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### Blurb

Ayla's family is preparing for a hot Christmas in their dry, country town. But something is missing. 'We don't have a snowman!' says Ayla.

How will Ayla's family make her wish come true?

*Inspired by the hay bale art in towns across Australia, from Tarrington in Victoria's West to rural Kalbar in South East Queensland.*

### About the Creators

Pamela Jones is a British-born Australian children's author, poet and podcast host. She co-hosts and edits the podcast Middle Grade Mavens for which she has interviewed some of the UK and Australia's most successful children's authors. Pamela lives in Melbourne/Naarm with her family and far too many books and ballet shoes. This is her debut book.

Lucia Masciullo is an award-winning children's book illustrator born and bred in Livorno, Italy. She moved to Australia in 2007 and now lives and works on the beautiful Gold Coast. Her last book with the National Library of Australia was *The Imagineer*.

## Ayla's Christmas Wish Teachers' Notes

Recommended for: Kindergarten

### Before and After Reading

Before reading, have students look closely at the cover clues and guess what the book might be about. What do they think Ayla might wish for? What do they wish for?

After reading the book, examine the cover again and ask students which parts of the cover demonstrate what the story is about.

### Design Your Own Hay Bale Art

On the last page of the story, Ayla's street is lined by hay bale art. Choose a theme (Christmas, perhaps) and have the class brainstorm different things that could be made from one or two hay bales. What other materials could add detail to their hay bale creation? Have students draw their own hay bale art. You might like to browse <https://tongala.com.au/hay-bale-trail/> for inspiration.

When the hay bale designs are complete, brainstorm with the class what other materials they could use to build a 'snowman' if there is no snow or hay available.

### Make a Christmas Checklist

In the book, Ayla ticks off her Christmas checklist. Have students think about what they would like to do before Christmas and write their own checklist.

### Hot Christmas

Ayla's family is preparing for Christmas while sweltering in summer heat, though the text does not specifically say this. Challenge students to search the illustrations for as many clues as they can that show that it is hot.

Discuss as a class why images of snow and snowmen are used in Australia at Christmas time, even though we celebrate Christmas in summer. Have the students draw or make a list of the things that look like their Aussie Christmas, including the types of clothing they wear, activities (like swimming and cricket), summer foods and other equipment used (like beach umbrellas and barbecues).

### Colours of Christmas

Lucia Masciullo has illustrated the book with hues of blue, green and yellow. Discuss why she might have chosen these colours for this story. Ask the students which colours they think are usually associated with Christmas and what these colours represent. Do they agree that Lucia's choice of colours suits an Australian Christmas? Instruct students to draw their own picture with the colours from the book, perhaps using a mix of different media.

### Christmas in the Northern Hemisphere

The book highlights some of the differences between an Australian Christmas and a European Christmas. Using the book, or other pictures depicting Christmas in Australia, have students make a list of items or symbols that represent Christmas in a cold climate—for example, snowflakes, holly and mistletoe.

Using the list of items from this exercise and the ideas under 'Hot Christmas', create a season wheel. You may also want to look at how the local Indigenous population divides the seasons.

To explore why the hemispheres experience opposite seasons, you might like to play a video on the Earth's rotation and revolution, such as this one by [Virtual Elementary School](#)

### Drawing on Tradition

Ayla draws a picture of a snowman and sticks it to her bedroom wall. In the backmatter, images show different Christmas traditions around Australia. Ask students to draw a picture, like Ayla, that reflects a tradition they enjoy at Christmas time.

### Paper Lanterns

In the town of Tarrington, Victoria, hay bale art is part of the celebration of St Martin's Day, a traditional German holiday in which children form a procession, singing songs and holding lanterns. With coloured paper, step the students through making a simple paper lantern (instructions can be found online) and decorate the classroom with them. St Martin is most known for helping those in need. Discuss with the students how they can help those in need.

### Christmas Books—Related Reading

Here are some other Christmas-themed picture books set in Australia that you might want to share with the class:

- *Tea and Sugar Christmas* by Jane Jolly, illustrated by Robert Ingpen
- *What Do You Wish For?* by Jane Godwin, illustrated by Anna Walker
- *Christmas Always Comes* by Jackie French, illustrated by Bruce Whatley
- *An Aussie Christmas Gumtree* by Jackie Hosking, illustrated by Nathaniel Eckstrom

