

# Koala Ark

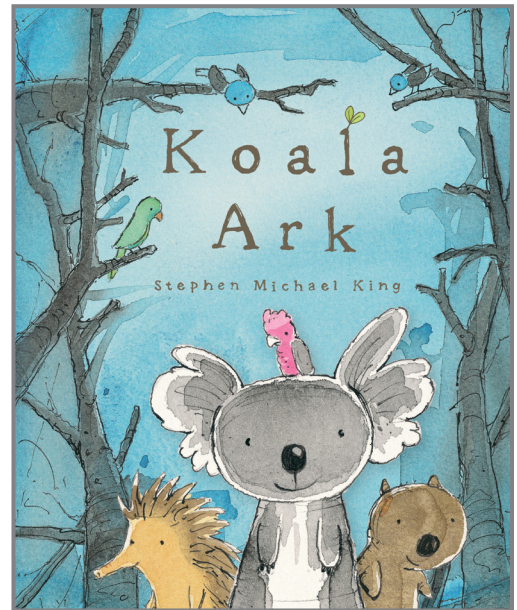
AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Lower Primary



## SYNOPSIS

Through the smoke, in a tiny battered boat, Koala sets out to rescue the billabong friends. From the multi-award winning author and illustrator who brought you *Three*, *Rainbow Bear* and *Leaf* comes a tale of care, companionship and renewal.

## ABOUT THE CREATOR

Stephen Michael King has been described as an artist who ‘draws from the inside out’, and it is this gentle, intuitive truth that gives heart and playfulness to his work. Stephen Michael King is an internationally renowned, award-winning author and illustrator whose career has spanned over thirty years, producing more than one hundred titles. He has worked with a stable of Australia’s best children’s book authors including Glenda Millard, Margaret Wild, Nick Bland, Peter Carey and Tim Winton. Books that Stephen Michael King has written and illustrated include: *Three*; *Rainbow Bear*; *Mutt Dog!*; *Leaf*; and *Milly, Jack and the Dancing Cat*. His books have been translated into over twenty languages, and he is frequently honoured in children’s book award categories—including winning the CBCA Book of the Year, and the Prime Minister’s Literary Award.

## STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
  - What can you see happening on the cover?
  - Who do you think this story might be about? Why do you think this?
  - What is an ark, and why might someone use one?
  - Which animals can you identify from the cover picture?
  - Where do you think this book might be set, and why?
- When Koala sets out in their little boat, how do they navigate?
  - How did sailors navigate their boats across the ocean before GPS?
  - How did people navigate before maps and written records could help them?
  - How well can you navigate using just a compass and a basic map?
  - As a class try a basic orienteering course. After you return to class discuss your experiences while orienteering, write a recount sharing what you found easy, what you found difficult and whether you would like to try orienteering again. Why/why not.

- Look carefully at the pictures in the book. What does Koala's boat seem to be made of? Go for a walk around the school grounds or a nearby green space, and collect a bag of leaf litter, twigs, and pieces of bark that have fallen to the ground. Make sure that you don't pull anything living off a tree, but only collect items that have already fallen. On your return to class, use your found materials to make a small model boat. You might like to research different types of boats first, and you will probably have to use extra materials such as glue, tape, or string to hold your boat together. Once you have finished test out your boat in a plastic tub filled with a few cm of water. Write a report on your seaworthiness trials and how your boat performed.
- What is a billabong? What does it look like, what creatures live there, and why are billabongs so important to the local wildlife and ecosystem?
  - Draw and colour a map showing how you envision the billabong to be laid out. Refer back to the story to help you create your map. Once you have finished, compare your map to the ones inside the front and back covers of the book. How closely does your map match the author's? As a class discuss how and why your maps differ, and what information in the story you used to help you create your map.
- How many different animals did we meet in this story? Are there any other animals in your local area who weren't included in the story but who would be affected by a bushfire coming through?
- Which of the animals in the story also live in your local area? Have you seen any of them in the wild or at a zoo or wildlife park? Draw and colour a picture of your favourite native animal, and caption your picture with one interesting fact about your chosen animal.
- The native animals in the story couldn't do much before the fire to protect themselves, but we can actually do quite a lot to prepare and protect ourselves from bushfires. As a class discuss all the different things we can do before bushfire season starts to keep ourselves as safe as possible, and the different things we need to do once a bushfire is actively threatening us. In small groups or as a class create a bushfire preparedness pamphlet or poster to display in a prominent place in your school.
  - Ask your local Rural Fire Service, Country Fire Authority, or State Emergency Service if they have a community liaison officer or similar who can come and give a talk to the class on bushfire preparedness and safety, or if they have any educational material available. Alternatively, ask if you can visit your local Fire and Rescue or RFS/CFA/SES base. As a class discuss what you have learnt about surviving and preventing bushfires, and how having this information might have helped Koala and the other animals.
- What is your favourite part of the story, and why do you like it the best? Draw or paint a picture of your favourite scene, and caption it with your description of what makes it your favourite.
- What can you see happening after the boat returns to shore? What types of activities can you see the characters doing, and why do you think they are doing them? Think of three useful things that you can do to help everyone after a natural disaster such as a fire.
- Why did Bandicoot and her family want to get in the boat with all the other animals? Why do you think she didn't feel safe when they were alone? How does having your home threatened or damaged by a natural disaster make people feel? As a class talk about what it feels like when a natural disaster threatens your home and community, and what we can do to reassure ourselves and help others in times of danger and upset.
- How did reading this story make you feel?
- What does the last line of the story 'the earth would renew' mean? Have you ever seen an example of the earth renewing? As a class go on a bush walk and look for signs of new growth, and of renewal after danger or disaster. You might see a new sapling growing from a fallen down or burnt tree, grass taking root on a washed out embankment, or birds hunting for worms in wet grass. When you return to class, write an illustrated recount of your walk, sharing what signs of the earth renewing you did or didn't find.
- On a piece of stiff card, draw a picture of a small boat like Koala's. Carefully cut the picture out, and then use markers or paint to colour it in. Turn your piece of card over and then colour the other side as well. Punch a small hole in the top of your boat, and thread a piece of string through the hole. As a class, hang your boats up on a cord strung along the classroom wall, or arrange them in groups to form mobiles. As an art challenge you might like to make a whole fleet of boats yourself, and use them to create a mobile using string and skewers.