GREAT GRASSLANDS: EARLY CHILDHOOD, FOUNDATION & LEVEL 1 RESOURCES
Early Childhood, Foundation and Level 1

Finger puppets and fun activities to explore our amazing native grasses. These materials include:

• Finger Puppets of 6 local grassland animals
• 7 Grassy Posters (print in A3 for A+ fun)
• A detailed lesson plan with fun activities
• Clear science explanations
• Suggested extension activities
• Links to curriculum
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INTRODUCTION

In these activities learners explore how Victorian animals use native grasses. Learners explore their local natural areas through activities and games to identify how animals use grass tussocks for shelter and food.

These activities follow the lesson structure of tune in, find out, explore and act. You can adapt them to your class to compliment other activities or use them as an introduction to a unit.

These lessons can be taken outside!

STUDENT OUTCOMES

That the grasslands area is a local natural landscape.

That grasslands contain wildflowers and tussock grasses which are important to the animals that live in them. There are specialised animals that live in the grasslands.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These resources are part of the ‘Great Grasslands’ education project, funded by the Strategic Partnerships Program of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Thanks to Anna Melville for her invaluable feedback. The Victorian Association for Environmental Education acknowledges Millicent Burke for her passion, knowledge and vision for these resources about grasslands, To Pen Lynch for her amazing finger puppets.

Find more lesson plans, a guide to grassland education and even more fun activities at www.vaee.vic.edu.au/grasslands
Curriculum National Early Years Framework

• Being and Belonging: Experiencing belonging—knowing where and with whom you belong.
• Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world (VEYLDF p21)

AusVELS Foundation

• Biological sciences – Living things have basic needs, including food and water (ACSSU002)
• Earth and space sciences – Daily and seasonal changes in our environment, including the weather, affect everyday life (ACSSU004)
• Nature and the development of science – Science involves exploring and observing the world using the senses (ACSHE013)
• Questioning and Predicting – Respond to questions about familiar objects and events (ACSIS014)
• Planning and conducting – Explore and make observations by using the senses (ACSIS011)
• Processing and analysing data and information – Engage in discussions about observations and use methods such as drawing to represent ideas (ACSIS233)
• Communicating—Share observations and ideas (ACSIS012)

Level 1

• Biological sciences – Living things have a variety of external features (ACSSU017)
• Biological sciences – Living things live in different places where their needs are met (ACSSU211)
• Planning and conducting – Participate in different types of guided investigations to explore and answer questions, such as manipulating materials, testing ideas, and assessing information resources (ACSIS025)
WHERE ARE THE GRASSLANDS OF VICTORIA?

Victoria has three large areas of grasslands, the Central and South Gippsland Plains Grasslands; the Northern Plains Grasslands and the Victorian Volcanic Western Plains Grassland. There are also many smaller patches where tussock grasses occur. Contact your local council to find your nearest grassy areas!

MADE ESPECIALLY FOR YOU

This resource has been designed especially for Early Years, Foundation and Level 1 teachers within our amazing Grasslands! In particular those based in Western and North Western Melbourne as well as regional Northern and South-Western Victoria.
Activity 1:

Grassy ideas (5 mins)
Show learners a grass tussock* (OR) The “Grass Tussock” Poster. Ask children prompting questions about their understanding of grass. Some questions you may wish to include are:

What is this? (OR) What is this a photo of?
How do you know?
Is this a plant or an animal?
Have you seen a plant like this before?
What do you think lives here?

Grassy Facts

- Many native grasses in Victoria grow in a clump called a tussock.
- ‘Grassland’ areas have lots of tussock grasses and wildflowers, but not many trees or shrubs.
- A grassland grows where there is too much rainfall for a desert and not enough rainfall for a forest to grow.
- Native grasses also grow in forests and bushland too! In these areas they are called the ‘ground cover’.
- Trees and shrubs have roots, leaves, stems, flowers, seeds and ‘woody’ growth (trunks and branches). Grasses have roots, leaves, flowers and seeds too, but never grow ‘woody’ growth.
- Wildflowers are small flowering plants, including daisies, orchids, geraniums and lilies.

*Most native grasses grow in clumps called ‘tussocks’ and are available from native plant nurseries. Look for varieties of “Poa” grass or “Kangaroo grass” (Themeda triandra) as these varieties have smooth leaves and non-prickly seeds.

The “Grass Tussock” poster is on page 22. Print on A3 if possible.
GREAT GRASSLANDS - EXPLORE [1/4]

Activity 2:
Tussock tunnels (5 mins)
Follow these steps to use your bodies to create grassy tunnels and see how the local animals use them. Sit in a circle, facing inward.

Ask children about grass in their gardens: What shape is it? What colour is it?

Step 1
Hold up your fingers in front of you and wiggle them. Then explain: “The grasses in our grasslands do not grow like a lawn. Follow me and I will show you why the grass of our grasslands is very special.”

Step 2
Bring your hands together and explain: “Our special grassland grass grows in clumps called tussocks. Bring your hands together to make a little grass tussock.”

Step 3
Bring your hands up to your shoulders and explain: “This grass is also special because it grows very long! It grows up…”
Step 4
Stretch your arms up straight and say “...and up...”

Step 5
Bring your hands down but keep your elbows up while you say: “...and over!”
Holding your arms like in this position and explain: “This special ‘up, up, and over’ grass makes tunnels under the tussock! These tunnels are used by all the grassland animals to live in!”

Step 6
Ask everyone to turn to his or her left, then explain: “See how we make tussock tunnels! If my hand was a little grassland animal they would run through the tussock tunnels!”
Use your hand to Pretend to be a grassland animal and ‘run’ it through the tussock tunnels!
Activity 3:
Grassland puppets (15 mins)
Let each child choose a puppet to assemble. Help them cut out each puppet (along the dashed line), then fold in half and then glue over an ice cream stick.
Next, use the posters of the Eastern Barred Bandicoot, the Blue Tongue Lizard, the Stubble Quail, the Golden Sun Moth and the Fat-tailed Dunnart to explore each animal. Look at each poster and point out features of the animal. Ask children what they can see. Do they know if it is covered in fur, feathers, scales or skin? Can they tell if it moves on the ground or flies in the air?

Extension activity
Invite children to move like each animal. Bandicoots hop; Stubble Quails run and fly; Golden Sun Moths walk, climb grass leaves and flutter; Fat-tailed Dunnarts hop; Blue Tongue Lizards lie on their bellies and push themselves along with their legs and arms; Wolf Spiders live in burrows and run.
Activity 4:

Tussock Dreams (10 mins)
Ask children to sit on the ground (it need not be in a circle) and become “Tussocks” again (as in step 6).
Explain that Bandicoots do not sleep in nests in a tree; they live in a nest under the tussock called a “drey”. Next, choose a child to pretend to be an Eastern Barred Bandicoot and find a ‘Tussock’ (another child) and make a drey under their leaves (under their arms).

Extension activity
If the children are enjoying this, you can continue the activity by choosing another child to become: a Fat-tailed Dunnart (they sleep in dreys or tunnels); a Stubble Quail (they build nests on the ground); a Blue tongue lizard (they doze in the sun between tussocks); Wolf Spiders live in burrows. Children can take it in turns becoming each animal or a grass tussock.
GREAT GRASSLANDS - ACT

Activity 5:

Puppet Play (15 mins)
Using the large tussock poster, let children to use the finger puppets to act out their knowledge or have paper, pencils and natural materials available for learners to create drawings of their understandings.

Some prompting questions you may wish to ask are:
Who eats who? (Golden Sun Moths eat tussock grass – but only as larvae. Stubble Quail eat tussock grass seeds, Wolf Spiders and Golden Sun Moths. Blue Tongue Lizards eat Golden Sun Moths, grass seeds and fruit from wildflowers. Eastern Barred Bandicoots and Fat-tailed Dunnart s eat the Golden Sun Moths, Wolf Spiders and grass seeds.)
Who lives where? (The Golden Sun Moth starts under the ground as a grub, then lives on the leaves. Eastern Barred Bandicoots and Fat-tailed Dunnarts live in dreys and in the grass tunnels. Stubble Quail nest in the tunnels and can fly.)
How do the animals move?

Activities checklists

Materials for each student:
- Finger puppet print out
- Glue
- Scissors
- Ice-cream stick

Materials for the class to share:
- Grass Tussock poster
- Eastern Barred Bandicoot poster
- Fat-tail Dunnart poster
- Wolf Spider poster
- Golden Sun Moth poster
- Blue Tongue Lizard poster
- Stubble Quail poster
GREAT GRASSLANDS - EXTENSION

ACTIVITIES (1/2)

Tussock travel

Visit your local park or school garden. See if you can find some tussock grasses. Use the finger puppets and toys to explore the area. Werribee Open Range Zoo and Mount Rothwell Biodiversity Interpretation Centre have an exhibit dedicated to the local grasslands. Visit it to see some of the grassland animals or to see a patch of tussock grasses. Details of excursions are available at:

www.zoo.org.au
www.mtrothwell.com.au

Stories

Read grassland related books next to a tussock grass plant. Your local council will have a list of parks and gardens in the area that feature native plants, some children’s books that feature grassland plants and animals include:

“Leaf Litter” by Rachel Tonkin
Features an area under a tree through time. Many of the plants and animals are found in the grasslands. The Murnong, or Yam Daisy, is also featured. This plant is a significant food plant to the indigenous peoples of Victoria.
**GREAT GRASSLANDS - EXTENSION ACTIVITIES (2/2)**

**“Yurri’s Manung” by Sue Atkinson**
Explores the different homes of animals.

**“Yurri’s Birthday” by Sue Atkinson**
Features local grassland and forest animals.

**Aboriginal knowledge and bush tucker**

Ask children about what they have eaten today, and if any of it came from a plant. You may like to use this discussion to lead into reading the book “Tucker” by Wendy Notley to introduce the idea of native plants as food.

Many of the plants within the grasslands are edible. The Wurrundjeri used to harvest many of the local plants to eat. You could invite an elder of the local aboriginal group to come and talk about their experiences of grasslands.

**More Grassland Characters**

Use the other Great Grasslands resources, including masks, playing cards and more to explore some more of the local animals. Check out the lesson plans and other grassland-themed activities at :

GREAT GRASSLANDS - FINGER PUPPETS

Wolf spider
Cut out & instruction page 16

Golden sun moth
Cut out & instruction page 17

Blue tongue lizard
Cut out & instruction page 18

Fat-tailed Dunnart
Cut out & instruction page 19

Stubble Quail
Cut out & instruction page 20

Bandicoot (Eastern Barred)
Cut out & instruction page 21
WOLF SPIDER

Instructions:
Cut me out and stick me on ice cream sticks to make me into finger puppets! Then give me a grass tussock to play in!
GOLDEN SUN MOTH

Instructions:
Cut me out and stick me on ice cream sticks to make me into finger puppets! Then give me a grass tussock to play in!
BLUE TONGUE LIZARD

Instructions:
Cut me out and stick me on ice cream sticks to make me into finger puppets! Then give me a grass tussock to play in!
FAT-TAILED DUNNART

Instructions:
Cut me out and stick me on ice cream sticks to make me into finger puppets! Then give me a grass tussock to play in!
STUBBLE QUAIL

Instructions:
Cut me out and stick me on ice cream sticks to make me into finger puppets! Then give me a grass tussock to play in!
EASTERN BARRED BANDICOOT

Instructions:
Cut me out and stick me on ice cream sticks to make me into finger puppets! Then give me a grass tussock to play in!
GREAT GRASSLANDS GRASS TUSSOCK

This poster is part of the Great Grassland education resources. Image credit: Millicent Burke (2013)
I am an Eastern Barred Bandicoot

I EAT:

- Bugs
- Fruits
- Flowers

I am a Fat-tailed Dunnart

I EAT:

- Bugs
- Fruits
- Spiders
- Flowers
I am a Stubble Quail

I EAT:

- Bugs
- Fruits
- Grass
- Flowers
I am an Blue Tongue Lizard

I EAT:

- Bugs
- Fruits
- Flowers
I am an Wolf Spider

I EAT:

Bugs
I am an Golden Sun Moth

When I am a caterpillar, I eat: Grass