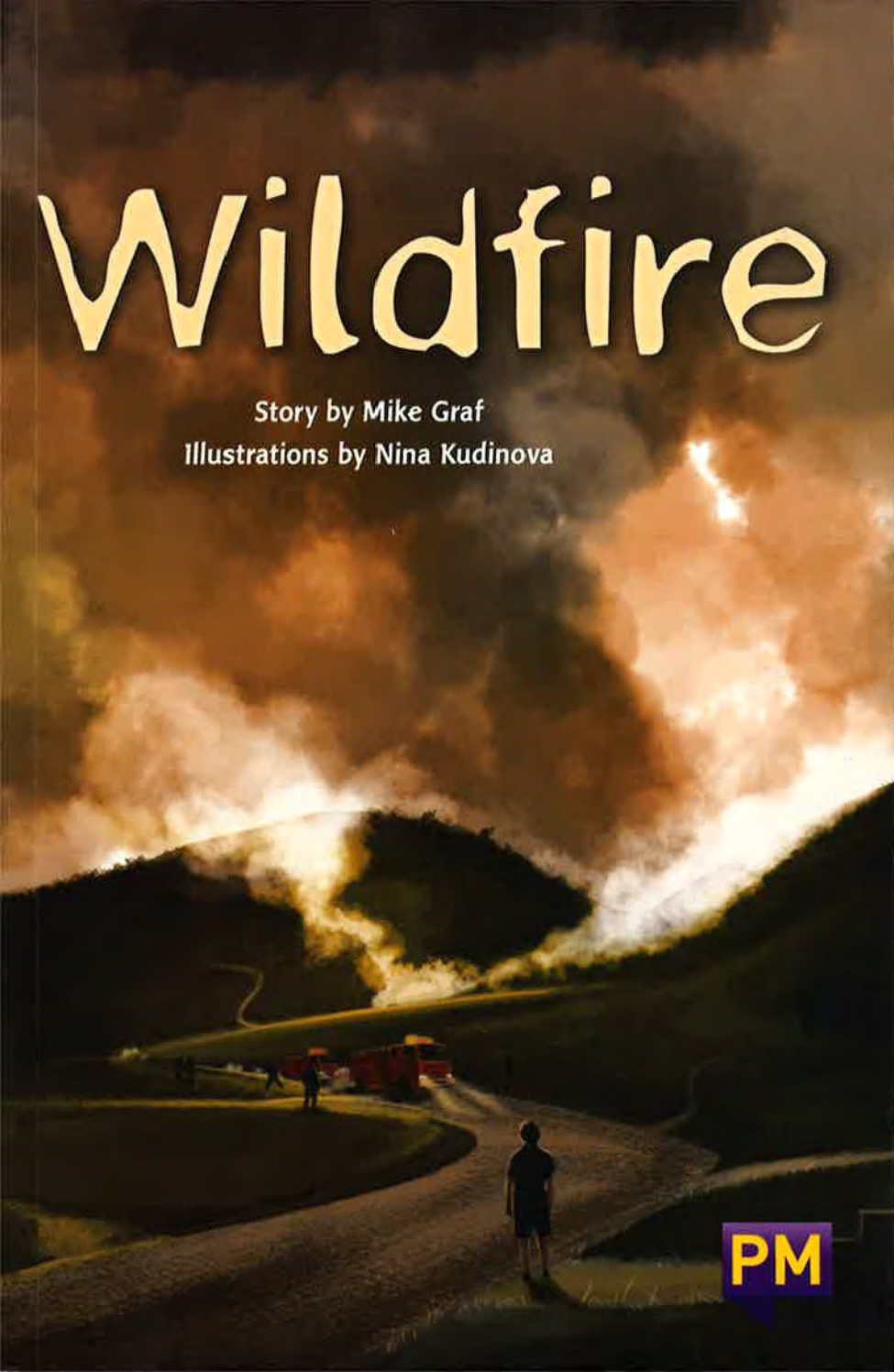
Wildfire

Story by Mike Graf
Illustrations by Nina Kudinova



PM

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Wildfire

Level 28

Running Words 4601 **Text Type** Narrative (Imaginative)

Curriculum Areas Literacy; Humanities – Geography; Personal and Social Capability

Retelling to encourage critical thinking about the content

Ask each student to retell the narrative in his or her own words.

Record the retelling for further discussion and reflection.

Questions to reinforce meaning and stimulate discussion

Literal

1 How do spot fires develop?

2 How close was the fire when Scott went back inside to check the news?

3 How did Scott eventually escape from the fire?

Inferential

4 Why did the helicopter drop flame retardant on the fire instead of water?

5 Why did Scott find it exciting, in an eerie way, to be in the middle of a fire?

6 Why did the cat react by hiding under the bed?

7 Why did the firefighters go from house to house?

8 Why did the firefighters close the road and not let Scott's parents through?

9 Why did the Andersons take so much time getting ready to evacuate?

10 Why do you think the Pells' dog had been left behind at home?

Applied Knowledge

11 What did the weather presenter mean when he said, *"Four years of below normal precipitation have left the hills and mountains tinder dry."*?

12 Why does a wildfire skip some houses in a street while others are burnt?

13 In a disaster, why do TV reporters and camera crews arrive at the scene?

Vocabulary

Replace the noun 'frenzy' in this sentence:
The whole neighbourhood was in a frenzy.

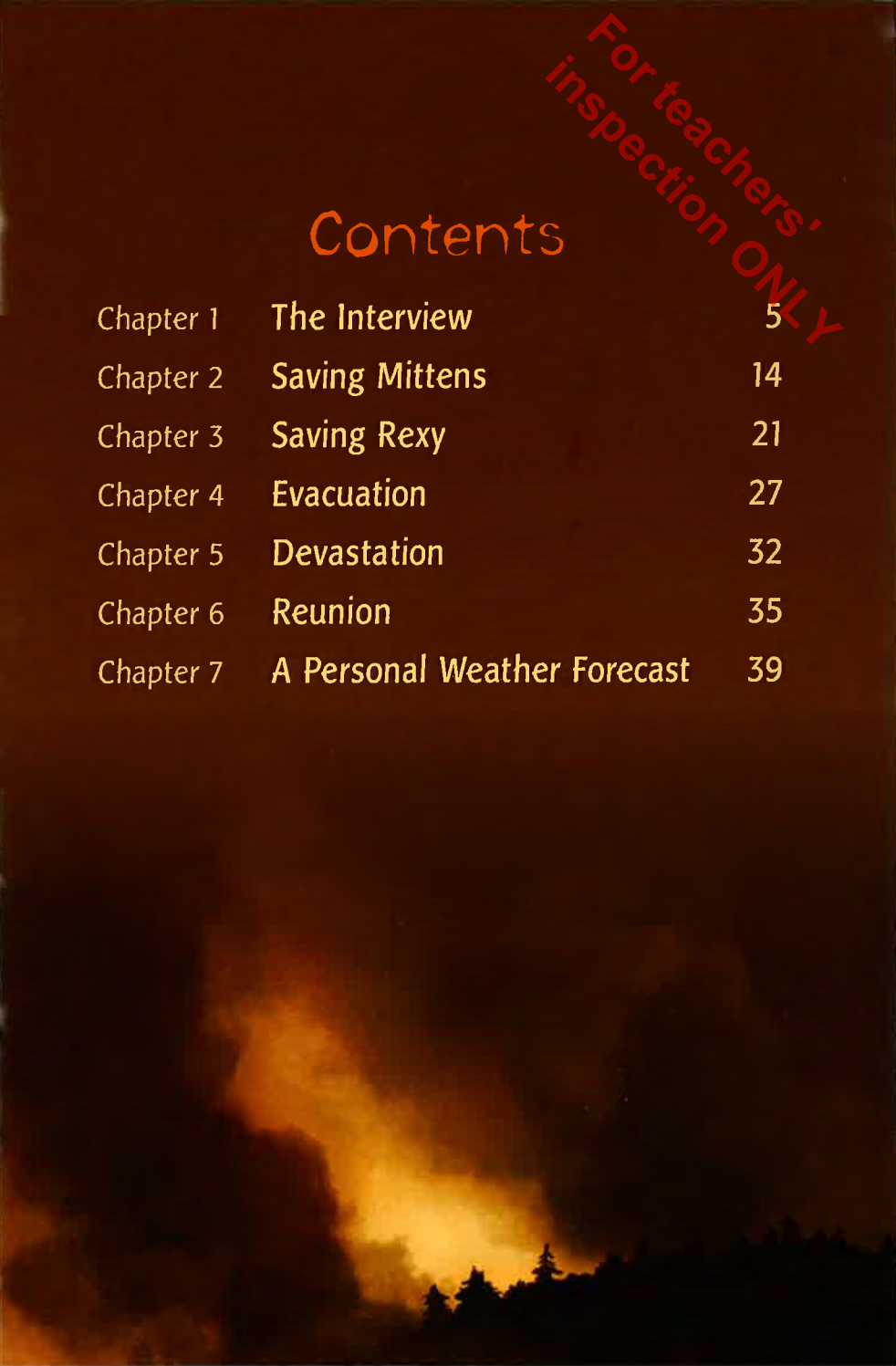
Links with other PM Guided Reading Books and Cards

Level 27	Book	Narrative	*Fool's Gold*
Level 28	Book	Narrative	*Shipwrecked!*

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Chapter 1

The Interview

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The television reporter sat down near Scott. Studio lights were turned on and a camera operator moved a large camera towards them. The reporter looked at Scott. "Thank you for agreeing to do this."

Scott shrugged. "I guess I was right in the middle of everything."

"This will all be recorded. If you say something you don't like, we can edit it out. There's nothing to worry about, Scott. Just say what you remember. Are you ready?"

Scott nodded. The camera operator gave a thumbs up, and the interview started.

"I'm sitting here with 10-year-old Scott Finnan. Scott, you were in the Oakwood Hills neighbourhood when the fire went through. Can you tell us what it was like?"

Scott took a deep breath and thought of the traumatic events from three days previously.

Immediately, the whole scene came back to him ...

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It was Saturday afternoon. I was sitting on the couch watching my favourite weather presenter, Dr George, on TV. It was hot, dry and windy outside, and there had been fires going on all week in southern California. Usually, I enjoy watching Dr George, but that afternoon, like everyone who lives in the hills, I was feeling nervous.

Dr George was talking about the drought. "Four years of far below normal precipitation have left our southern California hills and mountains tinder-dry," he said. "And this means we now have extremely flammable bush. The most dangerous areas are places that have not burned in recent years."

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It made me wonder when there was last a fire in our area. Then Dr George said, "One other thing we have to be concerned about is spot fires. These come from blowing embers carried by gusty winds."

Dr George then talked about a defensible space – a clearing of at least 30 metres between a house and any natural area of grasses, shrubs or trees. Our home is across the street from fields. But we did help our neighbours clear vegetation behind their house a few weeks earlier. I wondered if we had cleared enough.



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On TV, the news flashed from one scene to another. One segment showed flames and smoke coming from bush-covered hillsides. The news presenter mentioned Oakwood Hills. This is our area, but I could tell the scene was further up in the hills, so I knew the fire was somewhat distant, for now. I didn't recognise the exact place shown.

I thought about my mum and dad, and my sister Maggie's skating performance. Maybe I should have gone with them after all.

Mum hadn't wanted me to stay behind alone while the fires were going on, and Maggie wanted me to watch her skate. But I had seen Maggie perform recently, so at the time it didn't seem like a big deal. I had said I didn't mind watching Maggie skate, but I'd rather not spend two hours watching people I don't know skate! When I pointed out that our cat Mittens might be scared by herself and the skating rink was only a few kilometres away, Mum had finally agreed to let me stay at home and watch Dr George. She made me show her my mobile phone, switched on and fully charged, before they left.

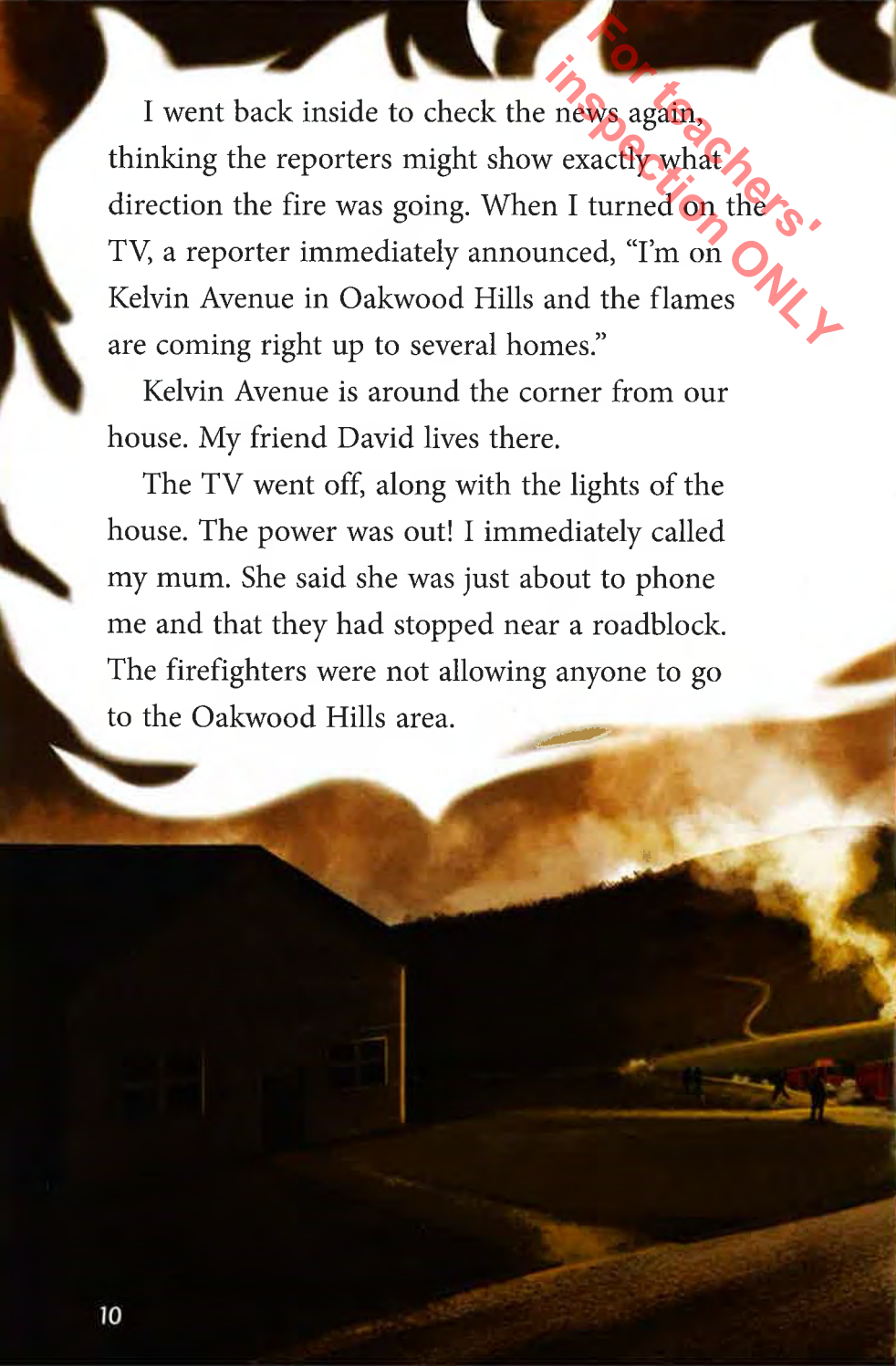
After watching TV for a while, I decided to turn it off and go outside.

It was shocking! The sky was covered in smoke, and up the hill, flames were shooting into the air.

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A helicopter buzzed overhead and flew towards the flames. A few seconds later, it dropped flame retardant right over the fire. At that moment, I realised our house and our neighbourhood were in trouble.





I went back inside to check the news again, thinking the reporters might show exactly what direction the fire was going. When I turned on the TV, a reporter immediately announced, "I'm on Kelvin Avenue in Oakwood Hills and the flames are coming right up to several homes."

Kelvin Avenue is around the corner from our house. My friend David lives there.

The TV went off, along with the lights of the house. The power was out! I immediately called my mum. She said she was just about to phone me and that they had stopped near a roadblock. The firefighters were not allowing anyone to go to the Oakwood Hills area.

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Scott is home alone on a Saturday afternoon, watching his favourite weather presenter give a report on the southern California fires. Pushed on by the hot, dry Santa Ana winds, the fires move quickly towards Scott's neighbourhood, and soon the residents have to evacuate.

Will Scott be able to save his cat, Mittens, and reunite with his family before it is too late?



Text Type:
Narrative (Imaginative)

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