



STORM

By **CLAIRE SAXBY & JESS RACKLYEFT**

RECOMMENDED FOR: Ages 5–8 YEARS OLD (YEARS 2 & 3, LOWER TO MIDDLE PRIMARY)

GENRE: Literary Non-Fiction

THEMES: natural environment, storms, weather, the water cycle, climate, habitats

CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS:

- English: Literature, literacy and language
- Science
- Music

NOTES WRITTEN BY: Jennifer Asha

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INTRODUCTION

'Tiny water drops join and grow until they are too heavy to stay aloft. Sparks flash and grumble. The storm is here.' Saxby, pg. 12, *Storm*

In the style of *Iceberg*, *Tree* and *Volcano*, *Storm* is the fourth book by the creative pair Claire Saxby and Jess Racklyeft. *Storm* uses Saxby's carefully chosen, rhythmic language and Racklyeft's moody watercolour illustrations to encourage the audience to look closely at the details of the impact of a storm on the beach and sea environment.

Racklyeft's watery illustrations literally represent the subject matter, using watercolours and mixed media, as we wait for and watch the storm. The illustrations use close-up shots to zoom in on the marine life and wide shots to pan out to see the crashing waves, billowing clouds and brewing storm.

Saxby's lyrical text uses sentence length to mimic the building storm and the return to calm. Rich descriptive language works hand in hand with the detailed illustrations to show the intricacies and interconnection of the ocean ecosystem.

Racklyeft's illustrations and Saxby's prose will immerse the reader-viewer in the weather watching and take them on a windy journey showing the impact of wild weather on birds and sea creatures.

These teachers' notes have been formulated with early to middle primary grades in mind and are accompanied by Year 2 & 3 curriculum outcomes. However, the suggested activities could be adapted for different year levels. Careful teacher modelling and scaffolding could make activities appropriate for younger students. Through the provision of student choice of representational mode, more extended research opportunities or through more sustained writing expectations, the activities could be made more challenging for older students or those needing extension.

PLOT SUMMARY

It begins with a puff. Then another. A flutter, a ripple, a shiver show where the breeze blows. Tiny water drops join and grow until they are too heavy to stay aloft. Lightning cracks and thunder bellows. The storm is here.

An evocative exploration of the birth of a thunderstorm and the effects of wind and weather on the natural environment. In the vein of *Iceberg*, *Tree* and *Volcano* – combining deep scientific research, lyrical language and stunning illustrations – *Storm* is the next exploration of the natural world from the CBCA award-winning team of Claire Saxby and Jess Racklyeft.

Q&A WITH THE AUTHOR: CLAIRE SAXBY

What is the main theme of the book?

'*Storm* is an exploration of the power of winds unseen and the things they bring, the things they take away. Wind and rain, and their effects on animals on a reef, in rock pools, in the air and the on beach are all the focus of this picture book.'

What was the inspiration for the book?

'This book is written for primary-aged readers who are curious about the natural world around them. As with *Iceberg* (water), *Tree* (earth) and *Volcano* (fire), I was keen to explore how the elemental forces of wind affected the landscape and animals where they occur. For anyone who has been on a summer beach when the winds change and a storm blows in, they will know how quickly that calm, warm beach can become something other, something wild and unexpected. Humans can quickly pack up their beach towels and flee, but what is it like for the animals who live in, on, under and above the beachside and sea? I wanted to include as many different beach environments and the animals that live there to explore how they prepare and endure the onslaught and tumult of a thunderstorm. I also wanted to understand just how summer storms are generated. Thunderstorms are wild, unpredictable and mesmerising (particularly when watched from inside a weatherproof house). They are also generally very short-lived, and I was keen to capture that. I also marvel at the industry of the animals who occupy a beach as they return to living their lives as the storm passes (while also taking advantage of the changes the storm has brought). I'm also fascinated by how and why winds blow.'

What sort of research did you undertake as part of the writing process?

'I "collected" beaches, reefs, rock pools, plants, birds, fish and more (in photos and descriptions) and put them all together to witness this storm. My "collection" included a tiny green fish I'd seen while snorkelling in Williamstown, rock pools I'd found near Apollo Bay, and a sea eagle I'd watched by a cliffed-beach further west.'

'Surprisingly, I moved house during the writing of this story and found myself living by a beach that features almost all the elements I'd collected. What a find! Or perhaps my research and the writing of this story taught me to look more closely at every beach. I now trawl the tideline almost daily to see if I can work out what's happening under the waves.'

What did you discover as you were writing *Storm*?

'Once the story was drafted, then came the layering of meaning and crafting language to mimic the energy in the story (i.e. many more drafts). I think what I'm most trying to understand and share in these books is that no one is an island, we are all connected, and that understanding more about our world can only help us survive and thrive.'

Q&A WITH THE ILLUSTRATOR: JESS RACKLYEFT

What is the essence of the book?

'*Storm* watches the changing mood, landscape and energy of the ocean over the course of a storm, from the macro (a whole beach, dunes and ocean) to the micro (rock pools), from stillness to storm and back. It also gently covers climate change, with Claire Saxby's end note and the plight of the hooded plovers throughout the story.'

Tell us about your process and inspiration for illustrating this book?

'I grew up by the sea in West Australia, and we were lucky to have a beach shack on the edge of the ocean. The dramatic colours and scenes of big storms are etched in my memories – the dark greys and turquoise before a storm and the blackness big thunderstorms created. It was a joy to try to recreate these feelings on the page. I chose to keep the pagination in a bit of a pattern – from beach, to rockpool, to under water, to sky and back again to the end. Just like the feeling of a storm – approaching, hitting and retreating, the art follows the moving tides and colours of the storm.'

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

BEFORE READING

- Watch some videos about storms such as the following.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUNEFefft8>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfdXInW-14A>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcZn3dGWQ-U>
- Make note of storm-related vocabulary such as *rumble*, *rolling*, *roar*, *brewing*, *updraft*, *downdraft*, etc.
- Pose questions such as the following to review the learning from the videos and draw on students' existing knowledge in readiness for reading *Storm*.
 - In which season do storms often occur?
 - How is wind made?
 - What makes a rain cloud form?
 - Where does the water (moisture) for thunderstorms come from?
- Read *Iceberg*, *Tree* and *Volcano* and/or review a range of other literary non-fiction. These are books that are written on topics and phenomena that are true or real, but are written in the form of a recount or narrative. They aim to teach or inform the reader while also engaging or entertaining them. You might like to read more about this genre: <https://www.slj.com/story/understanding-teaching-five-kinds-nonfiction>

Literary texts	Non fiction texts
Illustrations that use a wide range of media in an artistic way to visually engage the viewer.	Illustrations include accurate details or use elements of scientific diagrams such as cross-sections or network diagrams to visually inform the viewer.
Figurative and descriptive language that allows the reader to build vivid mental images of character, setting and plot and use their senses to experience the setting.	Language that makes use of technical, field-specific or scientific vocabulary, or names of real people and places to make the information accurate and authoritative.
Includes participants/characters' thoughts, feelings and reactions to position the reader to empathise with or understand the characters.	Retells true events or processes in the order they occur/ed to correctly inform the reader.

[AC9E2LA03](#) [AC9E3LA03](#)

- Brainstorm with students the different wind-related words and their meanings. For example, *breeze*, *puff*, *flutter*, *shiver*, *zephyr*, *blow*, *gale*, *howl*, *billow*. Share these words on a display that can be referred to during and after reading *Storm* aloud.

[AC9E3LA10](#)

- Share experiences of being caught in a storm. Ask students to share the places they have been during storms – at home, in the bush, on the beach, on the playground – and the different impacts of storms in these locations.

[AC9E3LA01](#)

- Listen to musical compositions inspired by storms and wind, and encourage students to share their responses. For example:
 - Beethoven's *Symphony No. 6 Pastoral*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whEDL_PLIbY
 - Tchaikovsky's *The Storm*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9Y49mIDWwA&t=25s>
 - Harley Mead's *Flooding Rain*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AbtlhWhU3w>
 - Justine Clarke's *It's starting to rain*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acA1pTc9A5Y&t=18s>

[AC9E2LA02](#) [AC9AMU2D01](#) [AC9AMU4D01](#)

ENGLISH

LITERATURE, LITERACY AND LANGUAGE

- Display the front cover of *Storm* and support students in making connections to their background knowledge and predicting the genre and purpose of the book. Elicit predictions from students using questions such as:
 - What does the title and cover illustration lead us to predict might be the purpose of *Storm*?
 - Does the title lead us to predict this might be an imaginative story or another type of book?
 - Titles of books can often help the audience to predict the main character of a book or the storyline. Do we think that *Storm* might be a character or a hint at what will happen in the book?
 - If we predict that the book might be informative, what might we learn from reading it?

[AC9E2LA03](#) [AC9E3LA03](#) [AC9E2LY03](#) [AC9E3LY03](#) [AC9E2LY05](#) [AC9E2LE03](#)
[AC9E3LE03](#)

- Read aloud *Storm* and pause to look closely at and appreciate the illustrations. After reading, in small groups or pairs, ask students to share their responses to the book. Remind students of talking and listening conventions and ways to share their opinions respectfully. You might like to try '[Fishbowl](#)' [talk grouping](#) to encourage students to listen to the perspectives of others. Pose scaffolding sentence starters to support purposeful student to student talk, for example:
 - My predictions about *Storm* were correct/incorrect because....
 - The part I appreciated most about the book was....
 - I most enjoyed....about the illustrations.
 - The words that helped me to enjoy the book were....because....
 - I think the author and illustrator want the reader to feel/think/respond.....
 - I think Claire Saxby and Jess Racklyeft want children to think.....about storms.

[AC9E2LA02](#) [AC9E3LA01](#) [AC9E3LY05](#)

- Conduct a close re-reading of the text and choose one or more of the following suggestions.
 - Highlight the range of verbs used to tell the actions of the marine creatures and birds. Ask students to mime each verb and discuss how the verbs change from slow, calm actions to fast, hurried actions as the storm builds then, to static as the storm hits, e.g.
 - 'eagle hovers', 'spiky green fish sways' - 1st page opening
 - 'periwinkle tracks scribble', 'crabs scuttle' - 2nd page opening

- 'plovers retreat', 'anemones close', 'crab tucks', 'periwinkles cling' – 4th page opening
- Point out the verbs that are attributed to rain such as 'spears', 'craters', 'plit' and 'plop'. Discuss the mental image that these verbs conjure and how Claire Saxby has used these words to make the audience feel like they can feel and hear the rain. Jointly search the text for examples of verbs that are attributed to the wind, lightning and thunder e.g. 'flings', 'slings', 'cracks' and 'bellows'. Discuss the impact on the audience. Allow students to use the discovered verbs in new sentences about weather events.
[AC9E2LA07](#) [AC9E3LA07](#) [AC9E3LA08](#) [AC9E2LY12](#) [AC9E3LY10](#)
- Explain and give examples of personification used throughout *Storm*. You can compare the use in this book to that in *Iceberg* and *Volcano*, e.g.
 - 'white lipped waves snack at the shore'
 - 'The wind is alive. It flings and slings rain at the land...'

Record discoveries on a large sheet of paper and save it for reference during future writing activities.

[AC9E2LE04](#) [AC9E3LE04](#)

- Look closely at the different distances each illustration is shown from. Guide students to locate illustrations through the book that are demonstrating 'close-up', 'mid shots' and 'long shots'. Talk about the impact of these distances on the viewer. How do close-up shots help to focus the audience on the sea creatures while the long shots capture the tumultuous storm? Display the endpapers and discuss the way the colours of the sky and clouds change across the day and in relation to storms. Ponder, what time of day is illustrated in the endpapers?

[AC9E2LA08](#) [AC9E3LA09](#) [AC9E3LE03](#)

- Use websites to research fish endemic to Australian waters to help identify those included in the illustrations. Use watercolours to represent fish from the book and others discovered via research to appropriate Jess Racklyeft's style of painting.

Species	Pages
leatherjacket , mado and old wife	2-3
Dolphin	6-7
Globefish , sixband parrotfish	10-11
Hippocampus kuda , globefish	16-17
Soldier crab	18-19
Leatherjacket	24

[AC9E2LA08](#) [AC9E3LA09](#)

- Use the illustrations of close-up shots as inspiration for [haiku poems](#). Haikus focus the reader on a small part of nature and evoke a specific mood. Model for students how to write a haiku following the traditional 5 syllable, 7 syllable, 5 syllable pattern. After demonstrating form to students and reminding them of the previous learning regarding verbs and personification, jointly construct further poems, appropriating some of the language used by Saxby, e.g.

Green spiky fish sways

Hidden within seaweed strands

Camouflage master

Froth bubbles popping

Thunderstorm begins to pass

Wind falls, the beach stills

[AC9E2LY06](#) [AC9E3LY06](#)

- While *Storm* does not have the characters of a traditional narrative, it does have an Orientation that sets the scene and introduces the place the story will take place. It then has a series of events that lead to a rise in tension and a type of Complication. The story finishes with a Resolution as calm is restored. Help students to plot the elements of a narrative. Replicate this narrative structure (Orientation ^ Complication ^ Resolution) to plan and create new stories that take place on the beach or that include a storm as part of the Complication.

Compare the structure of *Storm* to other stories such as *Magic Beach* by Alison Lester, *Beach Song* by Ros Moriarty and Samantha Campbell, or *The Beach Wombat* by Susannah Chambers and Mark Jackson. Consider how the purpose of these narratives differ from *Storm*.

[AC9E2LE05](#) [AC9E3LE05](#) [AC9E2LY06](#) [AC9E3LY06](#)

- *Storm* includes some technical vocabulary that show it to be a book based in fact. Return to the list of storm-related vocabulary highlighted in the Before Reading activities and search the book for examples of such terminologies, e.g. *updraft* and *downdraft*. Discuss the information learned and known about how storms form, and ask students to jointly or individually write explanations using the technical vocabulary where possible.

[AC9E2LE05](#) [AC9E3LE05](#) [AC9E2LY06](#) [AC9E3LY06](#)

ENGLISH ASSESSMENT IDEAS:

- Assess students' comprehension of the picture book using questions such as the following after reading the story.
 - LITERAL COMPREHENSION

- What is the setting of *Storm*?
 - What are some of the fish and birds included in the book?
 - What is the plot of the book, what happens across the story?
 - INFERENTIAL COMPREHENSION
 - Why did the story take place at the beach instead of in a city setting?
 - How did the illustrations show the impact of the storm on the sea creatures?
 - How was reading the book a bit like being in a thunderstorm?
 - INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION
 - Why might Claire and Jess have decided to create another book about the natural environment?
 - How do Claire and Jess feel about the beach and other natural environments?
 - How do Claire and Jess intend for the audience to respond to the text?
 - Why is it important to write books like this, now?
- Collect students' paintings of fish. Ask students to describe the distance they have used to create the picture and what they were aiming to achieve through their choice of distance. Listen to students' explanations and make note of the following:
 - Use of distance when painting
 - Use of metalanguage (close-up, mid shot, long shot) when explaining their choice of distance.
 - Understanding of the way a 'close-up' distance focuses the viewer on the sea creature and helps them to appreciate it.
- Collect students' writing samples and assess them for use of the literary features learned about during the activities. Use or adapt the following rubric to assist with assessment of writing.

Feature	Working towards	Achieving	Working beyond
<i>Action verbs</i>	A few action verbs used with inconsistent tense	A range of action verbs used with consistent tense	A wide range of interesting action verbs with consistent tense
<i>Personification</i>	An attempt to include personification	Inclusion of personification	Creative use of personification
<i>Syllables</i>	An attempt at appropriate syllable patterns	Appropriate syllable patterns included	Syllable patterns included effectively

SCIENCE

Science Inquiry: Processing, Modelling and Analysing

- sort and order data and information and represent patterns, including with provided tables and visual or physical models [AC9S2I04](#)

Science Inquiry: Communicating

- write and create texts to communicate observations, findings and ideas, using everyday and scientific vocabulary [AC9S2I06](#)
- write and create texts to communicate findings and ideas for identified purposes and audiences, using scientific vocabulary and digital tools as appropriate [AC9S3I06](#)

Science Understanding: Biological Sciences

- compare characteristics of living and non-living things and examine the differences between the life cycles of plants and animals [AC9S3U01](#)
- Make observations about daily weather and record using tables or graphs.
- Use the sea creatures, crustaceans and birds in the book to consider food chains and webs and represent visually.
- Draw diagrams of the water cycle and/or types of clouds. Label diagrams with appropriate technical vocabulary.
- Use websites to research fish species to locate examples of fish from the book and label with scientific names.

MUSIC

Creating and making

- select and combine elements of music when composing and practising music for performance [AC9AMU2C01](#)
- manipulate elements of music to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning when composing and practising for performance [AC9AMU4C01](#)
- develop listening skills and skills for singing and playing instruments [AC9AMU2D01](#)
- develop listening skills and skills for manipulating elements of music when singing and playing instruments [AC9AMU4D01](#)
- sing and play music in informal settings [AC9AMU2P01](#)
- sing and play music they have learnt and/or composed in informal settings [AC9AMU4P01](#)
- Look closely at the endpapers and illustrations of the picture book and experiment with the use of percussion instruments to create a soundtrack to accompany a dramatic read aloud of the story.
- Listen to and sing along with songs related to rain, wind and storms.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CLAIRE SAXBY has lived in many places through Australia and beyond. That meant many houses and schools, but also introduced her to many people, landscapes and ways of being. She writes about nature, about history and more. Claire's work has won several awards including CBCA Picture Book of the Year for *Iceberg* and an Environment Award for Children's Literature for *Tree* (both illustrated by Jess Racklyeft), CBCA Honour Book, a NSW Premier's Literary Award, a SCBWI Crystal Kite Award, an Educational Publishing Award and the Whitley Award multiple times. She is widely curious about just about everything and passionate about encouraging curiosity and wonder.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

JESS RACKLYEFT creates a variety of illustrated things – picture books, paintings, prints, pins and cards – mainly in watercolours. She works from her Melbourne studio along Merri Creek. Her work often combines collage – either on paper or digitally assembled – and lots of ink, and for every book she tries to use a new technique or process to continue to challenge and grow, book by book. Jess worked in publishing sales for almost a decade before making the leap to full-time illustration work, and since then has won several illustration accolades including CBCA Picture Book of the Year for *Iceberg* and an Environment Award for Children's Literature for *Tree* (both written by Claire Saxby). Her work can now be found in bookshops and libraries across Australia, and her days are happily spent in a messy studio.

www.jessracklyeft.com



ABOUT THE WRITER OF THE NOTES

Jennifer Asha is a lover of children's literature. Picture books are her absolute favourite. When she is not immersed in a good book, Jennifer is an academic at the Australian Catholic University where she enjoys sharing her passion for literature, language and literacy with her Initial Teacher Education students. Jennifer is also an experienced primary school teacher who has taught in the classroom and in the library, across all grades. Jennifer has worked with teachers in schools to improve their practice for teaching literacy, conducted classroom-based research and published articles and books that encourage teachers to teach literacy and language using rich literature resources. Her areas of special interest include the teaching of grammar, multimodal texts and visual literacy.

CORRESPONDING LITERATURE

(In alphabetical order of authors)

Iceberg by Claire Saxby and Jess Racklyeft

Tree by Claire Saxby and Jess Racklyeft

Volcano by Claire Saxby and Jess Racklyeft

ONLINE LINKS IN FULL

Australian Museum:

<https://australian.museum/>

Fishing, NSW Government:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing>

National Zoo & Aquarium:

<https://www.nationalzoo.com.au/>

Dolphin Identification & Observation Guide – Dolphin Research Australia:

<https://www.dolphinresearchaustralia.org/dolphin-sighting-network/dolphin-identification-guide/>

Thunderstorms 101, National Geographic:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUNEFefft8>

Thunderstorm explained (explainity® explainer video):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfdXInWV-14A>

What Causes a Thunderstorm?, NOAA Scijinks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcZn3dGWQ-U>

Understanding—and Teaching—the Five Kinds of Nonfiction - School Library Journal:

<https://www.slj.com/story/understanding-teaching-five-kinds-nonfiction>

Symphony No. 6 *Pastoral*, Beethoven performed by Philharmonia Zürich & Jukka-Pekka

Saraste: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whEDL_PLlBY

The Storm, Op. 76 (Overture in E Minor), Tchaikovsky:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9Y49mIDWwA&t=25s>

Flooding Rain, Harley Mead performed by Junior Gondwana:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AblhVWhU3w>

It's starting to rain, Justine Clarke: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acAlpTc9A5Y&t=18s>