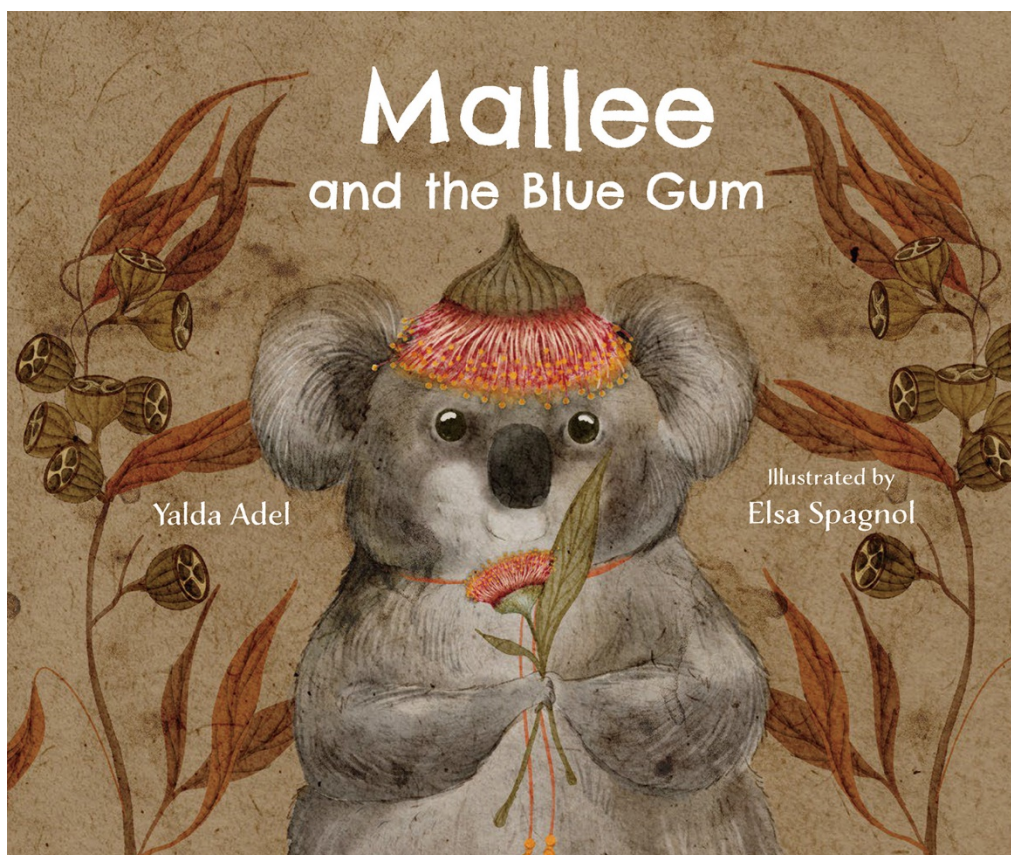


Mallee and the Blue Gum

Teaching Notes

Author: Yalda Adel

Illustrator: Elsa Spagnol



SYNOPSIS

When a devastating bushfire ravages the land where Mallee the koala lives, she clings to her tree hoping for safety. As the fires die down, the land is still hot, so Mallee must wait. When she can finally venture to the ground, Mallee finds her beloved tree blackened and thirsty. Determined to save her home, she seeks help from her animal friends, and together they work to restore life to the land. Mallee and the Blue Gum is a dramatic depiction of the effects of bushfires, featuring striking, detailed illustrations that show the devastation caused and the efforts to recover.

From the author:

Bushfires are a recurring event in Australia because of its dry and hot climate. We often wonder if there is anything we can do to prevent, prepare, or even help out once the terrible effects are seen. I thought of this story from the perspective of one of the most vulnerable animals in Australia's bushland, the koala, and what it might do to survive and later help save her precious tree and home that was badly affected by a fire.

Themes that are important for young readers:

Themes: facing fears, problem-solving, caring for the environment, teamwork, asking for help when needed, finding creative solutions, resilience, and hard work.

We all feel helpless and feel like giving up sometimes, but we can think of creative ideas and ways to help ourselves and others through hard times.

In the Classroom:

Before Reading:

Discuss what is seen on the cover:

- Introduce the book by looking at the cover:
 - What can children see?
 - What emotion is the character on the cover feeling?
 - Why do children think this?
- What do you think the story is about?
 - Why do children think this?

Additional cover discussion:

- Do any children share the same letters from the title in their name?
- What colours can be seen on the cover?

During/After Reading:

Questions to ask children during or after the story:

Broad discussion questions (any age group):

- What other ideas could Mallee have used to take water to her tree?
- What do you know about bushfires?
- What can we do to help prevent them at home?
- What steps can the community take to help rebuild the environment after a bushfire?

Reflective questions:

- Do you remember a time that was challenging for you?

- What did you do to get through it?
- What did you learn from it?
- What would you do differently next time?

Classroom Activities:

- Dot to dot with a picture of Mallee the koala
- Draw a picture of a fire scene in a forest - where can animals hide?
- Hidden animals in forest - Search and find activity for kids. Can be done in an outdoor area or using materials within the classroom.
- Design an alternative cover for this story?
- Word search using words found in or inspired by the story.
- Class topic/discussion about the effects of global warming and extreme weather conditions.

About the Author:

Yalda Adel moved to Australia when she was two and worked as a medical scientist before having her two girls. Curious about the world around her, Yalda loves to write stories that inspire children to explore and ask questions. She enjoys spending time with her family, going for walks along the beach, eating ice cream, and painting nature. She lives with her husband and two daughters in Melbourne, surrounded by gum trees and visited occasionally by laughing kookaburras and rainbow lorikeets.

About the Illustrator:

Elsa Spagnol is an Italian illustrator born in Bologna, Italy. She studied at the Editorial Illustration School in Macerata, Ars in Fabula, which gave her the opportunity to move into the world of illustrated books. She now works as a freelance illustrator.