

# POSSUM MAGIC

## POSSUM MAGIC

by Mem Fox, illustrated by Julie Vivas  
(Gulliver Books, Harcourt Brace)

Themes: Animals, Fantasy, Nature, Geography

Grade Level: K–5

Running Time: 8 minutes

## SUMMARY

Using bush magic, Grandma Poss has made her granddaughter Hush invisible, a trait that's handy for sliding down kangaroos and avoiding snakes. But when Hush wants to see herself, reversing the magic is not so easy. Grandma remembers that the spell came from human food, so the two possums take a bicycle tour of Australia, looking for the exact foods that will make Hush reappear. The funny story, bursts of rhyme and magical pictures draw children's imaginations to Australia, where the real foods that people eat sound as exotic as wombats and kookaburras.

## OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and listen to a fantasy story about animals in Australia.
- Children will identify some Australian animals, place names and popular foods.
- Children will distinguish between real and fantasy elements in a work of fiction.

## BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Start by defining the word "possum," by showing children the cover of the video. Ask

students to identify the part of the title that shows it's an imaginary story. Then explain that this imaginary story is set in a real place, Australia. Locate Australia on a map or globe, and ask students to share what they already know about Australia, especially the names of Australian animals. Encourage them to watch for these animals as they view the program.

## AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Divide students into three teams, one each for the animals, place names and foods of Australia. Each team should make a list of questions from their category. Teams then take turns testing each other's recall of details. For example, the animals team might ask, "What animal did Grandma Poss turn blue?"

Connect the story to a nature or science lesson by having students look up opossums in nature encyclopedias, books about animals, or animal-related web sites. Have them share what they learn through bulletin boards, posters and class reports.

Connect the story to both literature and American history by collecting and sharing other folk tales about opossums. (Look for folk-tales from the United States, Mexico, Central and South America, from Native American, African American and European American traditions.) Discuss the real elements of possum behavior, such as faking death to avoid it, that

appear in the folk stories.

Connect the story to geography by comparing the map at the end of the program with other, more detailed maps of Australia. Have students do library research about places in Australia or contact the Australian cities in the story by means of the Internet. Children should report their discoveries to the class.

Ask students to think of and list American food names that might sound funny to someone from Australia. For example, what are hot dogs? cheese fries? patty melts? subs? Encourage students to write funny stories and poems featuring names of foods.

Other videos and films about fantasy animals available from Weston Woods include:  
**ANTARCTIC ANTICS** by Judy Sierra, ill. by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey  
**SYLVESTER AND THE MAGIC PEBBLE** by William Steig

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