

BACKYARD

# Tennis



Carl Merrison illustrated by Samantha Campbell

TEACHERS RESOURCES



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**Carl Merrison** illustrated by **Samantha Campbell**

**Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Themes &amp; Curriculum Topics</b>	<b>3</b>
Humanities & Social Sciences (HASS)	
English Language & Literacy	
Visual Literacy	
Creative Arts	
Learning Technologies	
Mathematics	
<b>Further Topics for Discussion and Research</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Author's Notes</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Illustrator's Notes</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>About the Author</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>About the Illustrator</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Worksheets</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>About the Author of the Notes</b>	<b>15</b>

# INTRODUCTION

Follow a cast of sport-loving kids as they hop through the backyards of their neighbourhood in the Kimberley, collecting equipment and friends to play with as they go, from award-winning creators Carl Merrison and Samantha Campbell.

*Mum loves tennis, but we don't have a court out here. One day, she gets out her old racquets and takes me into the backyard. 'I'll teach you how to play,' Mum says, and our tennis adventure begins.*

This is one in a joyful series that celebrates sport, where the fun only grows with family and friends!

## THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

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

### HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

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

### TENNIS AND SPORT

**Discussion Point:** This book makes it clear that sport doesn't always need to be competitive. It can also be a way of enjoying time with friends and doing some exercise. Discuss the attitudes to sport which are reflected in the media and how these attitudes might be changed for the better.

**Activity:** Research the game of tennis and how it is played. Generally, it is played on a tennis court, but not everyone has access to such facilities. This book shows that we can easily adapt our environment to suit the playing of a game and that expensive sporting facilities are not always necessary.

**Discussion Point:** What sports do you play? Do you use dedicated sporting facilities, or do you make do with your own backyard, local park or bushland, or another area?

### FIRST NATIONS CULTURE

**Discussion Point:** This warm and witty story shows how each member of the community is welcomed to join in the games. Competition isn't the point of the activity, but the fun of sharing is! What does this story indicate about the First Nations community that is depicted in it?

**Discussion Point:** The Kimberley community in this story is bonded. They eagerly jump fences to join each other in their tennis playing and are obviously used to sharing the spaces attached to their homes. Compare this to how your neighbours relate to each other.

**Discussion Point:** Champion tennis player Ash Barty has inspired many athletes, and has inspired many First Nations children to aspire to sporting greatness as well. Read more about her achievements and their significance. Which other First Nations athletes are you aware of? Adam Goodes, Eddie Betts and Evonne Goolagong are just a few examples. [See **Bibliography**.] Research some of their achievements.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

<<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 example of a **cumulative tale** (a structure popularly used in folktales), featuring a repeated sequence of events and a repeated question: 'What you mob doing?', with the repeated answer of 'Come and play!' Write a similar story using this technique.

**Activity:** The text contains several **words that relate to how tennis is played**. For example: racquet, doubles, umpire, match and forehand. Invite students to explain the meaning of each term. [See also **Worksheet 2**.]

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

## VISUAL LITERACY

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

The visual design and illustrations of a book are used in conjunction with written text to tell a story. Explore this further below:

**Activity:** The **cover** of a book is an important part of its message. This cover depicts the narrator's friends being taught to play backyard tennis by her mother. Design another cover for this book.

**Activity:** The **endpapers** contain a brightly coloured dot painting. Examine other picture books by First Nations authors and how their works reflect their cultures. [See **Bibliography**.]

**Discussion Point:** The title page contains a simple graphic of a tennis racquet. What other symbol of tennis might have been used here?



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

**Activity:** Illustrating characters entails capturing **facial expressions** and **'body language'**. Examine the various characters in this book and how these aspects of the drawing give the reader insight into their feelings and natures.

**Activity:** The **medium or style** employed is digital art. It includes stylised characters and similarly stylised landscapes in rich primary **colours**, including ochre. Invite students to draw an image in a similar style.

**Activity:** **Sub-text** is important in picture-book illustration. There are many details in these pictures that extend the story. What toys do you see? What pets do you see? What wildlife do you see? What activities are people engaged in apart from tennis? What plants do you recognise? What fruit is growing on the tree near where the tennis match is taking place? What other details did you notice in the images?

**Activity:** Invite students to draw, paint or collage another scene to accompany the story they wrote above. Create a classroom mural using all the images. [See also **Worksheet 1.**]

**Activity:** Create a graphic novel/comic version of a scene in this book. [See **Bibliography.**] [See also **Worksheet 4.**]

## CREATIVE ARTS

1. Experiment with **tennis ball painting**. See: 'Tennis Ball Painting' *ActivityVillage.co.uk* <https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/tennis-ball-painting>
2. **Play a paper plate and balloon tennis game**. See instructions here: 'Paper Plate Tennis Game' *kidsactivities.com* <https://kidsactivitiesblog.com/77120/paper-plate-tennis/>
3. **Create a wallpaper pattern** using a tennis racquet as the repeated motif. Colour the racquets in a variety of colours and in a repeated pattern.
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.

## MATHEMATICS

**Activity:** Have fun counting things in this text. [See **Worksheet 3** below for mathematics activities.]

## FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

- Research the work of Carl Merrison. Compare this to his other books.
- Research the work of Samantha Campbell. Compare this to her other books.
- Students might research this book in comparison to other cumulative picture books, such as those listed in the **Bibliography**.
- Investigate any other topic not covered in these notes which you consider to be suggested by this text.

## CONCLUSION

This is a joyous celebration of sport and a First Nations community. It is a tribute to the resourcefulness and talents of First Nations children and to the strength of First Nations communities in the outback.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*Backyard Tennis* was inspired by the deadly talented First Nations kids in outback Australia ... who have limited access to sports resources, training and facilities. Young people in the outback use their initiative, creativity and passion to engage in sports in their own ways in their backyards and community. It's our life to have fun fishing, hunting, swimming and playing around Country... and we find ways to play our versions of tennis or basketball or football with what we've got. So many talents and skills are developed through just making do and having fun. The outback is a huge under-tapped talent pool for all codes of sports in Australia. And I wanted to highlight the need for pathways, talent recruiting, resourcing and training in remote communities. I also wanted to show the diversity of First Nations peoples, experiences, landscapes and the resilience of our mob.

## ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTE

The illustrations were created digitally using both Procreate and Adobe Photoshop. The colours draw from the rich Kimberley landscape, which is where the story is based. It was important to include the orange dirt, rocky hills and native trees in the background to give a sense of place. The characters are energetic and emotive and match the energy of a backyard tennis game. Being barefoot and feeling the dirt under your feet is what backyard sport is all about. Sometimes people want to wear shoes, but it doesn't matter either way. That's the beauty of backyard sport; it doesn't matter if the tennis net isn't a proper tennis net, as long as it's fun and everyone is included in the game.

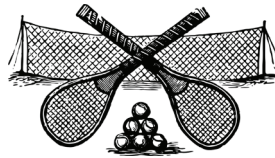


## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Carl Merrison** is a respected Jaru/Kija man from the Halls Creek area who came WA runner-up Australian of the Year – Local Hero in 2016. He has worked for over ten years alongside Aboriginal youth as a mentor and coach. Carl was the winner of the black&write! Fellowship in 2020 for his young readers' series Backyard Sports, and his debut picture book, *My Deadly Boots*, was shortlisted in the Queensland Literary Awards 2023 and the Speech Pathology Book of the Year Awards 2023.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Samantha Campbell** grew up in the Northern Territory and lives in Darwin. She is descended from the Dagoman people from Katherine and as a child lived in remote communities across the Top End. Her first book, *Alfred's War*, written by Rachel Bin Salleh, was shortlisted for the Premier's Literary Awards and the Speech Pathology Awards. She is currently illustrating her fifth children's book.

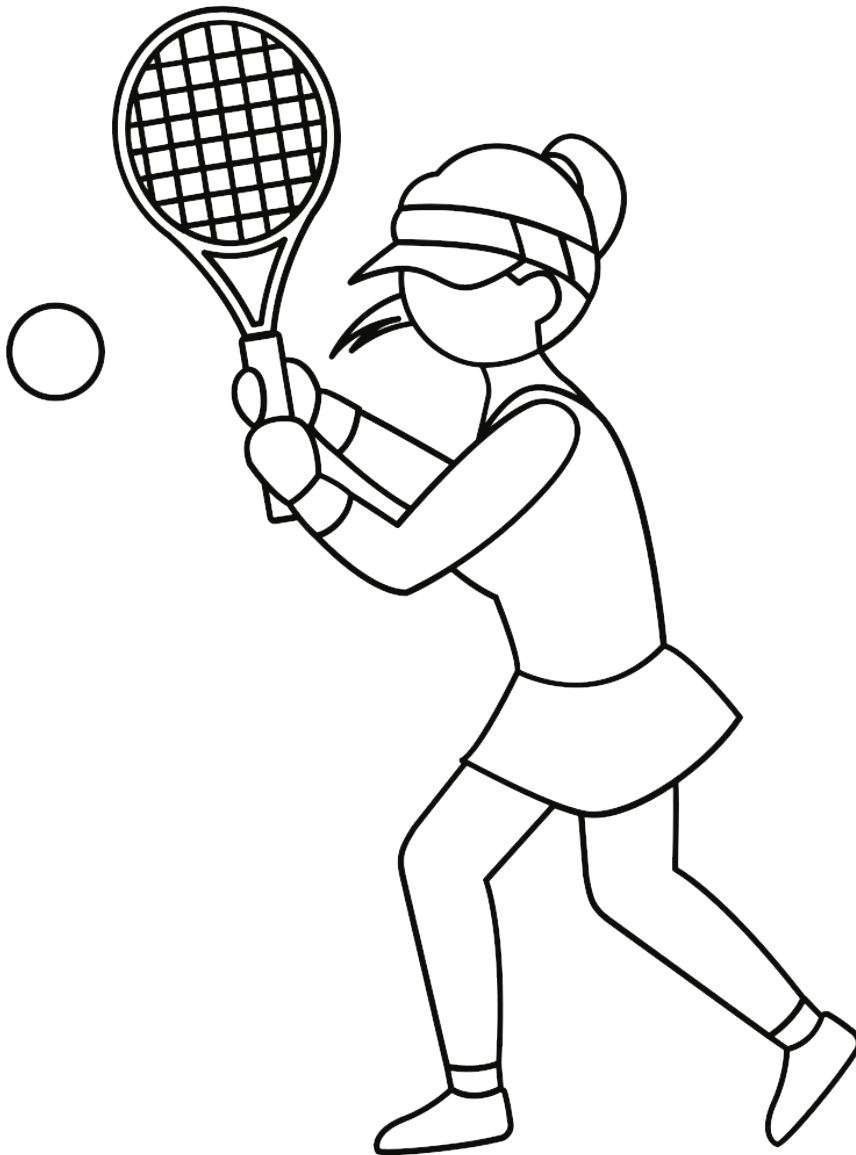




# WORKSHEETS

## WORKSHEET 1. COLLAGE THIS IMAGE

Draw a landscape as a backdrop for this image. Then colour and collage the picture.



## WORKSHEET 2. TENNIS TERMS

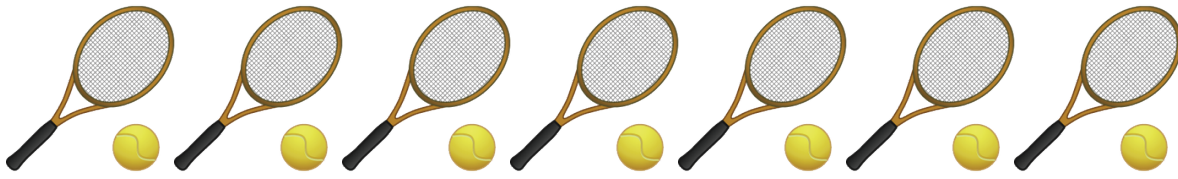
Write a short definition beside the terms below. Then check the answers below.

1. Racquet	
2. Slice	
3. Love	
4. Deuce	
5. Match point	
6. Serve	
7. Singles	
8. Volley	
9. Rally	
10. Advantage	
11. Ace	
12. Service box	

Answers: 1. The implement used by players in the game. 2. A shot with underspin (backspin), or a serve with sidespin. 3. A score of zero. 4. A score of 40–40 in a game. 5. A situation in which the player who is leading needs one more point to win the match. 6. The starting stroke of each point. 7. A match played by two players, one on either side of the court. 8. A shot usually hit by a player in the vicinity of the net before the ball bounces on their own side of the court. 9. Following the service of a tennis ball, a series of return hits of the ball that ends when one player fails to return the ball within the court boundary or fails to return a ball that falls within the play area. 10. When one player wins the first point from a deuce and needs one more point to win the game. 11. A serve where the tennis ball lands inside the service box and is not touched by the receiver; i.e. a shot that is both a serve and a winner. 12. The rectangular area of the court, marked by the sidelines and the service lines, that a serve is supposed to land in.



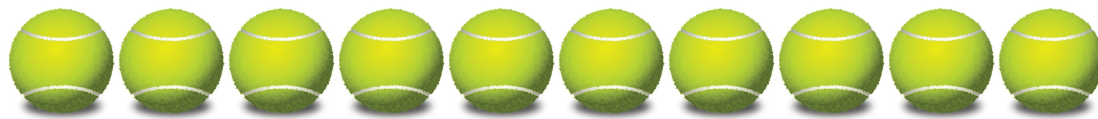
## WORKSHEET 3. MATHS



1. How many racquets can you see above?
2. If you multiplied the racquets above by three, how many would you have?



3. If you added five players to those above, how many would you have?



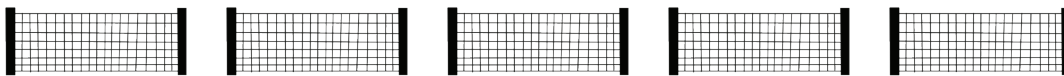
4. If you divided the number of balls above by two, how many would you have?
5. If you added twenty balls to those above, how many would you have?



- If you had four times the number of tennis-playing pandas above, how many would you have?



7. How many pairs of tennis shoes can you see above?
8. How many tennis shoes can you see above?

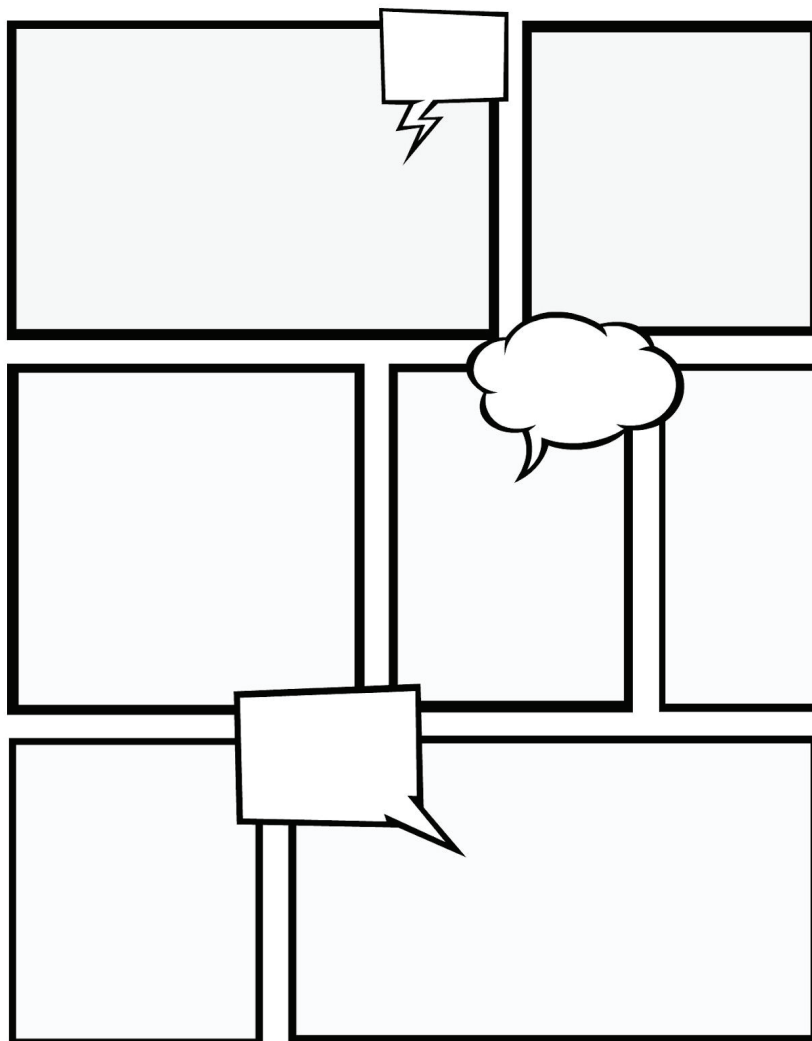


9. If you added ten to the nets above and then multiplied by two, how many would you have?
10. If you added together all the answers to the questions above, how many objects would you have?

ANSWERS: 1. Seven. 2. Twenty-one. 3. Twelve. 4. Five. 5. Thirty. 6. Twenty-eight. 7. Six. 8. Twelve. 9. Thirty. 10. 151.

## WORKSHEET 4. GRAPHIC STORYTELLING

Create a graphic novel/comic interpretation of one of the scenes in this book. Use the layout below as the storyboard for your comic. Enlarge it 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.

