



STORY SUMMARY

When a fire sweeps through the Australian bush, wombats Dig and Scratch are glad to have a cool, damp burrow to keep them safe. But Dig notices that other animals are not so lucky. When Dig invites a wallaby mother and her joey to shelter with them, Scratch grumbles. When Dig beckons to a koala, Scratch complains. And when Dig welcomes in a tiger snake, Scratch is fit to be tied—but Dig is sure there's always room for more. And when the rains come to douse the fire and bring a new threat of flooding, a crowd of creatures may turn out to be just what the wombats need.

And when Dig welcomes in a tiger snake, Scratch is fit to be tied—but Dig is sure there's always room for more. And when the rains come to douse the fire and bring a new threat of flooding, a crowd of creatures may turn out to be just what the wombats need.

Pair this book with:

- *Wombat Underground* by Sarah L. Thomson, illus. Charles Santoso

Michelle Kadarusman is a multi-award-winning author of middle-grade novels, including *Music for Tigers*, *The Theory of Hummingbirds*, and the Governor General's Award finalist *Girl of the Southern Sea*. Born in Melbourne, Australia, Michelle has also lived in Indonesia and Canada; today she splits her time between Toronto, Canada, and Byron Bay, Australia. *Room For More*, Michelle's first picture book, was inspired by Australian wildlife sheltering in wombat burrows during the devastating Australian bush fires of 2019–2020.

Maggie Zeng is a children's book illustrator, graphic designer, concept artist, and animator. Born in Montreal, she attends Concordia University and previously received the Outstanding Achievement Award in Applied Arts Technologies at Dawson College. Maggie loves making story-driven illustrations that convey a feeling of adventure and wonder through fun characters and magical environments. Her first picture book was *This is the Boat That Ben Built*.

Picture Book Ages 5–8 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-252-3 | Pages: 32

THEMES

Kindness, welcoming refugees, natural disasters, Australian animals

BISAC CODES

JUV029030 JUVENILE FICTION / Science & Nature / Disasters

JUV002000 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / General

JUV039220 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Values & Virtues

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies: Mapping; Health: Emotional and physical health; Language: synonyms, vocabulary, story elements

READING LEVEL

Lexile Measure: AD540L | Fountas & Pinnell: M

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

ACTIVITY	MAIN SUBJECT AREAS	SPECIFIC SKILLS / STRAND
Read-Aloud	Language Arts Character Traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> activate prior knowledge, make connections, prediction story elements (setting) vocabulary review synonyms friendship
Find it on The Map	Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mapping
Story Retell	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying story events in sequence
Friendship and Kindness	Drama Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> emotional and physical health
Helping our Land	Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicating through a poster format
Burrow	Physical Education Daily Physical Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> playing an active group game

THE READ-ALOUD

For this activity, teachers can choose the discussion points most appropriate for their particular group of students.

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- Activate prior knowledge, make connections and predictions while reading and listening to text
- Be introduced to (or review) adjectives

You Will Need

- *Room for More*
- chart paper
- markers

How To:

Before Reading

Show students the front cover of the book and ask if anyone knows the name of the animals that are shown. Ask students to describe the landscape that they see. Based on what they see on the front and back covers, ask students to predict where the setting of this story takes place.

Discuss what a bushfire is and ask for students to predict how they think this relates to the story based on the front and back covers.

During Reading

First Spread: Discuss the words *peered*, *twitched*, and *clever*. Ask students what other words they could use to replace these words (introduce or review the concept of synonyms). What is a burrow? Ask students what other animals they can name that create a burrow to keep themselves safe. Why do you think that Dig and Scratch consider themselves “lucky?” Show students the horizon in this spread. What colors are used? Why do you think the illustrator did this?

Second Spread: Explore the idea of fire safety and why the words *cool* and *damp* are used. Ask students why a burrow would be cool and damp. Can you predict who the footsteps belong to outside of the burrow?

Third Spread: Do the wallaby and her joey remind students of any other animal? If so, what? Why might Scratch say “there is no room” for the wallaby and joey? Bring student attention to the facial expressions on both wombats in the background.

Fourth Spread: The mother wallaby is thankful to Dig and Scratch for letting her and her joey join them in safety in the burrow. Why would a bushfire cause the wallaby’s lungs to fill with smoke? (link to fire safety). Scratch is still unsure about letting them stay. Discuss reasons why Scratch might be feeling this way.

Fifth Spread: Explore the expressions on all the characters’ faces in this spread. Discuss each animal and why they might be feeling a certain way. Ask students for their background knowledge on koalas to make connections to the text.

Sixth Spread: Compare the horizon illustrations in this spread to the first spread. What do students notice about the choice of colors used? The koala is thankful to Dig and Scratch for letting him/her into the burrow. How do you feel when someone does something kind for you? How do you feel when you do something kind for someone else?

Koalas live in trees. If this one’s “paws were burning,” what do you think this means for the koala’s habitat? (introduce the science vocabulary word *habitat* if this is new learning for your students).

Seventh Spread: In this spread, the joey and the koala both advocate for the tiger snake to join them in the burrow. The only character who fears the tiger snake is Scratch. Does this make sense for Scratch’s character considering what you’ve read in the book so far? How did the horizon colors change in this spread?



Eighth Spread: The tiger snake is appreciative of the animals for letting him/her join them in the burrow. Do you think these animals are all generally kind to one another, or do you think they are being kind because of the bushfire? Does this make their kindness even greater? Why or why not?

The tiger snake says, “I thought I was going to boil.” What would the opposite of boil be?

The mother wallaby begins singing songs to calm the joey. All the animals join in. Why do you think music has the ability to calm our minds and bodies when we are scared?

The animals hear a ‘pitter-patter noise’ outside the burrow. What do you think it could be?

Ninth Spread: Why would rain be welcomed by the animals? Look at the expressions on the animals’ faces. What do you notice? Can you predict how they are feeling?

Tenth Spread: The rain becomes a problem for the animals in this spread. What can happen to the environment when there is too much rain? The animals begin to leave the burrow. Scratch and Dig are now the animals in trouble. What do you think will happen next?

Eleventh Spread: All the animals are happy to help Scratch and Dig create safe shelter. What do you think would have happened at this part of the story if Scratch and Dig hadn't helped the other animals when they needed help?

Twelfth Spread: What kind words do you hear the characters using in this spread? Ask students if they have used these words or phrases with anyone before.

Thirteenth Spread: What do you notice between the first spread and this spread? Does this book remind you of a time when a friend or family member did something kind for you?



After Reading

- Discuss the idea of friendship in this story.
- Explore how acts of kindness play a main role in this story.
- Look at the glossary at the back of the book and discuss this in terms of non-fiction text features. Ask students to suggest reasons why the author felt a glossary was important for this fiction text.
- Using the rich vocabulary in this book, generate a list of synonyms for some of the descriptive words within the text (ex. *clever*, *scampering*, *grumbled*).

- Research habitats and other interesting facts about the animals featured in this text.
- Generate an 'Acts of Kindness' list after reading this story. Create a calendar and challenge students to complete each act.
- Use warm and cool colors to recreate some of the scenes from this book.

ACTIVITY 1: FIND IT ON THE MAP

Students will make a text-to-text connection (print book to digital or print map).

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- use print or digital maps to locate the real-life location of the book's setting

You Will Need

- *Room for More*
- a world map (print version)
- Google Maps (optional)

How To:

1. Read *Room for More*.
2. Draw attention to the Author's Note on the fourteenth spread where it discusses Australian bushfires.
3. Locate Australia on the map to show students where the bushfires happened in 2019–2020.
4. *Optional:* Consider comparing the Australian bushfires to wildfires closer to home that they may be aware of.
5. *Extension:* Have students gather information about climate, geographic features, and ways of life in Australia.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY RETELL

Students will use a graphic organizer to retell the events of the story.

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- identify important parts of the story by illustrating the major story elements in a graphic organizer

You Will Need

- *Room for More*
- *Room for More* Story Retell Sheet
- chart paper
- markers

How To:

1. Read *Room for More*.
2. Ask students to orally retell the main events of the story.
3. Record the main ideas offered on chart paper for students to refer to throughout their work period, including animal names (wombat, tiger snake, etc.).
4. To differentiate the activity for students, have students draw the events, use a keyword to label each event, or write a sentence for each main event in their story retell.
5. Have students orally present their story retell to a partner or in front of the classroom.



Michelle Kadarusman, illus. Maggie Zeng
Room for More

ACTIVITY 3: FRIENDSHIP AND KINDNESS

Students will discuss the themes of friendship and kindness in relation to their health and well-being

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- identify the characters in the story and how they show friendship to one another
- predict what would have happened to the main characters had they not been kind to others at the beginning of the story
- dramatize the portions of the story where Dig and Scratch help the other animals
- dramatize the portions of the story where the animals help Dig and Scratch

You Will Need

- *Room for More*
- chart paper
- markers

How To:

1. Read *Room for More*.
2. Ask students to orally describe some examples of how friendship is shown between the characters in the story (think-pair-share or whole-group discussion).
3. Create a brainstorm web on chart paper with the title “How do the actions of the animals affect other animals in the story?” (Relate this topic to the age of the students with prompts like, “How do you feel when someone asks you to play at recess if you are by yourself?”, etc.)
4. Once students have a firm understanding of the examples of friendship and kindness in *Room for More*, they are ready to dramatize the story.

- Students will be split into two groups. One group will work on creating the scenes where Dig and Scratch help the other animals. The other group will create a series of scenes where the other animals help Dig and Scratch. These scenes can be done without speaking or in tableaux. Groups will present their dramatizations to the class.
- Once each group has presented, ask students how they could really highlight the themes of friendship and kindness in this story to ensure the audience understands how helping others is actually good for our own well-being. Would freezing at a specific part create emphasis for the audience? How could facial expression highlight the friendship and kindness themes?

ACTIVITY 4: BURROW

Students will use animal characters from the book in a physical education game.

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- use the animals from the text to play a group game
- use physical activity skills to work as a team

You Will Need

- Room for More*
- large play area (outdoors or gymnasium)

How To:

- Prior to playing the game, read *Room for More*. Ensure that students understand the character names.
- Divide the class into four groups and have them move into each corner of the gym or play area.
- Give each of the groups an animal name: wombats, tiger snakes, wallabies, and koalas.
- When students have been assigned to their animal group, call out two of

the animal names and have those groups run and change places. Groups don't change animal names once they have switched. They keep their original animal group name.

- When you call "Burrow," all the students run to the center of the gym or play area. This can be an element of the game, or it can be used to end the game.



ACTIVITY 5: HELPING OUR LANDS

Students will look at ways to keep our land safe through picture books.

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- read and discuss two different texts with the lens of helping our Earth

You Will Need

- *Room for More*
- *When We are Kind* by Monique Gray Smith, illus. Nicole Neidhardt
- large pieces of paper
- markers

How To:

1. Read *Room for More* and *When We are Kind*.
2. Review the section titled “Australian Indigenous Land Practices” in *Room for More*.
3. Relate the concept of reducing bushfires to the idea presented in *When We are Kind* “I feel grateful when the Earth is kind to me.” Review with students, in a large group discussion, how both of these texts can relate to one another.

4. The overall theme of *When We are Kind* is articulated at the end of the book: “When we are kind we remember that we are all related.” How does this idea relate to the characters and events in *Room for More*? How does it relate to the land/setting in *Room for More*? How can both of these ideas relate to the Earth?
5. Divide students into groups. Provide each group with a large piece of paper and a marker. Identify a recorder for each group. Pose the question, “How can we help our Earth?” Have students brainstorm ways humans can help the Earth.
6. Bring students back together as a group after they have generated multiple ideas. Provide the opportunity for students to share their ideas with the rest of the class.
7. Once ideas have been shared, have students create a poster related to one way we can help our Earth.

Bibliography

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Story Retell

