

# The Little Gecko

Teacher Resources

Activities in this pack:



Information



Activity 1 Create



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## Introduction

### The Little Gecko A Chinese folktale, adapted for Australian animals by Julian Yu and Marion Gray

This is a story about a little gecko. Where is she? Over there, look! She's coming...

It was a hot summer's day. The little gecko was catching mosquitoes on the wall. Suddenly a snake slithered up and grabbed her tail! She struggled violently and escaped...but discovered she had lost his tail!

"How ugly I must look without a tail!" she thought. She decided to borrow one from someone else.

The little gecko crawled and crawled until she came to a riverbank. There he saw a fish, waving its tail as it swam slowly through the water.

"Little fish, little fish," she called. "Can you lend me your tail?" The fish answered, "I'm sorry, little gecko, but I need my tail to swim with."

Next, she saw a bull in a field, waving its tail and eating grass. "Mr Bull, Mr Bull. Can you lend me your tail?"

"I'm sorry, little gecko," answered the bull, "but I need my tail for swishing off the flies."

So the little gecko crawled on, when out of the blues he heard a bellbird calling. There it was, sitting in the tree above her.

"Little birdie, little birdie, if you're not using your tail at the moment, could I borrow it, please?"

"No, you can't," said the bellbird. "I need it for steering while I'm flying."

Last of all she met a kangaroo, hopping across her path. "Mrs Kangaroo, what does your tail do?" she asked. "I need it to balance me while I am standing and propel me when I hop," said the kangaroo.

The little gecko was dreadfully disappointed; obviously every tail had its own function, and no-one could do without theirs. She rushed into her mother's arms and told her the whole story.

Her mother laughed. "You duffer, turn around and have a look at yourself." She turned around, and lo and behold – "Ah! I've grown a beautiful new tail!"





## Sound Stories Composition Activity

1. Read the story of The Little Gecko
2. Explain the difference between a sound source and a sound pattern:

Sound source: what generates the sound –instruments, voices, body percussion, found sounds, digital sounds, environmental sounds...

Sound pattern: a short group of sounds that represent an object, character or idea. A sound pattern has pitch (high/low), rhythm (length of sounds and silence), volume (dynamics), and colour (instrument).

In small groups:

3. Story-board the narration. Include not just characters but also scenes and moods.
4. Explore sound sources and patterns which fit best with each section of the story board. NB. The gecko should be associated with the same source and pattern at each appearance, but with some variation to reflect mood and activity. This is very important; it gives the work coherence. The story-board sequence may look something like the following table, depending on the age group. Simplify as necessary.
5. Allocate sections to students: individuals, pairs, small groups, whole class; Decide collaboratively: whether or not to include narration and if so, where it fits in relation to each section; how long each section will last; how to keep track of where you are.

What's happening	Sound Source	Sound Pattern
Gecko appears		
Hot summer's day		
Gecko catching mosquitos		
Snake appears		
Snake pulls off her tail		
Unhappy gecko		
Gecko develops a plan		
Gecko crawling		
She reaches a river		
She sees a fish		
Conversation with fish		
Gecko moves on		
She sees a bull in a field		
Conversation with bull		
Gecko moves on		
She hears a bellbird		
Conversation with bellbird		
Gecko moves on		
She meets a kangaroo		
Conversation with kangaroo		
Very disappointed gecko		
Rushes home to her mother		
Mother's reaction		
Happy gecko		

6. Allow time for experimentation; encourage the careful use of silence and/or pause and try ideas out bit by bit. Invite comments, suggested improvements to refine the work.
7. Record the final version. Use a QR code generator to share the work.



## Composer's Choice: Listening

Listen to the recording of The Little Gecko:  
[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

Below is an outline of Julian Yu's choices. Invite students to comment on his choices and to compare them with their own. Discuss the importance of the xylophone, representing the gecko, as a technique creating unity in the piece. Identify by sight and by sound all the instruments listed.

[Meet the Instruments of the Orchestra](#) video can be found here.

Approx. Time (Total Length 9:55)	What's happening	Sound Source	Sound Pattern
0.12	Gecko appears	Xylophone	Short 5-note rhythm, pitch moves upwards and downwards, gaps in between, imitating the gecko's scurrying movements NB The gecko is ALWAYS there!
0.42	Hot summer's day	Flute, clarinet	2-note pattern, long-short, repeated
0.50	Gecko catching mosquitos	Strings Wind	High, soft, like the whine of a mosquito. Short sounds, gaps in between
1.20	Snake appears	Strings	Sliding, threatening
1.30	Snake pulls off her tail	Trumpets and xylophone	2-note pattern short-long
1.47	Unhappy gecko	Violin	Much slower; still uses gecko pattern but with a long note at the start
2.06		Pause	Thinking?

2.08	Gecko develops a plan	Xylophone, pizzicato strings	Gecko pattern with gaps between
2.15	Gecko crawling	Xylophone	Patterns closer together
2.28	She reaches a river	Harp	Gentle up/down flowing sounds
2.38	She sees a fish	Clarinet, flute	Gentle "waving" pattern
3.03	Conversation with fish	Oboe and vibraphone	"underwater" effect
3.25	Gecko moves on	Xylophone and harp	Moving along the riverbank so both patterns are used
4.00	She sees a bull in a field	Bassoon solo + full orchestra	Big animal but not loud sounds – it's a peaceful scene
4:28	Conversation with bull	Bassoon, wind and strings	Swishing sounds as the bull waves his tail
5.12	Gecko moves on	Xylophone	Bassoon fade, other "field" patterns continue
5.19	She hears a bellbird	Piccolo	Very high, short sounds, with gaps between
5.44	Conversation with bellbird	Xylophone and piccolo	Patterns interchange
6.07	Gecko moves on	Xylophone	Gets softer – losing heart? Xylo stops eventually
6.45	She meets a kangaroo	Low strings (cello, bass)	Bouncy pattern (boing!)
7.16	Conversation with kangaroo	Xylophone and horn	Horn takes over the "bounce" pattern, xylophone resumes gecko pattern
7.40	Very disappointed gecko	Solo violin, with vibraphone accompaniment	Much slower, with long note at the start of the pattern as before. Score is marked "doloroso"
8.00	Rushes home to her mother	Solo violin, flute, clarinet	Faster moving pattern
8.20	Mother's reaction	Solo violin	Short triplet pattern as mother laughs
8.40	Happy gecko	Clarinet Xylophone, and all instruments join in.	Rising glissando Patterns getting higher