

Dad, Get Off Your Phone!

AUTHOR

CRAIG SHEATHER

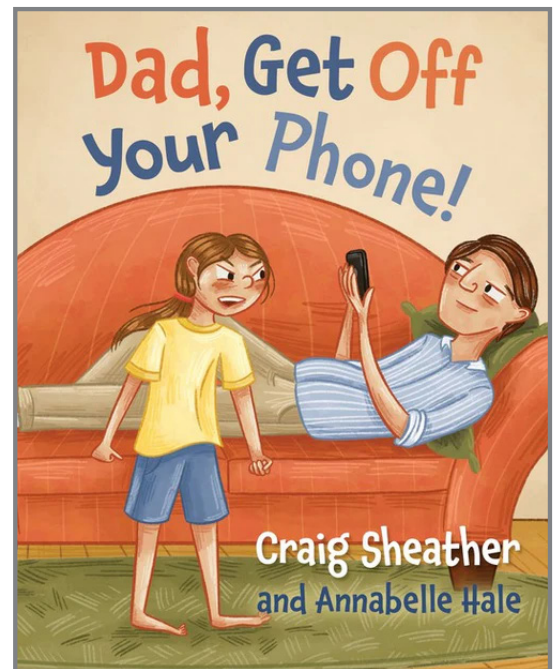
ILLUSTRATOR

ANNABELLE HALE

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SYNOPSIS

Lyra is an active young lady who wants to get out and explore the world—but her father has turned into a Phone Zombie! He spends all his time lying on the couch working . . . talking . . . texting . . . reading . . . watching sports. Finally she persuades him to go for a walk with her in the bush where they see amazing creatures and Dad is gradually converted into a Nature Zombie!

This wholesome tale, hinting at the dangers of the over-use of screens and extolling the benefits of getting out into nature, turns the usual parent-berating-child narrative on its head. The story thus delights children while at the same time tempting them to follow in Lyra's footsteps.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Craig Sheather is a freelance travel writer and creative author from Albury, southern NSW. His writing focuses on nature, travel, history, culture, hiking, camping, food and real-life stories for children. Craig has trekked to Everest Base Camp, been chased through the streets of Pamplona by rampaging bulls, swilled beer at the Munich beer-fest, was stalked by a hippo in Tanzania, fell asleep on a chopper flight over The Grand Canyon and has a Peruvian boy named after him (not his son!). However, his most ambitious travel escapade was taking his new wife to Borneo to complete the gruelling Death March trek . . . on their Honeymoon! He is a frequent contributor to *Australian Geographic*, *Great Walks*, *On the Road & Great Walks* magazines and he has authored *Best Walks of Victoria's High Country*, *Best Walks East of Melbourne*, *The Incredible True Story of Sparky the Wonder Puppy* and *Heroes of Black Summer*.

Find out more about Craig at <https://craigsheather.com.au>.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Annabelle Hale is an illustrator based in Melbourne. She loves drawing, dancing and spending time outdoors in nature.

Find out more about Annabelle at <https://www.annabelle-hale.com/>.

THEMES

- Ocean life
- Parenting
- Imagination
- Ecological sustainability

- Family dynamics
- Patience
- Slow living

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Ask children what they think a zombie and a ninja are. Share the following definitions to refer to during reading:
 - **Zombie:** a person who is or appears lifeless, apathetic, or completely unresponsive to their surroundings. A person or reanimated corpse that has been turned into a creature capable of movement but not of rational thought.
 - **Ninja:** a person skilled in the Japanese art of ninjutsu that requires them to go unnoticed. A person who excels in a particular skill or activity.

DURING READING

- What does the author mean by the term 'Phone Zombie'?
- Draw attention to the illustrations and ask: How does Dad's appearance change throughout the book? Why?
- What does Dad mean by the term 'Tickle Ninja'?
- Why do you think Dad finds everything so scary when he first reaches the hiking trail? How do his reactions compare with Lyra's?
- What does Lyra mean when she says, 'Dad, slow down. You're missing everything!'
- How do things change after Dad stops and takes a deep breath in?
- What does Dad notice that he may otherwise have missed?
- When Dad and Lyra lie down towards the end, why do you think they don't speak for a while?
- How is Dad the 'Nature Zombie' so different to Dad the 'Phone Zombie'? Why?

AFTER READING

- Discuss the pros and cons of electronic devices and compare them with the benefits of spending time outdoors. Create class lists of both based on discussion and research. Based on what students have learnt, ask how they might change how they use mobile phones and tablets.
- Over a period of four weeks, have students collect and graph data on the amount of time they spend outdoors compared with the time they spend on screen activities. Discuss why screen-free activities are so important and create a class list of as many of them as possible.
- Debate the topic 'Mobile phones are good for us'.
- Create an illustrated poster employing persuasive text to either sell the benefits of spending more time outdoors or spending less time on electronic devices.
- Research signs of mobile phone addiction and report back to the class.
- Include regular nature walks in your timetable, encouraging students to take notice of what is around them and to use their senses. Follow each walk with a creative activity that reflects their time spent outdoors.
- Ask students to share details of any hiking trails in their area or places they have visited. Students could draw maps of real or imagined trails.
- Australia is home to thousands of national parks and conservation reserves, including Kakadu National Park, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Royal National Park, and Blue Mountains National Park. Ask students to find out why these areas are so important to preserve and to choose one such area to research in depth. They should present their findings to the class, supported by visual cues.
- Bring in eucalyptus leaves for children to smell and attempt to play. Ask them to write lyrics to a song about eucalyptus trees.
- Conduct some lessons, such as free reading time, outside.
- Create a classroom or school garden for students to retreat to.
- Discuss First Nations peoples' deep connection to land and how it informs their culture and sense of wellbeing.

- Encourage students to take a deep, reflective breath in and out each time they leave and enter their classroom.
- Lyra made up inventive names for common Australian animals. Ask students to each choose an Australian animal to describe in a humorous way and to illustrate their creation.