

# Books about Natural Disasters on the **Story Graph**

One of the best ways to learn is to see examples, like these story graphs.

## How to use them:

- Explore favourite stories and how they work
- Look for moments of tension (the 'pebble', 'rock' and 'boulder')
- Compare the many ways stories start and end
- Inspire students to create their own story graphs!

There are many more similar sets of story graphs, covering books on themes from families to friends, sustainability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, and secondary texts. Subscribers can find them in the Resource Library on *Seven Steps Online*.



# Ash Road

by Ivan Southall

(CBCA Children's Book of the Year – Older Readers, 1966)

Gradual build-up of tension

## Sizzling Start

The story begins at a moment of change – three teenage boys head into the bush for a week on their summer holidays.

## Backfill

WHO: Several children  
WHAT: The Black Friday bushfire of 1939  
WHERE: Australia in the foothills near Melbourne.

## Pebble (Small problem)

The boys drop the fuel bottle for their camp stove. It bursts into flames and the fire soon gets out of control. They run.

## Rock (Medium problem)

Lorna's father has a stroke. Her brother has gone to fight the fire and she is unable to get an ambulance or anyone on the phone.

## Boulder

(Main tension scene)

Everything becomes more chaotic. Gramps finally gets his car started and takes Lorna's father and two of the boys towards the hospital. The car is over-run by the fire and they crash. They barely survive.

## Exciting Ending

(Action climax)

The long tension scene rises to the moment when the fire blasts down Ash Road. Everyone has to find somewhere safe: the pond, the open paddock. Grandpa Tanner puts the baby and Julie down his well and lies down on top, expecting to die.

## Character Wrap-up

(Emotional resolution)

The teens and older children are alive but feel their childhood is over. Grandpa Tanner survives (to his surprise) and hears Julie say; 'Here I am, everybody. Down the well. Safe and sound.'

Interest level

# Bush Baby Rescue (Juliet Nearly a Vet)

by Rebecca Johnson

## Sizzling Start

The novel starts with action: Juliet wakes up in the middle of the night to discover there's a bushfire nearby and her Mum, the vet is getting ready to rescue hurt animals.

Interest level

## Backfill

WHO: Juliet, age 10, her friends and family and a host of Australian animals  
WHAT: rescuing wildlife  
WHERE: suburban Australia

## Pebble (Small problem)

Juliet's Mum doesn't have enough time to get ready for the large number of injured animals expected. Juliet convinces her that she and her friends (and her friend's Mum) can help.

## Rock (Medium problem)

There are too many animals to look after in the vet surgery so Juliet and her friends each take a few to care for in their rooms. They learn how to feed and clean them.

## Boulder

### (Main tension scene)

An orphaned baby koala is badly burned and Juliet's Mum is afraid he won't survive. Juliet finds a teddy bear for him to cling to. They call him Button.

## Exciting Ending

### (Action climax)

Juliet's brother is feeding crickets to a lizard he is looking after and the crickets escape and hide all over the house!

## Character Wrap-up

### (Emotional resolution)

Months later the rescued possums are ready to be released into the wild again. Button the koala is okay and will go to a shelter.

Gradual build-up of tension

# Bushfire: Surviving Black Saturday (My Australian Story)

by Sally Murphy

## Sizzling Start

The novel starts with dialogue: 'Mum, Gran's house is on TV!'  
Backfill tells us that Amy's Grandpa died (we infer it was in the Canberra bushfires of 2004) and her Gran is sad.

Interest level

## Backfill

WHO: Amy, her Gran and family, her friends Jackson and Trudi  
WHAT: surviving Black Saturday  
WHERE: Marysville, Australia

## Pebble (Small problem)

Lots of small problems:  
Amy's Mum goes to Europe for work  
Amy's Dad works for Parks, fighting fires – Amy worries about him

## Rock (Medium problem)

Lots of medium problems:  
Amy is scared to swim but she tries  
Amy's Dad confesses he is scared of fires – they talk about bravery  
The weather gets hotter and more dangerous  
Amy goes to stay with her Gran because her Dad is fighting fires

Gradual build-up of tension

## Exciting Ending

(Action climax)

Amy's Gran is in shock. Amy has to drag her to the car and force her to drive. They have a terrifying drive to the oval where they shelter with a few other survivors. Jackson is scared that his parents are dead.

## Character Wrap-up

(Emotional resolution)

Jackson talks to his parents, Amy talks to her Dad. Amy's Mum comes home. Amy gets a medal for her bravery. Gran might find new happiness.

## Boulder

(Main tension scene)

The massive fire hits Marysville. Gran has fallen asleep and Amy and Jackson realise at the last minute they must leave. Amy sees the house begin to burn.

# Fabish: The horse that braved a bushfire

by Neridah McMullin  
& Andrew McLean

## Sizzling Start

The book starts with action as we see Fabish the horse on the racetrack in the middle of an exciting race.

Interest level

## Backfill

WHO: Fabish, a retired racehorse in charge of seven skittish yearlings  
WHAT: Racehorses survive a fire  
WHERE: A farm in Victoria, Australia

## Pebble (Small problem)

That summer was hot. One afternoon a hot wind blew up and the yearlings were nervous. Fabish smelled smoke.

## Rock (Medium problem)

The fire roars up to the farm, and the trainer opens the gates and tells Fabish to GO and take the yearlings. They run.

## Boulder

### (Main tension scene)

The trainer takes the rest of the horses into the stone barn to protect them. He fights all night to keep them safe.

## Exciting Ending

### (Action climax)

The farm burns. The skylights of the barn blow out and the trainer thinks they will all die, but the fire front is moving on.

## Character Wrap-up

### (Emotional resolution)

The trainer sees the desolate burned farm. He thinks Fabish is dead. But Fabish comes back, with all seven of the yearlings – and not a scratch or burn on any of them.

Gradual build-up of tension

# Fire

by Jackie French & Bruce Whatley

## Sizzling Start

The book begins with a word picture:  
'Hills bleached gold, a baked blue sky / Leaves lay limp in air sucked dry.'

Interest level

## Backfill

WHO: a small community  
WHAT: A bushfire roars up, burning the town  
WHERE: Rural Australia

## Pebble (Small problem)

A small spark starts a tiny flame.

## Rock (Medium problem)

The fire grows to become 'a blood-red wall'.

## Exciting Ending (Action climax)

The house burns. Fire engines, helicopters and crews battle the 'red monster'.

The family are shocked with grief and loss.

## Character Wrap-up (Emotional resolution)

The story ends with hope: 'Good things will grow again'.

## Boulder (Main tension scene)

It is time to run but it is hard to see in the smoke.

Gradual build-up of tension

# Koala

by Claire Saxby,  
illustrated by Julie Vivas

## Sizzling Start

The story begins with action.  
'A grey ball unfurls.'

Interest level

## Backfill

WHO: An adolescent Koala finding a new home  
WHAT: Leaving Mum and finding his own home  
WHERE: A forest in Australia

## Pebble (Small problem)

Koala can't get into Mum's pouch – she rejects him and the male roars at him. He needs to find his own home tree. (Informative text tells us that female Koalas reject the last joey when they become pregnant again.)

## Rock (Medium problem)

He's in an unfamiliar part of the forest. The trees have been burnt in a bushfire.

## Exciting Ending

(Action climax)  
After the storm, Koala nearly trips on a snake and he has to jump quickly out of the way!  
(Koalas can hop.)

## Character Wrap-up

(Emotional resolution)  
Koala finds a tree where he eats until he is full. 'This will be a good home.'

## Boulder

(Main tension scene)  
One night a huge storm roars through the forest and Koala holds tight to a tree. (Koalas have thick oily fur that keeps them dry and warm.)

Gradual build-up of tension