

# RAINBOW the Koala

Remy Lai



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Recommended for: 6 to 9 year olds

Themes: Friendship, animals, climate change, conservation, adventure, survival, science, nature, environment

Applicable to learning areas: English language, literacy and literature

## NEW SERIES:

### Surviving the Wild

A heartfelt and hopeful **early reader graphic novel** series featuring adorable animals surviving in the wilderness despite the perils of climate change, from the award-winning creator of *Pawcasso*.

## Summary

*Hi! I'm Rainbow and I'm a koala. My mum says it's time for me to go out and find a new home to call my own. But life in the bush can be scary! It's hard to find the perfect tree. A kookaburra keeps laughing at me. It's hot and I'm thirsty and ... do I smell smoke?*

## A Word from the Author

'I have always loved animals, and as a kid, I devoured fiction and non-fiction books about them. Inadvertently, reading about animals led me to finding out about other issues. Because animals are so connected to everything, they became my gateway to the rest of the world.

'In 2019–2020, bushfires burned down many forests in Australia. More than one billion animals, not counting insects, were lost. Rainbow's story is inspired by a number of events that happened during that time. In one fire, a koala was rescued from the only surviving gum tree in the area. The gym of a primary school was converted into a temporary koala hospital.

'Just as koalas have adapted to eat eucalyptus leaves, eucalyptus trees have adaptations that help them weather bushfires, which are part of the Australian landscape. But climate change makes bushfires occur more frequently and with much greater intensity. The eucalyptus trees' adaptations are not enough to protect them from such severe fires. And if eucalyptus trees are no longer around, koalas like Rainbow won't have enough food. But koalas can be saved if we slow down climate change! Since the burning of fossil fuels for energy is a major cause of climate change, you can help by saving energy.

'All of the books in the series have a theme of hopefulness. While humans have contributed to the animals' plight, in the end, it's the humans who can (and do) save the animals. It is up to us humans to help. Together, we can protect the earth!'

– Remy Lai

## Suggestions for Classroom Discussion and Application

### Before Reading

Hold up the cover of *Rainbow the Koala*, while masking the book's title with your hand. Now ask the following questions:

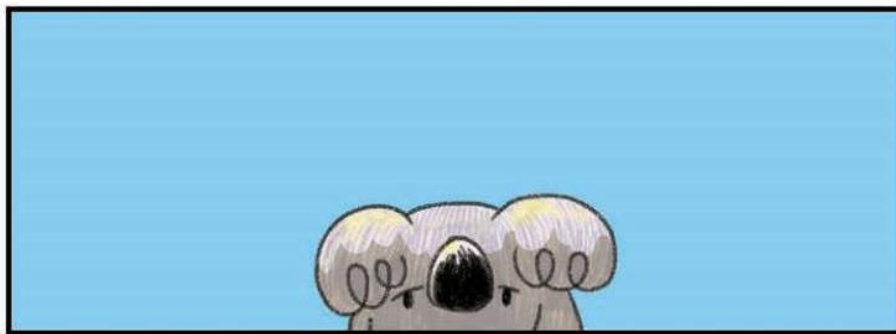
- What kind of animal is Rainbow? [Reveal the title once it is established that Rainbow is a koala.] Where might we find Rainbow? What would Rainbow eat? Is Rainbow a marsupial?
- Explain to students that this is the first story in a series called *Surviving the Wild*. [Point to the logo in the upper right-hand corner and ask questions, such as] What sort of dangers do you think Rainbow might face living in the wild? What can we do to keep creatures like Rainbow safe in the wild?



### Comprehension Questions

1. According to Rainbow's mum, where should koalas go if in danger? (pp 10–11)
2. Why are all the animals in the bush thirsty? (page 33)
3. What has happened to the creek? (pp 36–37)
4. What dangers do humans pose to animals like Rainbow? [Hint: think about Rainbow stopping on the road and falling in the family's pool.] For older readers: How have humans made the bush hotter, drier, windier and bushfires more likely?
5. Where do animals hide during bushfires? (pp 60–66)
6. Where does Rainbow go to recover after the bushfire? (page 90 and 101)
7. Do you think the story has a happy ending when Rainbow and Rainbow's mum see the regrowth in the bush?
8. Humans and dogs posed dangers to Rainbow early in the story but how did both help Rainbow return to the bush?
9. List three things you learned about koalas (pp 102–103) and three things about eucalyptus trees. (pp 104–105)
10. Name three things you can do at school to use less energy and help slow down climate change. (pp 106–107)





## Visual Literacy in Graphic Novels

- Graphic novels *show* you how a character is feeling. Rainbow sometimes feels angry, scared and exhausted in *Rainbow the Koala*. Can you find images of Rainbow feeling these emotions in the story and explain what it was in each image that helped you recognise that feeling?
- Onomatopoeia is when words sound like their meanings – for example words such as *boom*, *crash* or *bounce*. Graphic novels often feature lots of onomatopoeic words – and these are often handwritten in special lettering, so the word also looks like its meaning! Turn to page 22 of *Rainbow the Koala* and look at the words *CHOMP* and *OW!*. What is it about these words that tell us that the mean koala is threatening to bite Rainbow? And sometimes words aren't necessary at all. Look at the following page and discuss how Remy Lai shows the mean koala still trying to bite Rainbow all the way down the tree.
- The term *panel* is used in graphic novels to describe each sequential image and its accompanying words. Panels are often similar in size but can be bigger or smaller at points as a special way to tell the story.
  - (a) Turn to the first double-page spread in the story, featuring the words *That's my mum high up in a gum tree*, and discuss why Remy Lai decided to place two smaller panels next to the large image of Rainbow's mum sitting in the tree. [Hint: did the size of the images suggest to you that the bush is big and Rainbow's mum's pouch is small and snug?]
  - (b) Can you find other examples in *Rainbow the Koala* where changing the size or shape of panels helped tell the story?

## About the Author and Illustrator

Remy Lai was born in Indonesia, grew up in Singapore and currently lives in Brisbane, Australia, where she writes and draws stories for kids with her two dogs by her side. She is also the award-winning creator of *Pie in the Sky*, *Fly on the Wall* and *Pawcasso*.

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