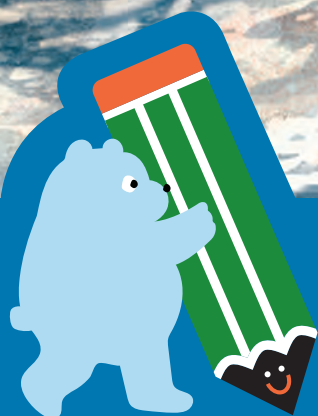




Storytime Kit____.

WALKER BOOKS

Words and Activities
written by Liz Anelli

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HAND TO HAND

by Liz Anelli

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HARDBACK JUNE 2026

THEMES:

Family, courage, resourcefulness, friendship, care of environment, loss and hope, new beginnings, community, care of wildlife

CURRICULUM LINKS:

English, science, geography, biology, humanities, art, environment & sustainability



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_____WALKER BOOKS



INTRODUCTION

The author, Liz Anelli, grew up in England, a densely populated country, without large areas of open ‘bushland’. Look at maps of England and of Australia. How are these two countries different?

- What percentage of Australia is ‘bushland’?
- Where do most people live?
- Have you lived in another country? What different things do you notice here, in this country?

BUSHFIRE

Liz’s first experience of a Bushfire was in 2019 when she was living in the city of Newcastle, NSW. The nearest outbreaks were 50 km away but still the signs in her city were noticeable, with smoky air, orange sky and burnt sticks falling from the sky into the sea. Some of her friends in rural NSW had to fight fires to save their homes.

- What can communities do to prepare for bushfire seasons?
- What should we do if we see a fire outside?
- Do other countries have bush fires? What do they call them?
- How does helping others during disasters show kindness and community?
- Some of the causes of bushfire are natural and some are not. What are they? (Lightning strikes, birds, glass reflection, dropped cigarette.)
- Why is it important to protect Australian wildlife habitats? How does helping animals help the whole ecosystem? How long might it take for animals to return to the bush?
- Draw a bushland scene that is re-generating after a bushfire.
- Why do koalas look back when climbing a new tree?

ANIMAL RESCUE

Is there an animal rescue centre or hospital near you? Can you arrange a visit? If there is no centre nearby, could your class arrange an interview by email?

- What kind of injuries do animal centres treat?
- *Hand to Hand* shows ways that humans help animals that have been affected by fire. Discuss these. Why do baby animals need special care?
- Why is it important to handle the animals in human care as little as possible?
- Why do you think, in this book, Liz does not give the animals names?
- How does the koala feel when rescued by the firefighters? Write a story about an interaction with humans from the koala’s point of view.



KOALAS

The Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water have the koala listed under national environmental law.

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/species/koalas/listing-under-national-environmental-law>

States also have their own Koala Strategy. <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/threatened-species/programs-legislation-and-framework/nsw-koala-strategy>

Look up these pages and find out the various dangers to koala health and survival.

- Do other countries in the world have native koalas?

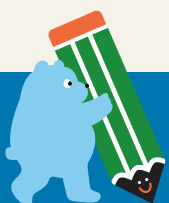
Use the fact page at the back of *Hand to Hand* to find out more about the koala. Draw a koala using Liz's guidelines. Think about colour and texture. A koala has: a big head, large fluffy ears, a big black oval shaped nose, small eyes, a sticking out bottom, strong arms and legs.

- How many fingers and toes does it have? How does this help the koala? Did you know that the koala has a fingerprint, just like a human? Can you find a surface to make a pencil rubbing on, to replicate the swirls of koala skin?
- The koala's name means 'no drink'. Eucalyptus trees provide all the food and water they need. But eucalyptus leaves are low in nutrition and koalas must eat lots of them. Make a koala diary page, describing what a koala does in a day.
- Have you ever climbed a tree? What might it be like to live in one, never climbing down to the ground? Imagine being a koala wedged in the fork between a tree's branches. What can you see? Could you go to sleep? Is it like anything similar, maybe being on a boat in a choppy sea?

ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR

Creatures react by instinct to danger in various ways.

- How do different creatures (insects, birds, mammals, marsupials) react when they sense approaching fire?
- How does a mother koala know what to do? What are the steps she takes with her joey? What happens next?
- If you have a pet, have you seen it display instinct? Do animals know, see or smell things we humans do not?



What creatures can you find in *Hand to Hand*? Not all are in the text. Look carefully and you will find a koala, kangaroo, joey, kookaburra, platypus, wombat, butterfly, frog, horse, echidna, frogmouth, mice, possum, potoroo, flying fox, parrot, emu, lizard, bush turkey and a rescue dog.

- Draw some animals that live near you.

FIREFIGHTERS

Can your class visit a fire station?

- What do firefighters do? Is this a full-time job?
- What clothes must they wear? Draw the fire crew.
- Draw a fire truck.
- Why does it need big wheels? What other equipment is on board?



BOOK DESIGN

In a picture book the illustrations and the text work together to tell a story. Sometimes the words on the page are minimal and the images ‘say’ more.

- How does this early page design (see below) differ to the finished book?
- What did Liz move or add as she developed her rough drawings for this dramatic point in the story?
- Why did she choose to position the animals running from left to right?
- Design a page spread for your own picture book. Where will you place the characters?



COLOUR

What colours do you find in this book? Use art materials to re-create the colour palette. How does a colour palette help to tell the story? Think of ways to select your own colour palette. Do you need to use every colour? Sometimes illustrators take a photograph of a landscape and copy those colours they see for their book. It is surprising how few colours you need!

ATMOSPHERE

Hand to Hand goes through different moods. It begins calm and sleepy with a wide landscape view. The following page zooms in on the main characters, and the pace begins to change. As the story unfolds the action becomes intense and scary for the creatures caught up in the fire. Page breaks and ‘spot’ illustrations (single images spaced apart on a white page) add to this.

Picture books all have the same number of pages (32) but are carefully designed to suit each story.

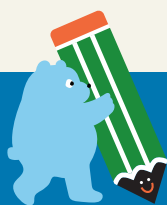
- Make a picture book ‘dummy’ by folding eight sheets of paper and sticking them together
- How will you divide your story (both pictures and words) between these pages?

PATTERN

Liz’s illustrations have lots of different elements – trees, creatures, weather, background, foreground and close-ups. Using pattern and texture helps her to keep these separate. She delights in trying to capture the shape and feel of native leaves and the patterns cast by our strong Australian sunlight. There are over 800 species of eucalyptus trees in Australia. Many have beautiful patterns on their trunk.

- Find some eucalyptus trees to draw.

Paint the trunk one colour. Then, dip a sponge into paint of a contrasting colour and dab over the top. Use a pencil to make swirl markings while the paint is still wet. If it gets a bit messy, you can cut out the trunk or branch shape when the paint is dry.



RESEARCH

Where do authors and illustrators get the information for their books?

Liz spent time at Taronga Zoo, Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary, as well as museums, with books and on the internet. Here are some of her research photos and pictures.

- What is backmatter? (This book has ‘koala facts’ on the last page)



Hand to Hand is a made-up story based on true events.

Does this make it a fact or a fiction book?

What would you make a non-fiction book about? How would you find out and check the facts?

<https://savethekoala.com/about-koalas/interesting-facts/>

MORE ACTIVITIES

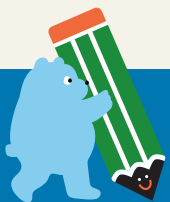
1. Find a present-day and an old map of your area. Has the landscape changed? Do you have areas of bushland near you? What different factors bring about change? Imagine your area in 30 years' time? Draw a 'future map'.
2. Take a nature walk and make a 'mud-map'. Draw where you see wildlife (animals, birds, insects, trees). Is this a walk you take often? Perhaps your walk to school. Are some creatures in the same place each time you pass? Birds like to sing from their favourite post or roof. How does your map alter through the year? You can add human interests, like where you play. Do animals need maps? How do they find their way?



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3. The most important parts have been left out of the drawing in the *Hand to Hand - Colour in Sheet*. Can you sketch them in? Liz has given you some helpful clues around the outside. How about adding other creatures that you know like to live in trees?
4. Do you have eucalyptus trees near you? There are hundreds of varieties all with slight variations. Can you spot some differences? Find textures, materials, ways of using paint, crayon or collage that represent the tree bark and leaves. Have fun!



Hand to Hand - Colour in Sheet



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