



# Living with disaster

DIGITAL STORIES 02

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Severe storm in Lennox Head  
and Ballina, NSW, 2010

TEACHING GUIDE



Australian Institute for  
Disaster Resilience

# About the project

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‘Living with Disaster’ was developed as part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security, and aims to provide young people from a variety of communities the chance to tell their own stories of how disasters have affected them, their families and communities.

Facilitated by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), the project began in December 2008 with stories from young people involved in flooding near Newcastle NSW in 2007, and then included stories from those affected by the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria (see the Living with Disaster 1 - Digital Stories education resource for further details).

This resource, Living with Disaster 2 - Digital Stories, contains stories about young people affected by the severe storm at Lennox Head and Ballina NSW in 2010.

The digital stories tell of young people’s personal experiences using images, video and music. The resulting short videos are supported by teaching materials and activities to create a comprehensive learning resource, enabling teachers and students to have structured discussions about the issues and realities of such events. The activities have been designed to look at what preparation and awareness of disaster risk means for a variety of community groups.

## Introduction

These teachers’ notes have been designed to assist teachers educate students about the occurrence and impact of natural disasters within a world, national and personal context. The activities are designed for students from Years 8-10.

Included in these notes are a number of activities that can be used to increase a student’s awareness of potential dangers, their level of preparedness, and strategies to cope with natural disasters. The kit provides a particular emphasis on the social diversity of the Australian community with specific interest to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Teachers should adapt and consider rephrasing the questions and activities to suit the particular terminology, curriculum foci and outcomes used in their school.

It is important to note that this material addresses the topics of loss, grief, family relationships, friendship and cultural differences. Careful consideration is needed and additional sensitivity may be required of teachers and classmates when selecting and orchestrating activities.

## Rationale

The activities in this kit are designed to assist students to develop understandings about different types of natural disasters and their effects upon communities and individuals.

The activities are intended to increase the student's empathy with those survivors of natural disasters who have undergone social and emotional upheaval. They complement a series of digital stories that give firsthand accounts of their experiences.

The activities in this kit to are designed to increase students' knowledge about preparedness, flexibility and resilience in the event of a natural disaster.

The activities focus on the stories and accounts of young people. It is intended that the personal and vivid nature of these accounts makes the experience of natural disasters and their impact more immediate and relevant to students.

The community focus throughout the kit encourages students to recognise and appreciate the diversity of Australian culture, value social cohesion and harmony, and act responsibly with regard to all members of the community.

# Teaching and learning goals

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## Learning Areas

This education kit is designed as a teaching resource to engage students from Year 8 to Year 10 across a number of learning areas. The lessons have been designed to incorporate a broad range of aspects surrounding the experience of natural disasters and crises, particularly for young people in our culturally diverse society. Teachers are encouraged to select aspects appropriate to the needs, interests, level/s and prior experiences of their students.

This resource and many of the stories may also be suitable for Years 5-7. In this instance, teachers are advised to select relevant resources at their discretion and in advance of delivery of the activities.

Activities and experiences provided in this education kit will assist teachers to address learning outcomes across a number of learning areas and subject areas including studies of geography, science, history and social science, health and physical education, the arts, English and technologies.

Teaching and learning programs may follow the sequence provided or teachers may arrange experiences to suit individual curriculum and learning needs as relevant for their own students, curriculum planning, assessment requirements and timelines.

## Aims

The aims of this teaching guide are to assist teachers to:

- actively engage their students in worthwhile educational experiences
- develop students' empathy with and understanding of the experience of trauma and social upheaval
- increase student preparedness in the event of a natural disaster
- broaden student understanding of the role of emergency services
- promote student discussion and reflection about important social issues
- develop higher order cognitive skills of reasoning, processing, inquiry and critical reflection
- encourage students to identify and connect with their own communities
- connect students' own experiences with the broader context of Australian society
- extend student understanding about the importance of communication

- illustrate the effectiveness of personal storytelling in conveying messages
- encourage student awareness and understanding of multimedia communication.

## Key Concepts

Questions and activities can be used to develop student self-reflection, to increase resilience and preparedness in the event of a natural disaster.

The digital stories, filmed accounts and accompanying learning experiences can inspire discussion of people's preparation for and response to a natural disaster, and how they might navigate any aftermath.

The activities encourage exploration of the themes of cultural diversity, community education, rights and responsibilities, family, friendship, relationships, understanding, tolerance, love, honesty, conflict management, emotional intelligence, loss and grief, and social cohesion.

## Understandings

Participation in activities and discussion related to the digital stories and accounts offers opportunities to develop understandings that include:

- the need for community education
- the need for preparation in the event of a natural disaster
- the need for community cohesion and inclusion.
- personal stories are a powerful means to create empathy and understanding

## Skills and Processes

When students reflect on and discuss the digital stories and personal accounts, community and media responses, and emergency service's advice, they will be utilising skills and processes such as:

### Thinking and Investigation

Intellectual skills of reasoning, processing and inquiry, questioning, listening, reading, viewing, critical thinking, researching, seeking solutions, describing, analysing, considering cause and effect, seeking relationships, interpreting and evaluating data, constructing hypotheses, drawing conclusions, making informed judgments and decisions, critical reflection.

### Creativity and Communication

Seeking innovative alternatives and use of imagination to generate possibilities and make connections; use of various communication forms (e.g. spoken, written, graphical, statistical, visual, dramatic, electronic) involving both critical and creative thinking to gather, represent and present information for different purposes and audiences; undertaking a range of visual, audio and print media production activities to communicate ideas, feelings and experiences through making, creating, exploring, selecting, experimenting, presenting and performing; manipulation of ideas and organisation of media elements such as words, sounds and images, characters and sequences of events to create stories and present information.

### Participation

Confidence, self-direction, autonomy, ability to work flexibly both individually and in teams to complete tasks, for example:

- brainstorming ideas
- working with partners and in small groups to share ideas
- collaborating to achieve an outcome.

## Values and Attitudes

Students will be encouraged to:

- appreciate that people's responses to crises may differ from their own
- appreciate the value of tolerance, compassion and empathy between people and be sensitive to religious and cultural diversity
- respect the courage and determination required by some people as they overcome or face challenges or adversity.

# Definitions

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## Activity – Create your definition of a ‘natural disaster’

To generate a discussion about natural disasters, divide the class into small groups and set a definition and quiz challenge.

### Definition Challenge:

Each group is required to:

- create a dictionary definition of ‘natural disaster’
- explain the difference between a human-caused and a natural disaster
- divide your list into categories based on their causes.

Compare outcomes with the following definition and categories:

Natural disasters occur when natural hazards affect societies and individuals.

There are four categories of natural disaster:

- geophysical causes, e.g. earthquakes and volcanic eruptions
- weather causes, e.g. floods and storms
- geo-morphological causes, e.g. fires and droughts
- biological hazards, e.g. bacterial and viral infections.

### Quiz Challenge:

Make a list of natural disasters (points are given for each).

- Make a list of well-known national and international natural disasters (points are given for each, with additional points for correct dates).

Allocate points for quiz answers.

Natural disasters have an enormous impact on people. Share the following quote with the class:

“Since 1970, five billion people have been affected by natural disasters and two billion people have died. Seven times more people have been affected by natural disasters than armed conflict during this time.”

Brainstorm how individuals, communities and economies may be affected by natural disasters.

## Quiz resources

Definition and categories quoted from an interview with Henrik Svensen, geologist from The University of Oslo, author of *The End is Nigh: A History of Natural Disaster*.

ABC Radio National, Late Night Live, 22 April, 2009

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/latenightlive/stories/2009/2550088.htm>

## Activity - Create your own quiz

Each allocated group is to create their own game show quiz including general knowledge about various natural disasters, their causes and their occurrence from the information they find on these websites.

Here are some suggestions to create variety:

1. Questions should be divided into categories.
2. Questions could begin with, 'Is the following statement true or false?', 'Which of the following statements is correct/false?', 'Finish this statement...'

Write questions and answers on individual cards so that the questions may be used later in the unit of work for a board game or refresher quiz.

# Stories and experiences

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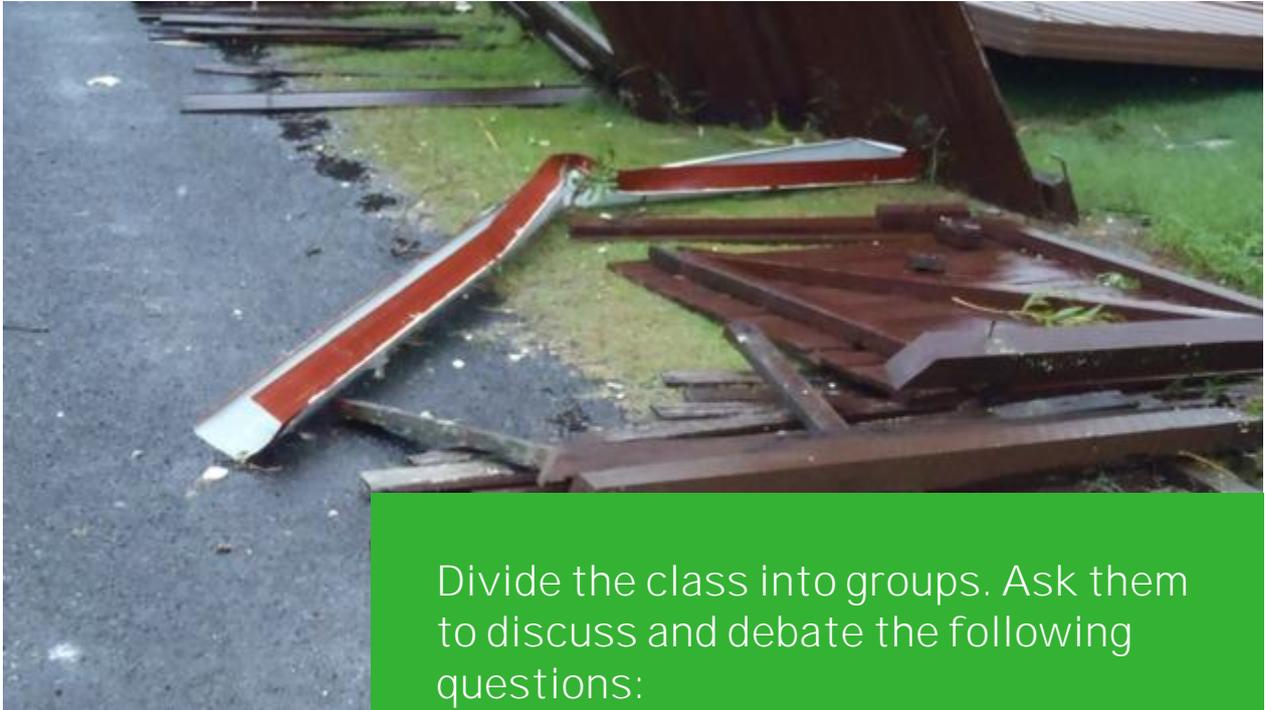
## Response to individual stories

After watching individual stories, select from the following questions and activities to encourage students to reflect and express their response:

- What is the title of the story? Why was it chosen?
- Where and when does the story take place?
- Who is the story-teller?
- What is the story about?
- What problem/s did the story-teller face? How did the story-teller resolve any problems?
- Was the story-teller changed by their experience of the natural disaster?
- How did you feel during the screening of the story or stories?
- Was there anything that surprised you about the story?
- What do you think was the main message underlying the story?
- If you could meet the story-tellers, what other aspects of their experience would you like to ask them about?
- Do you think that you would have behaved in a different way if you were in the same circumstances?

Provide students with paint, felt tip pens or other media to create a personal response to a story they viewed.

- Share responses and encourage students to explain why they responded in the way they did.
- Encourage discussion about how the stories made them feel.
- Why did they feel this way?



Divide the class into groups. Ask them to discuss and debate the following questions:

- How did the choice of music or sound help to tell the story? What sounds were most effective? Why were they effective?
- What images were most effective in the film? Why were they effective?
- Did the pacing or editing of the digital story contribute to the story? If so, how?
- How would you describe the mood of the digital story? How did the storyteller create this mood?
- Did the story-teller try to evoke particular feelings in viewers? If so, how?

## Response to the stories in general

After watching a number of digital stories, ask students to identify common threads of emotional and behavioural responses to natural disaster, evacuation and crisis.

- What emotions did the storytellers experience during the natural disaster?
- What emotions did they experience after the immediate threat?
- What strategies did they have to protect themselves?
- What strategies did they have to protect their property?
- What sources of information did they rely upon during the crisis?
- What did they value most during and after the event?
- After these experiences what do they plan to do differently in the future?

- As a class, brainstorm and record words or phrases that sum up what students learned from the stories.
- Ask students to also suggest key messages and themes reflected in the stories, for example, perseverance, compassion, consideration, courage, generosity, cooperation, determination, honesty, enthusiasm, tolerance and kindness.



Divide students into groups and assign each group **a key 'value'**. Ask each group to use a technique other than spoken word to communicate that idea.

# A disasterous day: Abby Dietrich

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Abby recalls the day the severe storm hit her home and town and how it affected her and her family.

## Looking after all members of the family

When the storm hits, Abby and her mother are safe inside their house. Abby states that, 'Lucky, our cat was in the shower drinking water at the time so he was safe.'

- Ask the students to form groups and compile a list of the group's pets and/or working animals or livestock.
- Ask the students to consider how they would feel if any of these animals were killed or injured due to a natural disaster.
- Ask students to research relevant websites and to create an instruction sheet for what to do to protect pets and livestock in the event of a natural disaster.

## The media: friend or foe

Abby recounts that, 'After the storm had settled down friends and family were phoning us to see if we were OK [as] they had seen it on the news and heard it on the radio.'

- Ask students to consider the role of the media in providing information to the rest of the world in terms of what has happened in a disaster area.
- Ask students to compile a list of the positive attributes of the role of the media in reporting about natural disasters, such as accurate and reliable information to warn citizens and to keep relatives and friends informed of their loved ones' safety.
- Ask students to compile a list of the negative features of the impact the media has in its role as a provider of information when a natural disaster occurs. Ask students to consider such issues as overload of information, desensitisation, constant reminders of others' suffering and horror, and possibly the public announcement of the severe injury or death of a loved one they did not know had occurred.
- Students can stage a debate to argue the pros and cons of the role of the media. A suggested topic could be: 'The role of the media in a crisis – friend or foe?'

## Evacuation centre crisis

Abby recalls that the local bowling club became the evacuation centre. She says the club was given a generator so that people could go there to eat and watch TV. For Abby and her mother, the evacuation centre was a safe haven; a place where they had their dinner before returning to their dark and powerless home.

- Have the class conduct some research into how evacuation centres are created and managed. Students can find information on the [Education for Young People website](#).
- Ask students to consider the various problems that could arise, such as overcrowding, lack of sanitary and medical facilities, potential conflict, and dealing with trauma as well as possible boredom.
- Either provide students a copy to read, or read them Omar's Story.
- Ask students what problems were encountered by Omar's family while they were in the evacuation centre. What problems were there especially for his mother and younger sister? How did Omar and the emergency services manage to solve these problems?
- Ask students to brainstorm and list all the various needs of different members of Australian society. They will need to keep in mind such things as requirements and needs for certain religions, certain dietary requirements, access for those with physical disabilities, signs and emergency service employees who can speak languages other than English, accommodating service animals, small children, a place where nursing mothers can breastfeed. Students will need to consider the entire spectrum of Australian society.
- Using this information, students are to design an ideal evacuation centre with the capacity to accommodate and satisfy the various needs of different members of the Australian community.

## Hour without power

Abby states that although their house was not badly damaged, it remained without power for some time.

**She says, 'It was so hard not having power, especially not being able to watch TV at home or turn on the lights.'**

- Have students conduct an empathy-inducing activity in which they simulate Abby's experience of being without power. This can be done in a single lesson at school or for an extended period at home.
- Before starting, students are to compile a list of all the devices that they use which require power (students can decide if they are going to 'live without' electricity, or have no gas or sewerage included). They are to divide their list into items of necessity versus luxury items. For the benefit of feeling the full effect of living with no power, they should try and refrain from using any items on both lists.
- Before starting the 'hour without power' activity, they should arrange games, activities and any other 'boredom-buster' ideas they have that do not require power. These games can then be played during the 'hour without power'.
- Students can access the Earth Hour website for ideas and suggestions for this activity.
- Once they have finished their 'hour without power' students are to write a report, poem, short story or role-play in which they explain their thoughts, actions and feelings during this activity. They are to discuss how it may or may not have helped them understand and empathise with Abby (and others who have experienced natural disasters).

# A trail of destruction: Jeremy Somerville

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**Jeremy (Justin's brother from Force of Wind) recounts his response to the severe storm that swept through his home.**

## So much, in so little time

Jeremy bookends his digital diary by stating in the opening scene that, 'the whole thing lasted twenty minutes' and later in the closing segment that, 'Within the space of a minute a tornado had swept into our small town and disappeared into nothingness, leaving behind a trail of destruction that will leave its mark on Lennox Head forever.'

- Ask students to consider the impact of the duration of an unpleasant event (be it a natural disaster, disagreement or argument with friend or loved one, illness etc.). Does its length add to or reduce the severity of the stress? Does it sometimes feel much longer, or indeed much faster than it is in reality? Ask students to focus on elements of perception and perspective and how these points of view can distort the reality and remembrance of a situation.

## Real versus reel

When the storm hits Jeremy's home, he recalls looking out the window and seeing, 'roaring towards our house ... a cloud of dust and debris flying through the air. I remember focusing on a single piece of iron; somebody's roof. It looked exactly like the cow from the movie Twister, as it flew around the outside of the tornado.'

- Ask students if they find his reference to the disaster film Twister (Jan de Bont, 1996) about a tornado that sweeps through an American town an effective description. Does it make his account seem more or less realistic? Ask students to consider how it must have felt for

Jeremy, to be witnessing something he had only ever seen artificially created in a film, but this time to see it in his backyard. Jeremy later says the whole experience was 'surreal.' What does he mean by this comment? How, perhaps, has his reference to the film *Twister* conveyed this feeling as well?

- Ask students to list all the natural disaster films they have either seen or know of. Some examples are *Dante's Peak* (Roger Donaldson, 1997), *Flood* (Tony Mitchell, 2007), *28 Days Later* (Danny Boyle, 2002) and *Volcano* (Mick Jackson, 1997). Ask students to choose one and write a review of the film in terms of how realistically they felt the film conveyed the sense of fear and terror that many people experience in a natural disaster. Ask students to consider how viewing such a film might impact on those who have lived through a natural disaster. What would a filmmaker need to do in order to be sensitive and compassionate to the emotional needs of survivors of natural disasters?
- Ask students to compare one of these natural disasters with Jeremy's film of his experience of the storm at Lennox Head. Which is the more effective in realistically expressing the terror and effect of the disaster? Why?

## Safety first

Jeremy recounts that when the tornado hit their house, his mother told him to stay away from the windows and any glass.

- Ask students to create a guideline for the safest place to take cover inside a house during a severe storm. Students will need to consider the various types of houses and incorporate the structure, building materials, location and layout of different homes. They can research relevant websites for appropriate information.

## Coping on your own

Jeremy remembers that when the storm hit his house he was, 'standing close to the window, so I dove to the floor for cover'. He survived the impact of the storm unscathed, but for that duration he recalls, 'I couldn't see the rest of my family.'

- Ask students to consider how being alone in a time of great stress, fear and/or anxiety could impact on the person's experience of that situation.
- Ask students to recall times when they felt isolated from their friends or loved ones, either during a natural disaster or in times of personal stress and/or anxiety. Did being alone increase their stress levels? Or lower them? Did working through the fear and stress on their own empower or disempower them? What physical and/or emotional reserves did they call on in order to help them get through the situation?
- Ask students to create a set of instructions that could help younger children (primary school age) cope in a situation of high stress on their own. Ask students to focus on the power of positive thought as an effective psychological tool for survival.

## Trying to help

After the storm has hit his home and swept through Lennox Head, Jeremy describes the vast array of damage that it has caused.

- Ask students to list all the damage that the storm caused.

**He goes on to say that, 'I tried to help with the little I could, but that wasn't much.'**

- Ask the students to explore why Jeremy may have felt that he couldn't do much to help.
- Ask the students to consider how this belief of Jeremy's may have made him feel.
- Ask the students if they have ever felt useless or helpless in a situation.
- Ask students to create a brochure in which they promote the idea that although teenagers may not have access to the same resources as some adults, that they can still provide help, assistance, support and reassurance to people in other ways.

# Big, grey and tubey: Sage Armstrong

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Sage recalls how she and her mother survived the severe storm and what they did to help other people in their local community.

## Empathy Role-play

Sage recalls hearing the tornado before seeing it or knowing what it was. She says, 'I heard a weird sound, it was hard to explain, but it sounded a bit like a mix of thunder, a train and an aeroplane.'

- Ask the students to conduct a role-play in which they are to limit one of their senses (sight or hearing may be the more effective) and imagine how they would feel if they were in Sage's shoes. This activity can be extended to a discussion of how people with a disability or illness may experience a natural disaster.
- Ask students to devise some strategies that could be used to help people who are already at a disadvantage in a community to be prepared for a natural disaster.

## Too scared to cry

Sage recalls that while they were sheltering in the toilet, even though her mother was hugging her really tightly, 'I was really scared and I had that feeling when you're so scared, you can't cry, you just scream.'

- Brainstorm with the class, any times that they have felt paralysed by fear. Ask them why and what happened and how they managed to recover.
- Ask students to think of strategies that could be used when someone finds themselves in a state of shock, fear or panic and are therefore unable to express themselves or possibly even function.

## Getting the facts

Sage recalls that after the storm had passed, 'Someone said it was coming back and I freaked out. I could hear the sounds ringing in my ear.'

- Ask students to research appropriate websites for facts on severe storms.
- Ask students, once they have read and understood the information provided, to create an informative report about the nature of storms, why and how they happen and if they do return. They are to present this information in the format of their own choice; however, the information needs to be informative, and able to be distributed to the public to inform them of what to expect in the event of a severe storm. An advertisement, brochure, poster etc. may be suitable options.

## Precious stuff

Sage recalls that when she thought the storm might return she went upstairs to her room and 'grabbed my precious stuff.'

- Ask students to create a list of the 'precious stuff' they would want to keep in the event of a natural disaster or emergency.
- Ask the students to prioritise the list from most important to least.
- Ask the students to imagine how they would feel if they lost some or all of these things.
- Have the students consider if these things could be replaceable, if anything (or anyone) else is more important and how they would cope without this 'precious stuff.'
- As an extension activity, students could consider creating an advertisement that encourages people to donate goods and items to a charity for people who have lost 'precious stuff' due to a natural disaster.

## Helping others to help yourself

Sage ends her digital diary by saying that, 'For the rest of the day we made coffee and tea for people, because there was no power and we had a gas stove in our campervan.' Significantly, her final image is of herself smiling, with her voice-over stating, 'It made me feel better helping people who needed it.'

- Conduct a class discussion centred on the topic of helping others in order to heal yourself. Have the students consider:
  - why helping others can make you feel happy
  - in what ways others can be helped
  - in what ways children can help others
  - examples of when they helped others and how it made them feel.

# Force of wind: Justin Somerville

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Justin recounts his emotional and intellectual response to the severe storm.

## Setting the scene

- Ask students to focus on the opening credits of Justin's digital diary. Ask the students to comment on the choice of font, the reasoning behind the 'shaky' appearance of the title, the words chosen and the choice of the sounds that are heard in the soundtrack. Ask students what sort of mood and feeling is established through the choices that Justin has made.
- Ask students to think of either a natural disaster they have experienced or a time when they were frightened or anxious. Ask them to imagine they were making a digital diary recording that experience. What would they call it? What would they do for their opening credits? What font, background image and music would they use to convey the mood and feeling of their digital diary?
- Ask students to identify other ways that Justin establishes that something serious and dangerous is going to happen. Do they find these techniques effective or distracting?

## The role of the media

In the introductory segment of Justin's digital diary, Justin states that the impact of the storm on his local community 'was documented well, by all the TV reporters...but in the aftermath...we kept noticing new damage which had somehow escaped our notice before.'

- Ask students to investigate the media's response to this particular natural disaster. They are to create a scrapbook in which they collate information from various media sources (newspapers, television, radio, various websites etc.) which documents this disaster. Using this information, they are to compile a list of facts about the natural disaster (what happened, where, when, etc.). Direct students to research appropriate websites to help them locate facts about the particular disaster type.

- Once they have watched all of Justin's film, they are to discuss which of the two – Force of the Wind or the news items in their scrapbook – gives a more effective account of this natural disaster and why.
- Using both the facts from their scrapbook and the feelings and emotions expressed in Justin's film, they are to write their own article about the disaster, taking into account both what happened and how it affected people emotionally.

## Being prepared

When Justin does make it clear that the storm is approaching, he says, 'At first I was bewildered and slightly confused.' Running upstairs to get a better view, without thinking of his safety, Justin says, 'A million things ran through my mind... I didn't even think about where I should go. I didn't even think I'd be in the middle of a tornado. I didn't even think that happened here.'

- Ask students to research appropriate emergency services websites for information on creating disaster plans. Using this information students are to create their own action plan should they or their family or local community be affected by a severe storm.

## Minority groups in the community

Justin's grandmother's house is badly damaged by the tornado and she calls Justin's father to come and help her.

What would she have done if she **didn't have Justin's father to help** her?

- Discuss with the class the impact of age in natural disasters.
- Ask the class if there would be any other groups who would also be at a disadvantage? Why?  
In doing this activity ask the class to consider the following:
  - having a physical or intellectual disability
  - having physical or mental illness
  - not being fluent in reading, writing and/or speaking English
  - having certain cultural, social or religious values which may make communication and cooperation difficult
  - having an extremely limited income.

- Ask the class to create a neighbourhood action plan in which they ensure all disadvantaged groups can be forewarned, prepared and assisted during a natural disaster. Students should refer to their local emergency services' and other relevant websites for appropriate information.

## Seeing versus experiencing

Justin recalls that his 'first reaction was that I wanted to see this phenomenon,' however after the storm passes and it is safe to go outside he states, 'there was so much damage done, but I didn't register it. My eyes saw it, but my brain didn't. There was just too much going on.'

- As a class, discuss what Justin meant by his expression: 'my eyes saw it, but my brain didn't.'
- Ask students to form small groups and discuss times when they have reacted in the same manner. Was this also in times of high risk and stress? Did some students not share this response? How did they respond?
- Ask students to create some sort of document to record their thoughts and emotions on this particular experience. Students may choose a visual, aural, written or multi-modal format.

# Friendship beats the storm: Keira Chapman and Eliza Goldsmith

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Keira and Eliza have chosen to make their digital diary together. They each recount their survival of the severe storm from their own perspectives, before coming together to narrate their feelings and experiences.

## Staying safe

Both Keira and Eliza survived the storm by sheltering under large objects inside their home; Keira hid under her mother's mattress with her mother, brother and Sam the dog, and Eliza hid with her brothers and mother beneath the dining table.

- Ask students to read the Severe Storms: Be Prepared information sheet on the [Education for Young People website](#), and ask them to create a poster, brochure or their own website which instructs people how to prepare for a severe storm, making sure they include what to do prior, during and immediately after the occurrence of a severe storm.

## Big brother/big sister

Although Keira's mother has placed herself, Keira and Keira's younger brother Jordan under the mattress for protection and safety, Keira recalls that, 'Jordan began to cry.'

- Ask students to either remember or imagine when they were much younger (around the age of five or so) and ask them to either recall a time in which they were very frightened or imagine how an event, such as a storm, would affect them.
- Ask students to form pairs and devise strategies that could be used to help lessen the fear and trauma that many younger children experience in times of high stress and anxiety. What ideas and suggestions can they use to provide comfort and reassurance to younger children who may be significantly more afraid than older children or adults?

## The power of words

In this film, both Keira and Eliza use similes to describe different aspects of the storm. Eliza recalls looking out the window at the storm, stating: 'We had the best view of this monstrous thing. It was like a hand as it tore apart a house nearby.'

Later on, Keira describes the exposed, dangerous flickering power lines **'like snakes.'**

- Ask students to consider the choice of these similes? What images do they visualise when they hear Keira's comment that the power lines were 'like snakes'? How effective a description is it?
- Ask students to think of other similes and metaphors to describe the power and force of severe storms. Have students make a list of similes and metaphors that focus on the destructive power of nature, then compare these with a list of similes and metaphors that portray the beauty and majesty of the natural world.
- Ask students to consider how the use of certain words makes them feel in relation to the importance and significance that nature plays in our day to day lives.

## Lasting effects

Both girls recall some of the lasting effects of the storm. Keira laments that her mother 'still has an injury from that day' and Eliza recounts that 'there's still lots of damage from the storm, there's scaffolding everywhere.'

- Ask students to consider the various long-lasting effects on survivors (people and places) of natural disasters.
- Have students create a list of the various physical, financial, material, emotional and psychological long-lasting effects that various natural disasters can have on people.
- Ask students to consider ways in which these various effects could be addressed. Students can look at the resources in WebQuest on the [Education for Young People website](#), which contains links to various organisations that can provide support and assistance to those affected by natural disasters. Using this information, ask students to work in groups to create a pamphlet or brochure that could be given to people who have experienced long-term effects of natural disasters. The aim of this brochure or pamphlet is to provide ideas, strategies and contacts for practical and emotional support.

## All in it together

Keira and Eliza both comment on the fact that the storm led to people within their local community connecting and looking out for each other. Eliza says; 'Everyone tried to look out for each other. There was a real feeling of care for each other.'

Keira states: **'People really stuck together.'**

- Ask students to consider their local community in terms of how they may be affected by a natural disaster. Ask students to consider who may be vulnerable in their local community and how they could be assisted to prepare for, and looked after in the event of, a natural disaster.
- Ask students to design an advertising program (this can use many different forms of media, such as brochures, posters, radio and television commercials etc.) in which they need to provide information and ideas for all facets of their local community to know what to do before, during and after a natural disaster.

# Storm at sea, tornado on land: Kelly Lennon

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In this digital diary Kelly recalls the morning that she and her younger brother and babysitter survived the severe storm.

## Duty of care to others

Kelly and her younger brother have to face the onslaught of the storm without their mother being there, as she has already left for work. Ask the students how they imagine Kelly and her brother may be feeling. Ask the students how they think the babysitter may be feeling? We do not know her age or how well she knows the family – but being the only adult, she must feel a great sense of responsibility towards the children.

- Ask the students to imagine they are the babysitter and to write either a diary entry, conversation or a script for the baby-sitter's experience of this natural disaster.
- Ask students if they have in fact been babysitters, or left in charge of younger siblings or relatives – even if only for a short period of time. Ask them what instructions they were given (if any) in case of an emergency.
- Ask students to brainstorm all the different types of jobs which feature 'duty of care.' Such jobs could be teacher, police officer, nurse, carer of the elderly, etc.
- Using relevant websites, students are to research the legal responsibilities of these people in the event of a natural disaster.
- Ask students to choose one of the professions and write their own set of instructions to ensure 'duty of care' in the event of a natural disaster.

## Unidentified flying objects

Kelly says when she first looks out the window she can see paper swirling through the sky, but, 'it turned out it was wood and metal flying through the air.'

- Ask students why they think Kelly thought it was paper.
- Ask students how they imagine Kelly felt when she realised what was flying through the air.
- Ask students what they think their first reaction would be once, like Kelly, they had made the realisation that it was dangerous heavy objects flying through the air and not paper.

## Iron will

Kelly narrates the aerial journey of a 'huge piece of corrugated iron' that flies through the air and ricochets off various other buildings, only narrowly, 'missing the window by an inch'.

- Ask students to design a storyboard in which Kelly's description of the journey of the corrugated iron is visually made clear.
- Students could then make their own short film showing the journey of the piece of iron, either using animation, stock or live footage. Students would need to consider their use of colour, sound effects and space in order to be true to Kelly's words and to convey the sense of fear, anxiety and stress that watching this journey of iron caused Kelly. As she says, seeing this unfold before her eyes, 'I was so scared, that my brother and I hid under our cubby house.'

## Absent friends

The digital diary ends with a still image of Kelly smiling and looking happy and relaxed as her voice-over informs the audience that, Keira states: **'People really stuck together.'**

- Ask the class to form pairs and discuss occasions when they were separated from a parent, relative or friend during a time of high stress and anxiety and how that separation affected them.
- Ask students to discuss their feelings when they were reunited with their absent loved ones.

## Wish I was there

This digital story is told solely from the point of view of Kelly the narrator.

- Ask the students to consider how her mother may have felt being separated from her children in such a dangerous time.
- Ask students to role-play a conversation that Kelly's mother may have been having at the time which conveys her thoughts and emotions.
- Ask the students to consider how different a digital diary made from the perspective of Kelly's mother may have been. What else might it include?

# The big roar: Daniel Ash

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Daniel recounts the actions of his family on the day of the 'big roar.' He focuses on how his family worked together to protect and comfort each other during and after when the severe storm hit his home and local community.

## Feeling unsafe

Daniel recalls the night before the storm, that, 'I didn't feel like staying in our house as I didn't feel safe.'

- Ask students to make a list of what makes them feel unsafe. This can be broken into categories such as personal fears, phobias (e.g. arachnophobia), local concerns, (e.g. dangerous local areas, be they urban or natural), national anxieties (e.g. fear of terrorist attacks) and international concerns (e.g. anxieties over climate change).
- For each of these various fears, ask students to think of strategies that they could use to overcome these fears. As a class, make a list of organisations, centres, websites, and different people in the community (such as teachers, police, lawyers etc.) who could provide support, assistance and advice for individuals who feel unsafe.
- In pairs, students could be given one fear from one of the categories, and asked to create a role-play in which they show empathy and concern for the individual who is frightened, and offer ideas and advice about how they can overcome this fear. Ensure that all the different categories and fears are addressed. Note that this needs to be done with sensitivity.

## Facing your own mortality

When the storm hit Daniel's house, his parents placed them under the bunk bed in his brother Josh's room for safety.

**Daniel remembers, despite his parents' best intentions, that,  
'When I was in this room I thought this might be the end of my life.'**

- Ask students to recall a time when they either thought their life might end or they were very frightened. Due to the highly personal nature of such a question, students could complete this activity in pairs, with a trusted friend.
- As a class, brainstorm different approaches, attitudes and strategies that students used when faced with this dangerous and possibly life-threatening situation. Ask students to share what or who they thought of, or talked to, or what actions they did to face the fear that their life was in danger.
- Share the students' stories (those that wish to disclose them) with examples from film and literature in which people have faced their own mortality. Some examples could be extracts from mountaineer Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* – a personal account of the disaster about an ill-fated attempt to reach the summit of Mount Everest – and extracts from Danny Boyle's film *127 Hours*, which explores the dilemma that adventurer Aaron Ralston faced after falling and becoming trapped under a boulder whilst climbing the canyons of Utah on his own.

## Losing your family

While Daniel was sheltering from the storm in his brother's bedroom, not only was he frightened of losing his own life, he was also concerned that, 'I could lose my family.'

- Ask students to think of times when they have been safe and well, but they have been concerned for the welfare of a family member or friend.
- Ask students to construct a table in which they record if they were concerned about their physical and/or emotional welfare. Lead a discussion on what constitutes the things that are needed for positive physical and/or emotional welfare.

- Ask students to suggest different ways that they could not only help their family member or friend in danger but also help themselves to not get overly anxious or upset about the predicament of their relative or friend.

## Survivor's remorse

The next day Daniel and his father take a drive around the town to inspect the damage to other properties in their local community. Daniel says, 'I kept thinking; imagine if I had lived in that house, I could have died.'

- Conduct a discussion with students about the concept of 'survivor's guilt/remorse.' Explain that at times, people who have survived a natural or human-caused disaster often feel guilty about surviving, as well as feeling very sorry for those who didn't survive.
- Ask students to consider the effect survivor's guilt may have within a disaster-affected community. Ask them to consider in what ways this may divide the community, but also bring it together.
- Ask the students if they think Daniel has 'survivor's guilt' or if he is realising how fortunate he was to survive.

## Change

The film ends with a still image of Daniel on his way to school. His voice-over informs the audience that, 'the next day we went to school, but we had to walk a different route.'

- Ask students why they think Daniel ended his digital diary in this way. Is walking a new way to school a major concern on its own, or does it symbolise or represent a greater change for Daniel, his family and the community?
- Ask students to recount times when a small change in their life, which was directly linked or connected to a greater change in their life, affected them in some way. Ask students to think about which had the greater effect on them, and why.

# Under the stairs: Emily Somerville

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Emily recalls how she and her family survived the severe storm and how it affected the local community, her family and herself.

## Freaking out

Emily recalls that during the morning of the storm she twice ‘freaked out’ and was in ‘panic mode.’

- Ask the students if they have ever felt ‘freaked out’ by an event that was beyond their control.
- How did this state of panic manifest itself?
- Ask students to research what actually happens to the body when we are in ‘panic mode’.
- Using this information, ask students to form groups to discuss various strategies that can be used by others and themselves to try and combat rising fear and panic.

## Shutting down

While sheltering from the storm in the cupboard beneath the stairs Emily states, ‘All I wanted to do was to go back to bed and be sound asleep with none of this happening.’ Conduct the following activity with sensitivity.

- Ask students to consider one of the other responses to levels of extreme stress and anxiety, which is shutting down or closing off to what is happening.
- Ask students if they have experienced this in times of crisis.
- Ask students to debate the merits and dangers of doing this.
- Have students research people’s responses to surviving crisis, such as natural disaster. Students can research individual stories on appropriate websites.

## Who's in charge?

Emily informs the audience that her Dad wanted to leave the shelter of the cupboard under the stairs to inspect the damage, but, 'none of us would let him.'

- Ask students to recall or imagine times when the traditional parental or authoritative roles have been reversed and how it may have a positive or negative impact on those involved.
- Have students research occasions when children have acted in a heroic manner and have either saved or been responsible for saving others, often those older than them. Have students investigate what should be done in an emergency in which an adult is absent or too injured or unwell to oversee proceedings and look after dependants.
- Using this information, students are to construct a guide for children (it must use the appropriate level of language), which they could use if an emergency occurred in which parents or supervising adults were absent or injured and unable to look after the children or themselves. Direct students to the Take the Communication Mission activity in the People, Get Ready resource on the [Education for Young People website](#) for assistance with ideas. In particular, focus students' attention to Worksheet 1, detailing the use of appropriate terminology (such as jargon and common acronyms for emergency services) to be used when completing a guide for preparation and survival of a natural disaster.

## Silence speaks volumes

The film ends with Emily stating, 'We waited a little longer before going to have a look'. This is followed by a series of still images of damaged homes and streets with no voice-over.

- Ask students how this segment impacted on them emotionally.
- Ask students to consider if it would have been less or more effective with a voice-over.
- Ask students what (if any) narration could have been added to these scenes.

## It's OK to cry

Emily resumes her voice-over by stating, 'I just kept crying and couldn't control my emotions. For the rest of the day I just couldn't stop crying.' This is narrated over a still image of Emily facing the camera and looking anxious.

- Ask students what emotional effect these parting words have on them.
- Ask students to write an imaginary letter to Emily in which they share a time when they have felt sad and/or out of control of their emotions. Ask them to include what or who helped them to cope and cheered them up, and how they began to feel better.

# What else matters: Maree Somerville

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This digital story, unlike all the others in this series, is told from the point of view of an adult. Maree, the mother of Justin (Force of the Wind) and Jeremy (A Trail of Destruction) recounts how the severe storm affected her then and now.

## A mother's point of view

This digital diary differs from the majority of the other films in this series, as it is told from the point of view of an adult/parent.

- Ask students to consider the adult/parent perspective in this film in discussing the title. In Maree's perspective, 'all that matters' is the safety of her family – what else could matter? How might this be different for a child? How might it differ between children of different age groups?
- Ask students that, although for Maree all that mattered was the safety and survival of her family, in what way may this unintentionally devalue the experience of others who have felt traumatised by the loss of material or other goods.

## Impact of the internet

Once the storm had passed, Maree says she called her two sons in Brisbane, because, 'I wanted to make sure they knew we were safe.' She continues to say that, 'Their initial nonchalance was replaced with concern, as soon as they saw the images on the internet.'

- Explore the idea of being 'nonchalant' about an event you have not experienced, read or seen any information about. Ask students to recall their first responses to hearing stories of natural

disasters before having seen or read any information, and to compare it with how they felt once they saw images, read articles or listened to a news report.

- Ask students to consider the impact of images being made available on the internet, be they still, (such as photographs) or moving (such as recorded footage). Ask students to consider whether there are times when these images can desensitise the viewer, or whether they always elicit sympathy and compassion.
- Students can choose a striking image from a recent natural disaster. Many images can be found on the [Knowledge Hub](#).

## Making history

- Maree recalls that, 'We took photos because this was our history. All our boys were born and raised here. This was their town.'
- Ask students to discuss the importance of documenting natural disasters as a way of preserving the historical significance of the event.
- Ask students to research an Australian or international natural disaster that occurred prior to 1950, such as the 'Black Friday' 1939 Victorian bushfires or the 1931 earthquake that struck in Napier, New Zealand. Students are to focus on how the event was recorded and documented and what purpose its documenting serves, not only for the survivors, but future generations as well.

## Seeing without feeling

Although Maree acknowledged the social and historical value of taking photographs of the effects of the storm for the purpose of **recording history, she also states, 'I look back at those photos and they do not give a true indication of the feeling of devastation.'**

- Ask students to consider Maree's statement. Do they agree or disagree with her opinion?
- Ask students to consider photographs they've taken at times of either great happiness or great sadness. When they look back on those do they feel that they capture the emotional feelings experienced at the time? Is this true for some of the photos and not for others?

- Ask students to research artwork that has been created in response to an artist's experience of stress, fear and/or extreme anxiety from either personal problems or from natural disasters, and to discuss how it may or may not convey the heightened emotions and feelings of the artist. Some examples are Edvard Munch's *The Scream* and John Longstaff's *Gippsland, Sunday Night, February 20th, 1898* (which documents a devastating bushfire in the Gippsland area in 1898.)

## Grieving from a distance

Maree recalls, 'Our son had to come home the next day; I felt he just had to touch his family again.'

- Ask students to discuss how they think a natural disaster may impact on those who have not directly experienced it, due to being in another place, but have friends and loved ones who have been directly involved.
- Ask students to consider if being absent and away from the event can actually add to the person's level of stress due to their concern and anxiety for their loved one who is experiencing the natural disaster.
- Ask students to consider the effect of not being able to establish or remain in contact with their friends and loved ones. What other sources of contact can be established or used? Ask students to consider the role of social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) with regard not only to providing information about the natural disaster, but also in assisting to connect people with each other and in some cases with emergency services. Some students may wish to share stories of how they kept in contact, or dealt with not being able to keep in contact, with loved ones during a natural disaster.
- A discussion of the role of Facebook and Twitter in communicating messages of help, distress or condolences, used, for example, by the locals and tourists trapped in the 2011 earthquake of Christchurch in New Zealand may be a suitable extension activity. With regard to the use of such social media as a survival tool, ask students to consider the plight of victims of a natural disaster who may not speak the language spoken by emergency services. Direct students to the [Take the Communication Mission Lesson Plan in the People, Get Ready resource on the Education for Young People website](#), focusing on the whole class activity of making an effective TV or radio advertisement to prepare newly arrived or non-English-speaking people for an emergency.

# Yellow morning: Caitlin Foley

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In this digital story Caitlin recounts her experience of the severe storm. She narrates how it affected her, her family and their local community.

## Use of humour

Unlike the majority of other digital diaries centred on the experience of surviving a natural disaster, Caitlin's digital diary is unique in its use of humour.

- Ask the students which parts of the film they found funny. Some suggestions could be her father's comment about having, 'enough building materials in his backyard to build a new home', after the storm had swept an assortment of items from other people's home into Caitlin's back garden, as well as Caitlin's final statement, 'So much for Mum saying the water spout would never come onto land!'
- Ask the students what they think of the inclusion of humour in a film about a very serious topic.
- Ask students to consider other films or texts they may have seen that contain humour, even though the subject matter may be very serious, sad or tragic. Some examples could be Shakespeare's tragedies, most notably the grave-robbert's scene in Hamlet and the servants' scene in Romeo and Juliet, which both contain comic elements.
- Ask students if they find the humour effective in balancing out the tragedy and possibly making the subject matter and the narrator's experience more accessible for the audience. Do some students find it offensive or unnecessary, or simply not funny? Ask them if, when telling stories of a serious nature, they ever include humour. Why or why not?

## First Aid

Again, unlike the majority of digital diaries in this series, Caitlin's is the only one to go into fairly explicit details in regard to the nature of people's injuries.

- Ask students to recount the injuries that both Monique and Elaine sustained due to the storm.
- Ask students to discuss any injuries they or their friends and family have sustained.
- Ask what assistance and help they were given when this occurred.
- Ask students to research First Aid procedures on appropriate websites.
- Using this information, ask students to create a poster or brochure featuring various First Aid techniques that could be put into practice in the event of an emergency.

## Saving face?

Caitlin recalls seeing her neighbour in a state of distress, with her 'head in her hands and a look of fear on her face.'

She also says **that the injured Elaine was, 'in shock and couldn't stop crying.'**

- Ask the students what effect seeing visibly distressed adults may have on others, especially on people Caitlin's age or younger children.
- Ask students to discuss the pros and cons of not hiding your emotions in front of younger children. The class could stage a debate on whether it is better to hide emotions or to show them.
- Ask students to recall the last time they saw an adult or a celebrity showing emotion. Who was it? What was the circumstance? How did it make them feel? Some examples could be Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard crying during the floods in Queensland in January 2011, then-Police Commissioner Christine Nixon shedding tears at the inquest into the management of the Black Saturday Fires in February 2009, or former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke's frequent emotional displays.



## Safety House

Caitlin informs the audience that both Monique and Elaine shelter in the basement of their home.

- Ask students to design a 'natural disaster-proof' house.
- They will need to consider which type of natural disaster they are 'proofing' the house for and whether it is possible to protect a house for several or indeed all types of natural disasters.
- They will need to consider the materials used, the design, the terrain and neighbours' existing dwellings.
- They are to produce a visual design with annotations which clearly show how certain aspects of the house will be of assistance in the event of a natural disaster.

# Ready and able

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## Emergencies: be prepared

Emergency services personnel are trained to be prepared and so can be relied upon to make good decisions in a crisis and maximise their survival and the survival of others. On the other hand, while preparation is recommended for members of the public, people are often completely unprepared for emergencies.

Discuss:

- What emergency procedures do you have in your school?
- How often are they practised?
- What emergency procedures do you have in your home?
- How often are they updated, reviewed and practised?

## The leadership challenge

Emergency services personnel take leadership roles to protect the community. However, there are times during disasters and emergencies when they will not be available to help. In times like these people must be self-reliant. The underlying message from all the digital stories and interviews has been the need to be prepared. As young adults, perhaps it is time for the class members to take a leadership role as Simon did at sixteen. Taking the initiative to be a leader may help them protect their family, neighbours, friends and classmates by being prepared.

To practice taking initiative, have students create an emergency plan.

When devising plans, students can refer to appropriate websites where they can find important information on:

- how to develop an emergency plan
- pets and disaster
- state and territory emergency services
- emergency survival kit.



/ End.

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