

# Wonderful Wasps

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



## SYNOPSIS

What do you know about wasps?

There are wasps that shimmer in shades of bright blue and green. There are some without wings—and some almost too tiny to see. Some capture spiders, while others nest in fruit or mud.

With over 12,000 species found in Australia, *Wonderful Wasps* brings the beauty and importance of native wasps to life, and reminds us every creature matters in its own wonderful way.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katrina Germein is a teacher and award-winning children's author. She writes picture books about family, fun and the natural environment.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Suzanne Houghton is an award-winning picture book author and illustrator. She works closely with local schools through workshops and presentations.

## STUDY NOTES

- Before reading ask students to draw a wasp. Provide them with art materials, including paper and ask them what the key characteristics are, prompting them on colours, number of wings, wing shape, legs and body shape. When they've completed their pictures, ask them to explain how a bee, ant or butterfly might look different.
  - Ask the class which of all of those insects they find most interesting. Which are they most cautious around?
- After sharing their different wasp pictures, ask the class if they think there are different kinds of wasps. Invite them to make suggestions on things they might change in their wasp picture to make a new variety. Encourage the students to reinvent their wasp and describe where it lives, what food it might eat and what its predators might be.
- Show the class the image of the European wasp at the beginning of *Wonderful Wasps*. Ask them to point out parts of the wasp's body that they recognise. What might the wasp use each body part for? Ask them why it might be yellow and black, instead of other colours.
- European wasps were once only found in the Northern Hemisphere, in Europe, northern Africa and some parts of Asia. Today they're found all around the world, including Australia, where they are a serious pest. Discuss how they might have arrived here, and what we could do to help reduce the chance other invasive pests might become a

problem.

- Compare the bodies of the wasps in the book. What do these wasps have in common? What looks different about them? Ask the class why they would be called wasps and not moths, ants or bees.
- Discuss the different kinds of homes wasps build. Invite the students to share their experiences of wasp homes around their own house and garden. Do they look the same as the ones featured in the book or do they look different?
- Read 'More about Australian wasps' and point out how much wasps vary in size. We know of 12 000 native species—ask students whether it's likely entomologists will find more in the future. How might they go about finding a new wasp species?
- Compare the different kinds of Australian wasps in the book, reading their names aloud. What might these names tell you about their behaviours?
- Read 'Some of the wasps in this story' in the back of the book. Invite the students to try to pronounce the scientific names of the families, and the genus and species names. Make connections with their own family name, and ask the students why different group names like these might be useful.
- Ask the students what jobs they think wasps might do in the wild before reading about their work pollinating flowers like bees. Discuss how pollination and providing food as prey might help numerous other species survive.
- Read 'More about Australian wasps' and discuss the role spaces in our own yards have in giving native wasps a place to live. Ask students why they might want to encourage more native wasps into their yard.
- In 'More about Australian wasps', discuss with the class what each word means in the wasp life cycle—egg, to larva (or grub), to pupa, to adult. Use the internet to find images of each stage for one or more Australian wasp, asking the students to describe how they look. What makes them look similar? How are they different? Share images of the same stages in other insects from order Hymenoptera (ants and bees).
- Invite students to find a page in the book they like. Instruct them to write a short paragraph describing the image on the page. However, they cannot use any noun directly describing an object in the picture. For example, if it is a wasp on a flower, they cannot say 'wasp' or 'flower', but they could use less direct words, such as 'insect' or 'plant'. Encourage them to use adjectives and verbs that help give a sense of the imagery. Hand the book to another student, or a group. As the first student reads their description, the second student or group must try to identify their picture from their description.