

Teacher Notes

Themes

- Spiders and invertebrates
- Animal adaptations
- Habitats and ecosystems
- Challenging perspectives of wildlife

Key learning outcomes

- Discover that spiders are a diverse group of animals with many different physical features and behaviours.
- Learn about the physical and behavioural adaptations spiders use to survive in a range of environments.
- Develop an understanding of the important roles spiders play in ecosystems.
- Challenge common misconceptions about spiders through scientific observation and discussion.

Key curriculum areas

- **Science:** Science Understanding (Biological sciences); Science Inquiry
- **English:** Language; Literature; Literacy
- **The Arts:** Visual Arts
- **Cross-curriculum Priority:** Sustainability

Publication details

I'm Not Afraid of Spiders

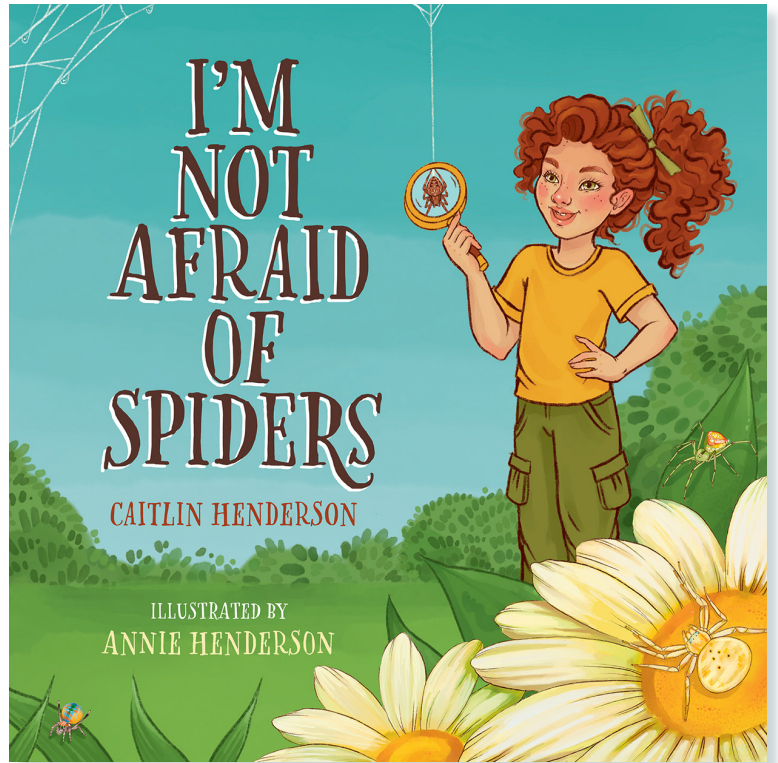
ISBN: 9781486318551

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I'm Not Afraid of Spiders

Caitlin Henderson and
Annie Henderson

About the book

I'm not afraid of spiders!

Come along on an exploration of the wonderful world of spiders. Discover how there's nothing to fear about these beautiful but often misunderstood animals. Meet spiders that jump, spiders that sparkle and spiders that look like twigs. Be amazed by their fascinating features and different shapes, colours and sizes.

Recommended for

Readers aged 5 to 9 (Years 1 to 4)



PUBLISHING

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About the author and illustrator

Caitlin Henderson is an award-winning wildlife photographer and writer who works with live spiders and other invertebrates. She tells stories of misunderstood wildlife online under the name She's Got Legs Photography.

Annie Henderson is an illustrator with a love of nature and finding the beauty in even the smallest of creatures. Her passion for illustration began as a child, when she and her sister Caitlin would spend hours creating drawings of make-believe worlds.

Pre-reading questions or activities

What is a spider?

How many legs do spiders have? Do spiders have any other defining features or behaviours? What other animals do they remind you of?

Friend or foe?

When you think of spiders, how does it make you feel? Do you like spiders?

Discussion questions

Science

1. We see the spiders in many different habitats throughout the story. How many did you see? Why do you think spiders can adapt to live in so many different environments?
2. Some spiders famously build webs to catch their prey, while other spiders choose to hunt without webs. What other ways have spiders developed to catch their prey? Why do you think it is important for species to evolve different ways of catching food?
3. *'I'm not afraid of spiders, though some are hard to see. Their smart disguises keep them safe from predators-to-be.'*

Some of the spiders in our story blend into their environments whereas others have evolved to be brightly coloured and stand out from their surroundings. Why do you think this is?

4. Spiders eat lots and lots of insects such as flies and mosquitoes. What do you think might happen if there were no more spiders left in the world?

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English

1. *'I'm not afraid of spiders.'* This line is repeated throughout the story. Repetition is used in poetry to emphasise important themes and build rhythm. What other poetic devices has the author used and how do they improve the story?
2. The author wants readers to look at spiders differently and learn to appreciate these wonderful creatures. What strategies has the author used to persuade you to like spiders?

Sustainability

1. Spiders are often killed because people are afraid of them. Why do you think it's important to understand animals before deciding whether they are dangerous?
2. How can learning about spiders help us make kinder and more sustainable choices when we encounter wildlife?

Activities

Science

Arachnids versus insects

In the fact pages at the back of the book, the author teaches us that spiders are often mistaken for insects, yet they actually belong to another group of animals called arachnids and have distinct physical and behavioural adaptations. In this activity, students will explain the difference between these two animal groups to help others understand. Students will create a poster that compares arachnids and insects, highlighting their different physical and behavioural adaptations.

Web builder

Students will study the designs of different spider webs and then build their own webs using string. Students can use the four legs of a chair to fasten their webs, then they are encouraged to trial different patterns, structures and designs as they build. Once the webs are done, the class can test which web is the strongest. By preselecting an agreed upon unit of weight, such as Unifix® cubes or MAB blocks, students can start adding the weights one by one to observe which web structure is the strongest.

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English

Repetition, repetition, repetition

'I'm not afraid of spiders.' The use of this line over and over again throughout the story is a poetic feature called repetition. Repetition is used in poetry to emphasise important themes and build rhythm. Ask students to write their own short poem or story using a repeating phrase or word.

The Arts

Spider web art

Spiders use silk to create strong webs with repeating patterns and shapes. In this activity, students will observe the structure of spider webs and use a wax-resist technique to create their own web artworks. The wax drawing will remain hidden until paint or dye is applied, revealing the web in a surprising and engaging way.

Materials:

- White paper
- White wax crayons or candles
- Paintbrushes
- Watercolour paints or coloured food dyes
- Small containers for dye or paint
- Paper towels and water for clean-up

Steps:

1. Begin by looking closely at spider web illustrations or photographs.
Ask students to notice the shapes, lines and patterns, including straight lines, spirals and repeated sections.
2. Give each student a sheet of white paper and a white wax crayon or candle.
Explain that they will be drawing a spider web, but that their drawing may be difficult to see at first.
3. Using the crayon or candle, students lightly draw their spider web on the paper.
Encourage them to start from the centre and work outwards, adding straight and curved lines to create a web-like structure.
4. Once drawings are complete, provide students with diluted paint or food dye.
Using a paintbrush, students carefully paint over the entire page.
5. As the paint or dye is applied, the wax lines will resist the liquid and the spider web will appear.
6. Allow artworks to dry before displaying.

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Sustainability

In this activity students will research as a class to build a food web that is based around spiders. What do they eat and what eats them?

Once students have developed a food web with a number of different links, take away the spiders. Now discuss what changes as a result – which animals will lose their food source, and which creatures will get out of control without spiders around to eat them?

With this new perspective on the important role that spiders play in our ecosystems, brainstorm ways that we can support spider populations, such as:

- Leaving leaf litter or garden corners undisturbed.
- Respectfully relocating spiders instead of killing them.

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Australian Curriculum Links (Version 9.0)

Year level	Learning area: Science	Other learning areas
Years 1/2	<p>Science Understanding: Biological sciences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the basic needs of plants and animals, including air, water, food or shelter, and describe how the places they live meet those needs (AC9S1U01) <p>Science Inquiry: Questioning and predicting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pose questions to explore observed simple patterns and relationships and make predictions based on experiences (AC9S2I01) 	<p>English: Language: Text structure and organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore how texts are organised according to their purpose, such as to recount, narrate, express opinion, inform, report and explain (AC9E1LA03) <p>Language for expressing and developing ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiment with and begin to make conscious choices of vocabulary to suit the topic (AC9E2LA09) <p>English: Literature: Literature and contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how language and images are used to create characters, settings and events in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators (AC9E1LE01) <p>English: Literacy: Texts in context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss different texts and identify some features that indicate their purposes (AC9E1LY01) <p>Interacting with others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use interaction skills including turn-taking, speaking clearly, using active listening behaviours and responding to the contributions of others, and contributing ideas and questions (AC9E1LY02) Use interaction skills when engaging with topics, actively listening to others, receiving instructions and extending own ideas, speaking appropriately, expressing and responding to opinions, making statements, and giving instructions (AC9E2LY02) <p>Creating texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and edit short imaginative, informative and persuasive written and/or multimodal texts for familiar audiences, using text structure appropriate to purpose, simple and compound sentences, noun groups and verb groups, topic-specific vocabulary, simple punctuation and common 2-syllable words (AC9E2LY06) <p>The Arts: Visual Arts: Developing practices and skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiment and play with visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials (AC9AVA2D01) <p>Creating and making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to create artworks (AC9AVA2C01)
Years 3/4	<p>Science Understanding: Biological sciences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare characteristics of living and non-living things and examine the differences between the life cycles of plants and animals (AC9S3U01) Explain the roles and interactions of consumers, producers and decomposers within a habitat and how food chains represent feeding relationships (AC9S4U01) <p>Science Inquiry: Questioning and predicting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pose questions to explore observed patterns and relationships and make predictions based on observations (AC9S4I01) 	<p>English: Language: Text structure and organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how texts across the curriculum use different language features and structures relevant to their purpose (AC9E3LA03) <p>English: Literature: Examining literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how an author uses language and illustrations to portray characters and settings in texts, and explore how the settings and events influence the mood of the narrative (AC9E3LE03) Examine the use of literary devices and deliberate word play in literary texts, including poetry, to shape meaning (AC9E4LE04) <p>English: Literacy: Interacting with others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use interaction skills to contribute to conversations and discussions to share information and ideas (AC9E3LY02) <p>The Arts: Visual Arts: Developing practices and skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiment with a range of ways to use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials (AC9AVA4D01) <p>Creating and making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to create artworks that communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning (AC9AVA4C01)
All	<p>Cross-curriculum Priority: Sustainability: Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All life forms, including human life, are connected through Earth's systems (geosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere) on which they depend for their wellbeing and survival (SS1) 	

Teacher Notes

Related books from CSIRO Publishing

For younger readers:

- *Look, See, Find Me* (<https://www.publishing.csiro.au/book/8211>)
- *The Very Stinky Fly Hunt* (<https://www.publishing.csiro.au/book/8180>)
- *Wonderful Wasps* (<https://www.publishing.csiro.au/book/8057>)

For older readers:

- *Our World of Wild Wonders* (<https://www.publishing.csiro.au/book/8176>)
- *Sensational Australian Animals* (<https://www.publishing.csiro.au/book/8094>)

Other CSIRO resources

CSIRO has developed and delivered a broad range of high-quality STEM education programs and initiatives for nearly 40 years. Our programs aim to inspire the pursuit of further STEM education among students and the community, to equip the emerging workforce with tomorrow's skill sets, and to strengthen collaboration between industry and classrooms across Australia. For more information visit: <https://www.csiro.au/en/Education>