



TEACHERS  
RESOURCES



# The CHEEKY Toddler Alphabet

DAVINA BELL • JENNIFER FALKNER

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>7</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

*The beautiful chaos of our ABC...*

*The Cheeky Toddler Alphabet* is an A-to-Z celebration of the chaos and tenderness of the toddler years – that bittersweet window of domestic life when each day is a magical bunfight that you wouldn't trade for anything . . . or would you?

*A is for aeroplane, all-gone and ant  
And the apple you bit and then dropped in a plant  
B is for bubbles and bee-buzz in blossoms  
For bruises and bottles and bare bathtime bottoms*

From bestselling and award-winning author Davina Bell and critically acclaimed illustrator Jennifer Falkner, this is a tender and funny journey through the toddler years, that never-ending but also gone-in-a-flash time when both love and mayhem reign supreme.

## 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/)

### PARENTING TODDLERS

**Discussion Point:** This book makes it clear that parenting toddlers is a joyous and also often frustrating time of 'beautiful chaos'. The many moments shared will be familiar to parents – some good, such as 'Sunrise in bed with your head on my shoulder and wishing you wouldn't get one second older', and some bad, such as refusing food, breaking things accidentally and throwing tantrums. But all of it makes up a rich pageant of love, nurturing and caring. What did you observe about the single parent who is depicted in this book and how she interacts with her child?

**Discussion Point:** Do your students have a sibling who is a toddler? What does their family enjoy doing with the toddler? What curious things does 'their' toddler get up to?

**Activity:** Read other books about toddlers and their antics and discuss with the class. [See **Bibliography**.]

### FEELINGS AND CONCEPTS

**Discussion Point:** The book explores emotions and feelings such as anger, love, frustration and exhaustion. Discuss emotions like these with students and ask how they express them.

**Discussion Point:** The book also explores concepts such as sharing (p 26), curiosity or questions (p 22) and rules (p 22). Discuss the scenes depicting these three concepts. How might you have behaved in these situations?

## DAILY ACTIVITIES

**Discussion Point:** This book provides a catalogue of activities that children enjoy, such as pretending to be an aeroplane, bubble blowing, bathtime, outdoor play, crafts, meals, visiting the dog park, going to daycare, visiting a farm, visiting grandparents, reading, bedtime, kite flying, picnics, riding a make-believe horse, swinging on playground swings, playdates with friends, puddle jumping and visiting a zoo. What things do you enjoy doing with your parents, grandparents or carers?

**Activity:** Draw a picture of yourself enjoying one of these activities, or any other activity.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

[<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/>](https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/)

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

**Activity:** Alphabet books are a study in themselves. There are many versions of alphabet books, and students could embark on a study of the format. Some are for very young readers to learn to identify familiar objects, animals, plants, etc. Others are more complex and, like this book, identify common experiences or feelings. There are many that deal with complex issues, such as the experiences of refugees (Mike Dumbleton's *Anisa's Alphabet*) or differences in translation (Ellen Heck's *A is for Bee*), and some that make each letter a story (Oliver Jeffers' *Once Upon an Alphabet*). Read other alphabet books and compare them to this one. [See **Bibliography**.]

**Activity:** The text is also very poetic. For example:

'O is for oceans of love that we row'

'Waving from windows, things that have wings  
The world full of wonder and wildness you bring'

Encourage students to choose a letter and write a poetic sentence to accompany it. Then create 'A Cheeky Toddler Alphabet' as a class project. [See **Worksheet 2** below.]

**Activity:** This text includes lots of interesting words, including new words to learn (dictator, infinity, unfurl, piñatas), colloquial terms (bye-bye, jarmies) and made-up words (cracker-crumbs carpet, dinosaur-stomping). Invite students to discuss the meanings of some of these words.

**Activity:** Some names of animals in the book may encourage research, such as xerus, x-ray fish and zebras (pp 30–31). [See **Bibliography**.]

**Activity:** Test your students' **comprehension** by asking them questions about the written text. For example:

Q. What does the letter G stand for in this book? Make a list of the things or people mentioned (p 9). What other relevant words might start with G?

Q. What does this mean? 'Infinity feelings when we are apart' (p 13)

Q. What other words were mentioned that were unfamiliar to you?

[See also **Author's Notes** below.]





## VISUAL LITERACY

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

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

**Activity:** The **cover** depicts the cheeky toddler in several poses; it is a vibrant summary of the contents of the book. Design your own cover for this book.

**Activity:** The **endpapers** depict many of the objects that appear in this book. Identify some of these objects. [See **Worksheet 3**.]

**Discussion Point:** The **title page** depicts a child eating breakfast – from a jar! There is lovely humour in this and throughout the book. What other details did you find amusing?

**Activity:** Draw a **funny scene** depicting a toddler doing something amusing that is typical of the age-group.

**Discussion Point:** The **format** of the book (which consists of the traditional 32 pages) is varied, with full double-page spreads, some small illustrations scattered across the spreads and some single page images. How does this varied **layout of the storyboard** influence your reading of the book? For example, the double-page spread depicting the mother holding the toddler and gazing out to the ocean evokes a particular feeling.

**Activity:** The nature of the two main characters in this book (mother and toddler) are carefully evoked via **facial expressions** and **'body language'**. Examine the spread (pp 4–5) in which mother and child are lying on the floor together. What does the depiction tell you about these two people?

**Activity:** The **medium or style** employed is gouache, watercolour, ink, pencils and Photoshop. The **colours** used in this book are warm pastel hues that are perfectly suggestive of the warmth of the relationship depicted. Use similar hues when creating artworks for this unit of work.

**Activity:** The images often incorporate **patterns** on clothing, bedspreads, tablecloths, kitchen floor covering, armchair upholstery, etc. Choose one of these patterns to copy and then to colour in.

**Activity:** Invite students to **draw, paint or collage another scene** to accompany the poetic sentence they wrote above. Create a classroom alphabet mural using all the images. [See also **Worksheet 2** below.]

**Activity:** Test your students' **comprehension** by asking them questions about the visual text. What do the pictures show that the text does not mention. For example:

Q. What foods do they share at the picnic (p 21)? [Answers: Pie, cheeses, watermelon, fruit, bread and sandwiches.]

Q. There are three picture books depicted on pp 24–5. What are their titles? [Answers: Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Puffin, 2018, 1969), Rod Campbell's *Dear Zoo* (40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Macmillan, 2021) and *Frog on a Log* by Kes Grey and Jim Field (Scholastic, 2015).]

Q. How many times does the family's cat appear? [Answer: Twelve.]

**Activity:** Create a **graphic novel/comic version** of a scene in this book. [This activity would be best shared with school-aged children.] [See **Bibliography**.] [See also **Worksheet 4**.]



## **CREATIVE ARTS**

There are many creative activities suggested by this text:

1. **Play a game with fridge magnets** (p 17) making up new words.
2. **Make music by banging on a variety of pots** as the cheeky toddler does (p 23).
3. **Create a paper plate mask of a zebra** like the one seen on p 30. See 'Paper Plate Zebra Craft' *DLTK's Sites for Kids* <<https://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/mplate-zebra.htm>>
4. **Create a poster** to advertise this book.
5. **Create a book trailer** to promote this book. [This activity would be best shared with school-aged children.] [See **Bibliography**.]

## **LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES**

**Activity:** Research any topic suggested by this book online.

## **MATHEMATICS**

**Activity:** Have fun counting the many objects and animals (chickens, socks, birds, bees, butterflies, etc.) depicted in this text. [For example, how many galahs can you see (p 22)? Answer: Nine.]

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

- Research the work of Davina Bell and compare this book to her other books.
- Research the work of Jennifer Falkner and compare this book to her other books.
- Investigate any other topic not covered in these notes which you consider is suggested by this text.



## CONCLUSION

This touching work explores the days spent by a mother with her toddler. There are laughs and tears, things learnt and mistakes made, food eaten and food rejected, things put together and things broken. This is an extremely playful text about a typical toddler's antics and the warmth of the parent-child relationship. The alphabetical arrangement is both entertaining and informative. It is a joyous book celebrating the precious time when a child is very small and both dependent and eager to be independent and to learn. It is about the pleasures and surprises of parenting.



## AUTHOR'S NOTES

*When you're pregnant with your first kid, everyone tells you how hard it will be and how you won't sleep, etc. and that's TRUE, but also not a single person tells you one day your toddler will say 'good night, love you' individually to every one of his trucks, the cats and you. – Lucy Huber*

Though I didn't realise it at the time, the genesis for *The Cheeky Toddler Alphabet* was a screenshot of the quote by Lucy Huber above, which a friend sent me when I had just had a baby. The sweetness of the image struck me hard, and I must have tucked it away in my sleep-deprived mind. But the duality it captures – that parenting a toddler can be so hard and so wonderful – really began to resonate when my son was about 18 months old. Truly, it felt like he had turned from a sweet pudding into a complete agent of chaos. Meeting friends with toddlers in the park became a chance to exchange the maddening, cute, irrational and funny things they had done – a list of which I began to keep track of in the Notes app of my phone. That list formed the basis for the words to this story, which was inspired by the desire to convey the highs and lows of life with a small child with sincerity, authenticity and love. What's funny to me is that the things I wrote about in the original manuscript seem so mild compared to what my son gets up to now! Spilling water on a table is nothing compared to ripping off your clothes and climbing naked onto that same table to grab a sharp pizza cutter. Sneaking something naughty out of the fridge is mild compared to sneaking out the front door to climb a balustrade with a two-storey drop. I am so grateful to the illustrator, Jennifer Falkner, for capturing the chaos, the love, the humour, the enchantment and the exhaustion of this time, and even more so for depicting a single-parent family like mine.

## ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTES

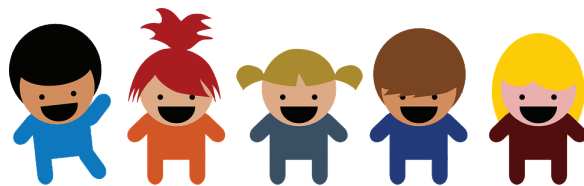
After reading Davina's wonderful manuscript and having a discussion with her, ideas for the illustrations started to take form in my imagination. I leaned into my own memories of that time when my first-born son, James, was very little and very cheeky, and it was often just the two of us. Those years were hard work and the days often long, but they were also so very precious, and it was wonderful for me to experience the world anew through his perspective. It's perhaps the closest thing to having your own childhood again. The inspiration for the characters came from Davina and her toddler Teddy, and also the families of some of my friends. The cover design and bright colour scheme of the book were inspired by ABC alphabet posters and books. The illustration style was influenced by the work of Margarita Kukhtina, Felicita Sala, Joe Todd-Stanton and Adelina Lirius.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Davina Bell** is a children's book editor and a writer for young people of many ages. Her picture books include *All the Ways to Be Smart*, *All of the Factors of Why I Love Tractors*, *Under the Love Umbrella*, *What to Say When You Don't Know What to Say* and *What to Do When You're Not Sure What to Do*. Her debut young adult novel, *The End of the World is Bigger than Love*, won the 2021 CBCA Book of the Year for Older Readers and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards' Ethel Turner Prize for Young Adult Fiction. *What to Say When You Don't Know What to Say* was the winner of the ABIA Children's Picture Book of the Year Award 2023 and a CBCA Notable Picture Book of the Year 2023. For more information, visit [www.davinabell.com](http://www.davinabell.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Jennifer Falkner** is an illustrator and designer based in Perth, Western Australia. Since graduating from university with a major in illustration, she has spent the last sixteen years of her career in art direction, textile design, brand development and illustration. Before returning to Perth in 2018, Jennifer lived and worked in Canberra, Bangkok, Jakarta and Singapore. Jennifer finds inspiration in the daily antics of her two boys, independent bookshops, her local museum, the cinema and the rich biodiversity of Australia's south-west. Her favourite mediums are gouache, watercolour, ink, pencils and Photoshop. She is represented by the Bright Agency. For more information, visit <https://jenniferfalkner.com/>.

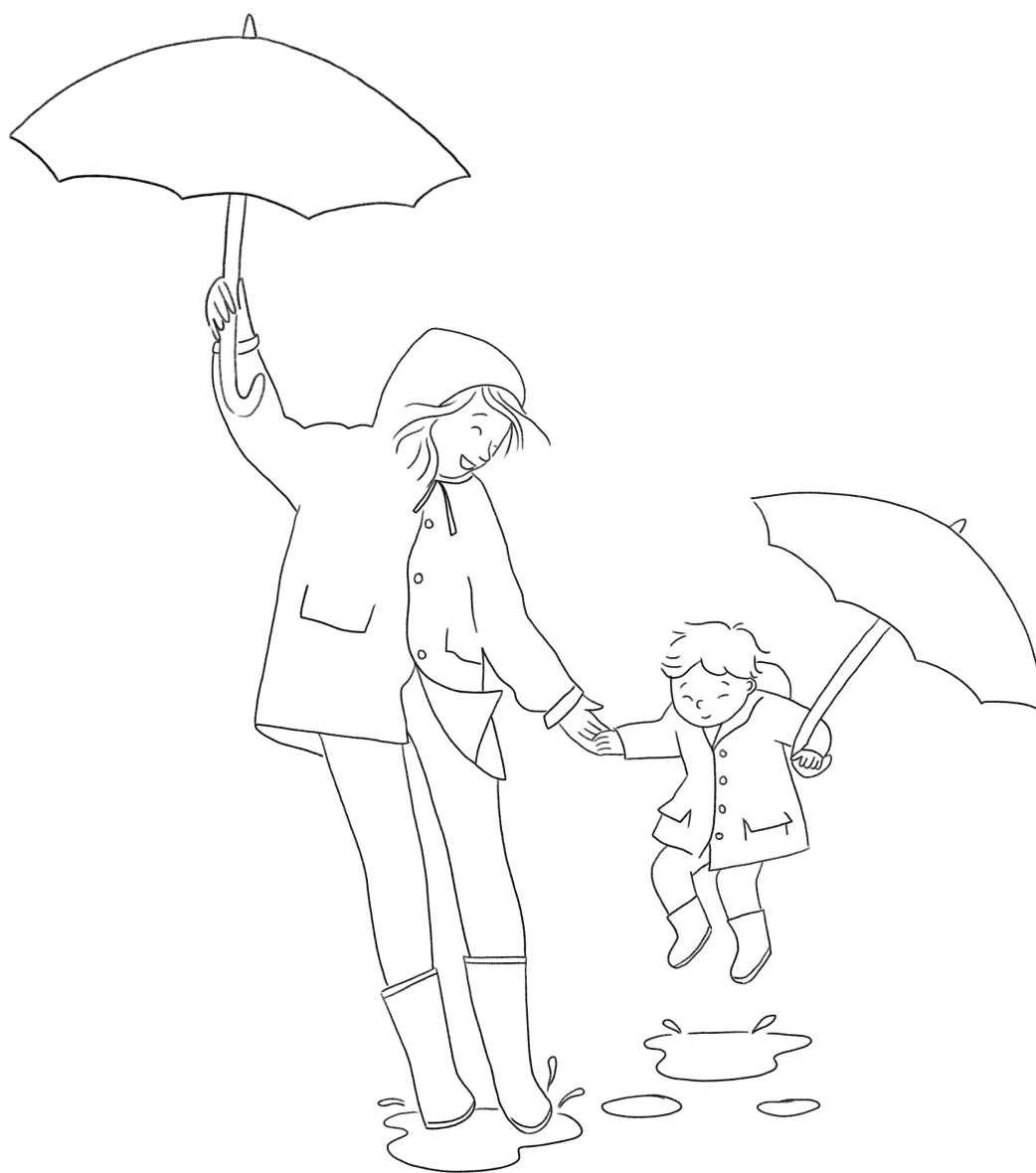




# WORKSHEETS

## WORKSHEET 1. COLLAGE THIS IMAGE

Colour and collage this lovely image of the cheeky toddler and mother puddle jumping.











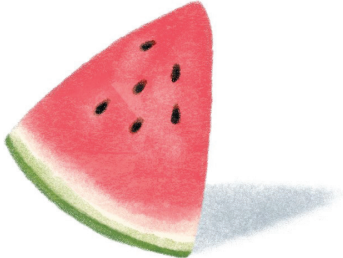


## WORKSHEET 2. CHEEKY TODDLER ALPHABET

<b>A IS FOR...</b>	
<b>B</b>	
<b>C</b>	
<b>D</b>	
<b>E</b>	
<b>F</b>	
<b>G</b>	
<b>H</b>	
<b>I</b>	e.g. Inquisitive
<b>J</b>	
<b>K</b>	
<b>L</b>	
<b>M</b>	
<b>N</b>	
<b>O</b>	
<b>P</b>	e.g. Pandemonium
<b>Q</b>	
<b>R</b>	
<b>S</b>	
<b>T</b>	
<b>U</b>	
<b>V</b>	
<b>W</b>	
<b>X</b>	
<b>Y</b>	
<b>Z</b>	



## WORKSHEET 3. IDENTIFY THESE IMAGES

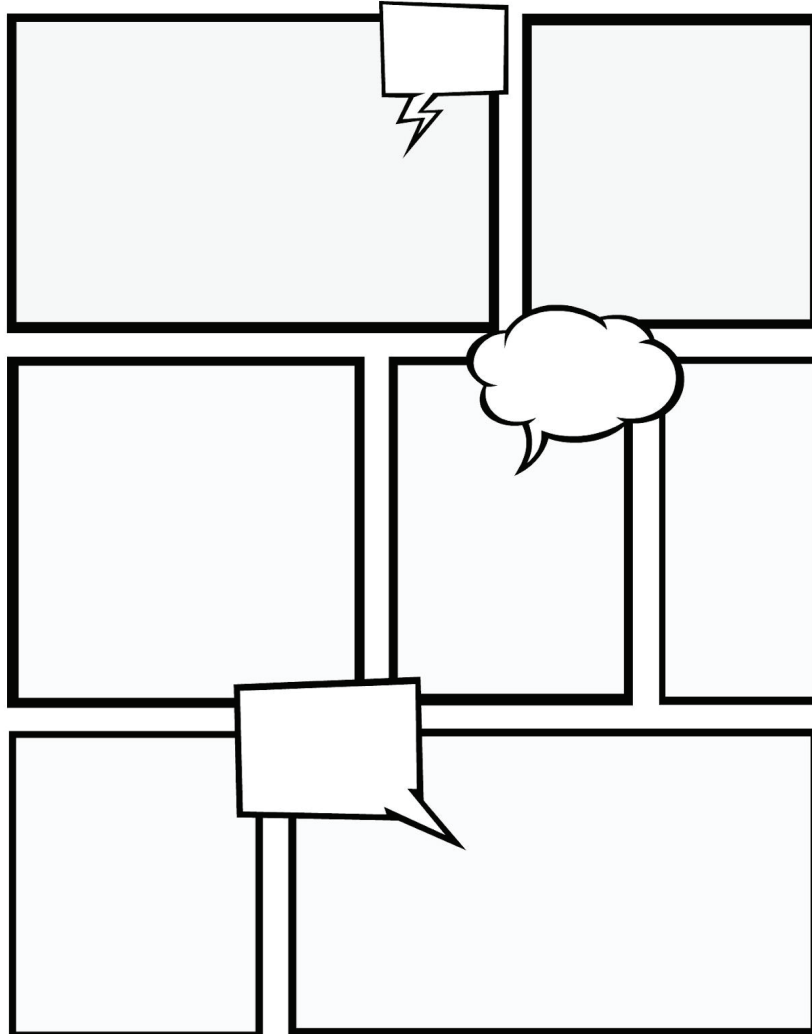
		
1.	2.	3.
		
4.	5.	6.
		
7.	8.	9.

Answers: 1. Apple. 2. Bee. 3. Umbrella. 4. Dog. 5. Hat. 6. Ice cream. 7. Jelly. 8. Octopus. 9. Watermelon.



## 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.





# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## PICTURE BOOKS: ALPHABETS

[Note: Some titles are for older readers.]

Base, Graeme *Animalia* Puffin, 1986.

Claesson, Jonas and Redmayne, James *The Surfing Animals Alphabet* Ill. Jonas Claesson, 2015.

Concepcion, Patrick and Concepcion, Traci *Alphabetics: An Aesthetically Awesome Alliterated Alphabet Anthology* Ill. by Dawid Ryski. Little Gestalten, 2014.

Brallier, Jess M. *The Olphabet: "O" No! An Alphabet Revolt* Ill. by Nichola Cowdery. Running Press Kids, 2021.

Cossins, Jennifer *The Ultimate Animal Alphabet Book* Lothian Children's Books, 2020.

Cossins, Jennifer *A-Z of Australian Animals* Lothian Children's Books, 2018.

Cossins, Jennifer *A-Z of Endangered Animals* Lothian Children's Books, 2017.

Donaldson, Julia *Animalphabet* Ill. by Sharon King-Chai Pan Macmillan, 2020.

Dots by Donna *The Animal Alphabet* Lake Press, 2024.

Dumbleton, Mike *Anisa's Alphabet* Ill. by Hannah Sommerville. MidnightSun Publishing, 2020.

Greder, Armin *Australia to Z* A&U Children, 2016.

Hawkes, Ben *London ABC* Doubleday Children's, 2012.

Heck, Ellen *A is for Bee: An Alphabet Book in Translation* Chronicle Books, 2022.

Jeffers, Oliver *Once Upon an Alphabet* HarperCollins, 2014.

Kuenzler, Lou *Not Yet, Zebra* Ill. by Julia Woolf. Faber Children's, 2018.

Lester, Alison *Alison Lester's ABC* A&U Children's, 2006.

Lui, Bonnie *ABC of Feelings* Viking Books for Young Readers, 2021.

McCartney, Tania *Alphakid: An A-Z of Antics* Windy Hollow Books, 2020.

Moniz, Madalena *Today I Feel: An Alphabet of Feelings* Abrams Appleseed, 2017.

Nagara, Innosanto *A is for Activist* (board book) Seven Stories Press, 2013.

Oehr, Alice *Artichoke to Zucchini: An alphabet of delicious things from around the world* Scribble, 2023.

Ortiz, Consuelo Fernandez *Australian Alphabet* Five Mile, 2023.

Paprocki, Greg *A is for Atom: A Midcentury Alphabet* (board book) Gibbs Smith Children's, 2016.

Bell, Hilary *Alphabetical Sydney: 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* Ill. by Antonia Pesenti. NewSouth Publishing, 2022.

Rose, Sarah with Pascoe, Alley *ABC Disability* Ill. by Rebecca Feiner. Lothian Children's Books, 2024.

Seeger, Laura Vaccaro *The Hidden Alphabet* Neal Porter Books, 2024.

Suzuki, Caroline *A is for Avocado: An Alphabet Book of Plant Power* Ladybird, 2020.

Willems, Mo *A Busy Creature's Day Eating!* Hyperion Books for Children, 2018.

Woods, Billy and Musgrove, M. *A is for Anarchist: An ABC for Activists* Rizzoli International,



2023.

See also series: Beck Feiner's *Alphabet Legends*  
<<https://alphabetlegends.com.au/>>

## **PICTURE BOOKS: TODDLERS**

Daddo, Andrew *When I Grow Up* Ill. by Jonathan Bentley. ABC Books, 2016.

Daddo, Andrew *Daddy's Cheeky Monkey* Ill. by Emma Quay. ABC Books, 2017.

Godwin, Jane *Families* Ill. by Yael Frankel. Hardie Grant Children's Publishing, 2022.

Guest, Patrick *Windows* Ill. by Jonathan Bentley. Hardie Grant Children's Publishing, 2020.

Lee, Spike and Lee, Tonya Lewis *Please, Baby, Please* Ill. by Kadir Nelson. Simon & Schuster, 2007.

Lester, Alison *Kissed by the Moon* Viking, 2013.

Lester, Alison *Bumping and Bouncing* A&U Children, 2008.

Quay, Emma *Rudie Nudie: 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* HarperCollins, 2021.

Shanahan, Lisa *Hello World* Ill. by Leila Rudge. HarperCollins, 2021.

## **NON-FICTION**

Bonning-Gould, Krissy *The Outdoor Toddler Activity Book: 100+ Fun Early Learning Activities for Outside Play* Rockridge Press, 2019.

Luca, Stefania *Preschool Paper Crafts: 25 Creative Crafts to Practice Hand-Eye Coordination & Scissor Skills* Rockridge Press, 2022.

*The Highlights Big Book of Activities for Little Kids* Random House US, 2024.

## **WEBSITES AND TEACHING RESOURCES**

'11 Xerus Facts' *Facts.net*

<<https://facts.net/nature/animals/11-xerus-facts/>>

'How to Make a Book Trailer' *Tristan Bancks*

<<https://www.tristanbancks.com/2016/03/how-to-make-book-trailer.html>>

Pagani, Balthazar *How to Draw a Graphic Novel*. Ill. by Otto Gabos and Marco Maraggi. Thames and Hudson, 2023.

'Paper Plate Zebra Craft' *DLTK's Sites for Kids*

<<https://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/mplate-zebra.htm>>

'Pristella maxillaris' [x-ray fish] *Wikipedia*

<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pristella\\_maxillaris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pristella_maxillaris)>

'Zebra' *Wikipedia*

<<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zebra>>



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

**Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright** 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.

