

Shirin and Amir and the Dragon Smoke

Educator resource pack



This pack was generated by the picture book authors Liz Drummond and Jemima Shafei-Ongu, with help from Karen Bell, a Canberra based primary school teacher; and illustrations are by Magie Khameneh.

About *Shirin and Amir and the Dragon Smoke*

Bushfires are part of our Australian landscape. Unfortunately, their impact can be devastating to people, and to natural and built environments. This book focuses on the impact of bushfire smoke (rather than the flames) on people who may live far away from any fire front. It follows the adventures of two curious children from collectivist cultures as they react to bushfire smoke, learning how to stay safe and respond resourcefully.

This book is available in four languages to increase access to these important health messaging for families in Australia from other language backgrounds.

There is an English only version, and three bi-lingual versions: Persian-English, Arabic-English, and Turkish-English.

Shirin and Amir and the Dragon Smoke is written by Liz Drummond and Jemima Shafei-Ongu, and illustrated by Magie Khamaneh.



Shirin and Amir and the Dragon Smoke is an Australian National University initiative to share knowledge about how people can protect themselves from harmful exposure to bushfire smoke. You can find additional resources at:

bit.ly/DragonSmokeANU



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Themes

- Bushfire smoke
- Making healthy and safe choices
- Cultural diversity and family connections

Learning outcomes

- Actions people of all ages can take to stay safe from bushfire smoke.
- Identify and understand health messaging with regard to bushfire smoke.
- Appreciation of the diverse cultures within Australia

Prior knowledge requirements

Some children may have already experienced bushfires, and/or bushfire smoke. However, some children will not have an understanding or firsthand experience with these concepts. The next page has a summary of some key concepts and ideas.

What are bushfires?

Bushfires occur when trees and grass catch fire, usually during the summer when it's hot and dry. They can be started naturally, e.g. by lightning; or by people accidentally or on purpose.

Can bushfires cause damage?

Yes. Bushfires can cause damage to both natural and man-made environments. Bushfires can destroy houses and other buildings, causing people to lose their homes or places where they work. Fires can also burn in bushland areas which can damage vegetation and animal habitats.

Can bushfires be helpful?

Absolutely. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have been using fire to manage the Australian landscape for tens of thousands of years. Non-Indigenous land managers have also adopted these practices. They light small fires and leave unburnt areas nearby for animals to seek refuge and plants to grow from. These small fires clear out thick bush (small trees, shrubs and grasses) so if an unplanned fire (or bushfire) comes through it will have less fuel to burn and be safer for people and wildlife. This type of burning is sometimes called 'backburning.'

Australian plants have grown used (adapted) to fire. Some plants even need fire for their seeds to germinate.

Fire is one of nature's ways to encourage new growth.

What is bushfire smoke?

Bushfire smoke is made up of tiny particles, gases, and water vapour released into the air when trees and grass burn. Wind can blow smoke a long way – thousands of kilometres! So even if the fire isn't near you, smoke can be in the air.

Why is bushfire smoke bad for you?

Smoke can make your eyes and throat hurt. It can travel into your lungs, making you cough, and even trigger an asthma attack. Most people will be fine and recover quickly if they do feel sick.

What can you do if you feel upset?

It's understandable if you feel scared or upset. It can help if you talk about your feelings with family, a teacher, or trusted adult. You can also contact the Kids Help Line at any time, it's free – 1800 55 1800. Remember – the smoke won't last forever.

Discussion questions

General comprehension questions

Q) Who are the characters in the story?

A) Shirin, Amir, Mamaam, Farhad, Amoo Sami

Q) Where is the story set?

A) In an Australian city – see the cockatoo and possum on the first page.

Q) Is the dragon real / what do you think the dragon is in real life?

A) The dragon is made up by Shirin for her game. Shirin pretends the bushfire smoke is smoke from a fire breathing dragon.

Did you notice that the patterns on the dragons' wings are the same as the pattern on the rug next in the lounge room?

Did you notice the dragon outside the window in the loungeroom where the children are playing?

Making healthy and safe choices

Q) Shirin and Amir worked together to protect their toys from the dragon smoke. What did they do?

A) They put all their toys inside their playhouse and rolled up tea-towels to seal gaps in their castle / playhouse windows.

Q) What can you do to protect yourself and your family from bushfire smoke?

A) There are lots of actions you can take to keep safe during a bushfire:

- Play indoors when it is smoky outside.
- Close windows and doors to help keep the smoke out –if they 'leak', try filling these gaps with tape or towels.

- Wear a P2 or N95 facemask when outside. It is not recommended to wear a mask if you are under five or have a medical condition that may be affected by wearing it.
- Keep your puffer with you if you have asthma.
- Ask your parents or check air quality yourself using an app such as 'AirRater' and plan outdoor activities for when air quality is best.
- Trust your senses. If you can see or smell smoke from bushfires, then it is unhealthy to be outside.
- Check on family and friends to make sure they are healthy, and offer help if they need assistance and you are able.

Personal, social and community health

Q) How do you think Shirin and Amir feel when they play in their neighbourhood at the start of the story and then at the end of their story?

Q) Shirin and Amir live in Australia, but their families were born in Iran. Some people might also call it Persia.

- Where is the Iran?
- Who here was born overseas or has family born overseas?
- Who speaks more than one language?
- What language(s) do you speak?
- If you could learn to speak another language, which language would you like to speak?
- Are there other languages spoken in your home?
- Can you share with the class how you would say the following words in other languages?
 - Fire
 - Smoke
 - Dragon

Q) Shirin and Amir's mothers' say *baseh*, *bodo* when they want them to come home.

- Do you remember what language this is? (Persian)
- What do you think this means? (“it’s enough, run” or “hurry up”)
- What language do you think they are speaking? (Persian, also called Farsi – the Persian word for the Persian language)
- What do your parents call out when they want you to come home? What language do they say it in?
- Can you recognise any other Persian words in the story?
bodo digeh (hurry up already), Amoo Sami (Uncle Sami), mamaan (mum)

Q) Shirin's mum sends Amir home with Ghormeh Sabzi (a lamb and bean stew). This is a traditional and popular dinner from Iran. What do you commonly eat at home for dinner?

Activities

The next few pages have resources you can copy and use with students.

If you would like to print from the original file, they can be found at:

bit.ly/DragonSmokeANU



Shirin and Amir and the Dragon Smoke – staying safe

Name: _____

What can you do to stay safe when bushfire smoke is in the air?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Shirin and Amir and the Dragon Smoke – I can re-tell a story...

Name: _____



First...

Next...

Then...

Finally...

Blank space for writing the first part of the story.

Blank space for writing the second part of the story.

Blank space for writing the third part of the story.

Blank space for writing the final part of the story.

Shirin and Amir and the Dragon Smoke – Vocabulary builder

Name: _____

“Wow” or ambitious word	What does it mean?



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Key curriculum (V9) areas

Foundation Year (i.e. kindy)

Achievement Standards

- They identify and demonstrate protective behaviours and help-seeking strategies to keep themselves safe.
- By the end of Foundation, students describe similarities and differences between themselves and others, and different emotions people experience.

Content descriptors

- AC9HPFP05 -demonstrate protective behaviours, name body parts and rehearse help-seeking strategies that help keep them safe.
- AC9HPFP06 -identify health symbols, messages and strategies in their community that support their health and safety
- AC9HPFP01 -investigate who they are and the people in their world

Year 1 and 2

Achievement Standards

- Students apply protective behaviours and help-seeking strategies to keep themselves and others safe.
- By the end of Year 2, students explain how personal qualities contribute to identities.
- They explain why health information is important for making choices.

Content descriptions

- AC9HP2P05 -identify and demonstrate protective behaviours and help-seeking strategies they can use to help them and others stay safe
- AC9HP2P06 -investigate a range of health messages and practices in their community and discuss their purposes
- AC9HP2P01 -describe their personal qualities and those of others, and explain how they contribute to developing identities

Year 3 and 4

Achievement standards

- Students describe and apply protective behaviours and help-seeking strategies to keep themselves and others safe online and offline.
- They interpret health information to apply strategies to enhance their own and others' health, safety, relationships and wellbeing.

Content descriptors

- AC9HP4P08 -describe and apply protective behaviours and help-seeking strategies in a range of online and offline situations
- AC9HP4P09 -interpret the nature and intention of health information and messages, and reflect on how they influence personal decisions and behaviours
- AC9HP4P10 -investigate and apply behaviours that contribute to their own and others' health, safety, relationships and wellbeing