfect companion to *Let's Build a House* by the same author and illustrator. Children will learn the basics of preparing a site for planting, fencing, adding features such as a pond or a possum house, and nurturing wildlife. Self-sufficiency is a national curriculum priority, and this text explores a range of skills which children might develop in order to create a backyard which is both productive and a leisurely place to play and work in.

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

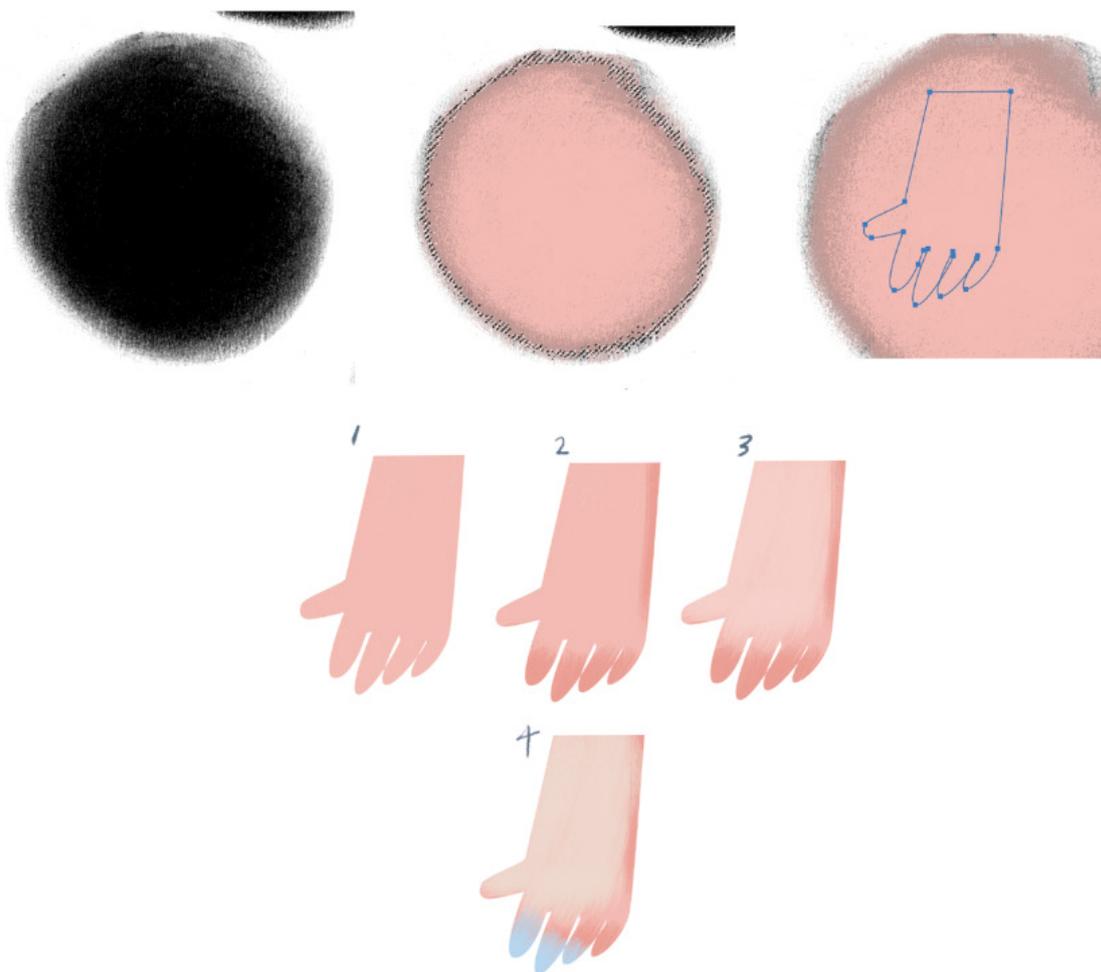
*Let's Build a Backyard* was a natural progression from *Let's Build a House*. The backyard is a place to have fun, to explore and to relax, a familiar part of a home with which many children will be able to identify. Like *Let's Build a House*, this book takes the reader through the process of construction in a logical sequence. Many children will be able to see the finished items from the book in their own backyard. As well as the construction process, this book includes some important added references to nature conservation and animal habitats. Some new construction vehicles are introduced in the forms of a tipper truck and a dozer. Like the first book, the words were written with the intention of the story being both educational and fun. It uses a three-line metered rhyme on each spread, followed by three-word repetition to allow younger children to join in. There are examples of alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia throughout the book - three very important tools used in writing poetry.

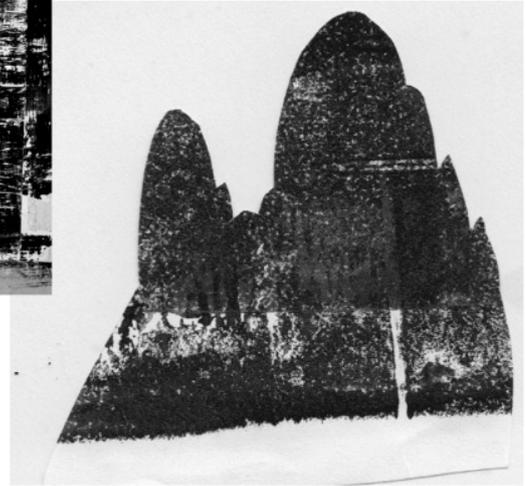
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Originally from the UK, **Mike Lucas** moved with his family to Adelaide in 2010. He started his writing career writing funny poetry anthologies and visiting schools and libraries to encourage children to create their own silly rhymes. He has had work published in various magazines and anthologies. Mike's first picture book, *Olivia's Voice*, was a 2018 CBCA Awards Notable book, followed by *Vanishing* and *Let's Build a House*. As well as being a writer, Mike also owns a bookshop in Adelaide, Shakespeare's Bookshop in Blackwood. In 2017, he was the lead organiser of the first ever Adelaide Festival of Children's Books. For five days a week Mike works as an engineer and has very little time for sleep. Visit his website for further information: <http://www.mikelucas.com.au/>

# ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTES

My process starts with the roughs, which are initial thumbnails to get an idea of a basic layout and composition, and where the characters will sit. It was a straightforward process as this book was the second in the series, so the foundations for cover and illustration formats were already established. As in *Let's Build a House*, the illustration style in *Let's Build a Backyard* is simple and colourful and aimed at a younger reader, and I made sure everything in the illustrations was easily recognisable. This book was extra fun because I could play with colour in the flower beds. The mediums I used were a mixture of textures I created myself and phototextures – sort of a mixed media job. I used the approved roughs as my starting point. I cut shapes from my library of textures and then added a coloured layer in Photoshop. All these elements were put together to create a piece of the illustrations.





## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Award-winning New Zealand illustrator **Daron Parton** was born in Aden, in Yemen, and later lived in Singapore, Germany and the UK. 'I went to my first art school at Canterbury in England then to do a degree at Central St Martins School of Art where I graduated with a BA (Hons). I worked as an illustrator from then on. I moved to New Zealand in 1995 with my beautiful Kiwi wife; we have two boys Ollie and Rhys.' He has been working as an illustrator since 1990 and is also an illustration tutor at Auckland University of Technology. Daron's books include *The Ultimate Survival Guide to Monsters Under Your Bed*, *A Crocodile in the Family* and *Let's Build a House*.

# WORKSHEETS

## WORKSHEET 1. COLLAGE THIS IMAGE

*Illustration by Daron Parton.*

Colour and use collage to complete this image. Enlarge to A3 to give you more space to work on.



## WORKSHEET 2. RHYMING WORDS

Add another word in the column to the right which rhymes with the three beside it.

Sow	grow	go	
Ground	mound	round	
*Turn	worms	squirm	
Pits	fits	hits	
Brings	things	wings	
Rocks	box	blocks	
*Up	top	stop	
Sun	done	everyone	
*Plop	up	hop	
Blue	too	poo	
View	you	do	

\*These are imperfect rhymes.



## WORKSHEET 4. MATHS

1. If you take three watering cans from the row below, how many would you have left?



2. If you multiply these garden forks below by four how many would you have?



3. Add five wheelbarrows to the wheelbarrows below and how many would you have?



4. Divide the pot plants below by three and how many would you have?



5. Add fifteen ponds to those below and how many would you have?



6. Subtract ten spades from the row below, and how many would you have?



7. Multiply the goldfish below by five and how many would you have?

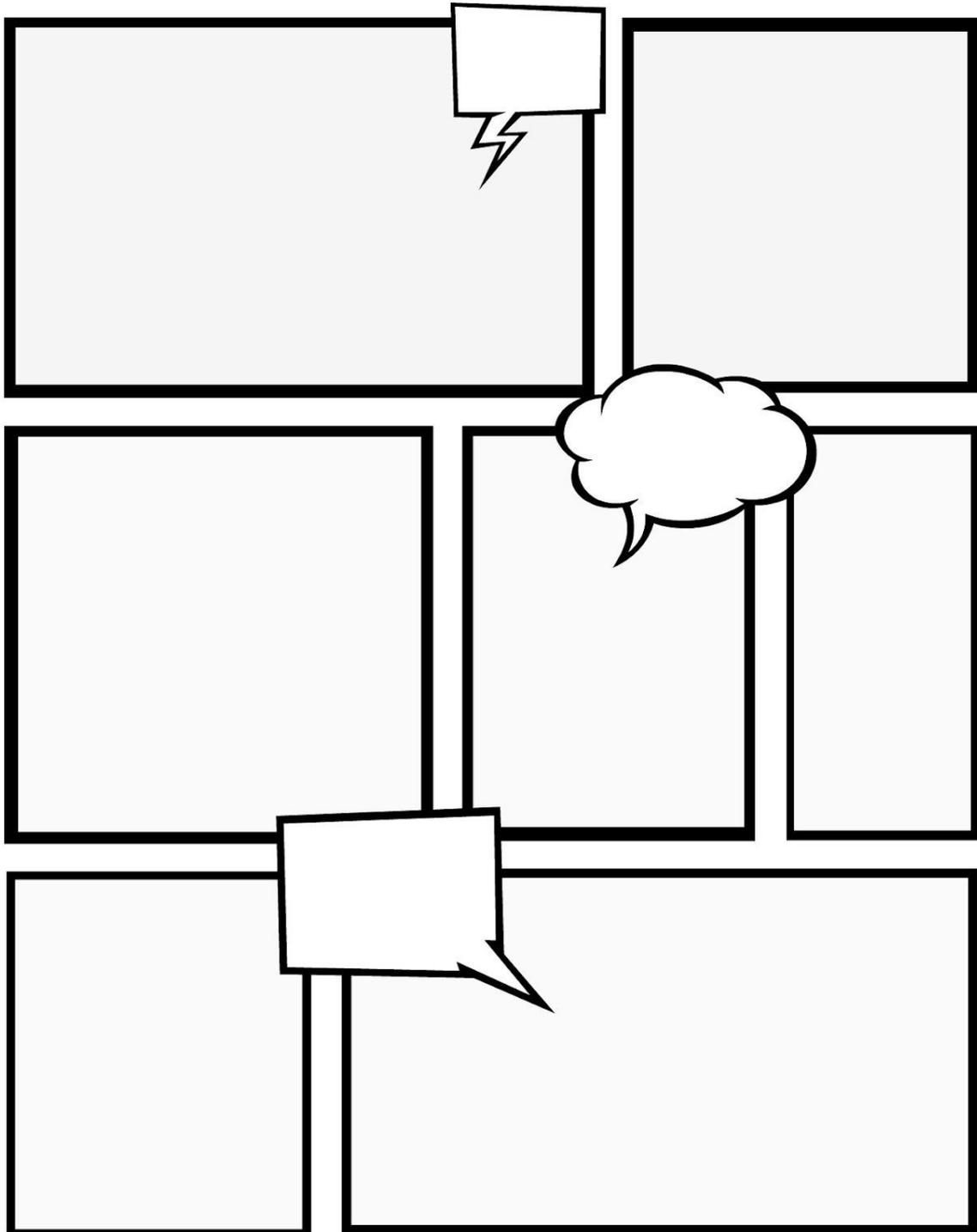


8. Subtract six goldfish from the row above and how many would you have?

**ANSWERS: 1. Six. 2. Forty. 3. Twelve. 4. Three. 5. Twenty-two. 6. Two. 7. Thirty-five. 8. One.**

## WORKSHEET 5. GRAPHIC STORYTELLING

Devise your own comic panels, interpreting a scene in this book. Use the layout below as the storyboard for your comic. Enlarge on a photocopier to give you more space.



Comic Book Template viewed at: <<http://www.pinterest.com/pin/365706432212821426/>>

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## 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.