



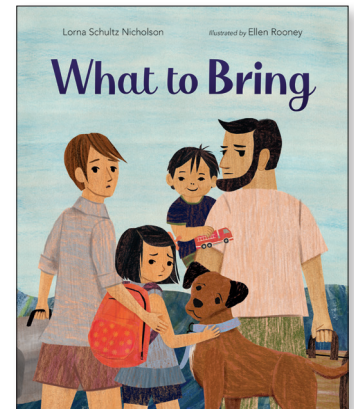
What to Bring

Discussion Guide by Dr. Heather Prime

About the Book

Malia and her family are spending a day outside when they notice something strange. Huge white-and-gray clouds fill the sky, planes zoom overhead, and the air smells funny. A forest fire is sweeping the area, and they need to evacuate their home.

Daddy tells Malia that she needs to choose what to bring. “Pick small things. Things important to you,” he says. But there’s so much that Malia wants to take with her! Her pillows and blankets. Her family of teddy bears. LOTS of books. As the pile in her room grows, and chaos swirls around her, Malia comes to realize that what is most important to her won’t fit in a backpack: her little brother, her cat, and her dog.



Written by Lorna Schultz Nicholson
illustrated by Ellen Rooney

This heartfelt and powerful story explores a rare perspective: experiencing a natural disaster through the eyes of a child. Malia’s authentic voice will resonate with readers, and the book’s challenging subject matter is balanced with gentle lessons in communication, problem-solving, and family.

About this Guide

This book offers an opportunity for teachers to support children in learning about sensitive subject matter. Displacement due to war and terrorism, political violence, natural disasters, and weather emergencies impacts children worldwide. Some children reading this book will have gone through emergency situations. Other students may have had other sorts of experiences that have left them feeling unsafe and/or in danger. For these students, this book can support understanding and emotional processing with a trusted adult. For students who have not themselves had these sorts of experiences, this is an opportunity for them to build emotional understanding skills, including empathy.

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CURRICULUM LINKS

Language Arts: Reading;
Character Education:
Responsibility; Cooperation;
Positive Communication

READING LEVELS

Grade: 1 and up
Fountas & Pinnell: H
Reading Recovery: 15
Lexile® Measure: AD 470L
COMMON CORE: RL.1, W.1,
SL.1, L.1



Section One: Exploring sensitive content

Teachers can use this book to guide children through difficult conversations, thoughts, and feelings that come up when considering emergencies and crises. Children will benefit most when teachers use the following approach:

- Encourage questions and discussion. Gain insight into students' understanding of the story and address any underlying fears, concerns, and/or misunderstanding. Address inaccuracies and do not misrepresent events.
- Explain it in their terms. Use age-appropriate words. Use simple and direct language, such as "People need to leave their homes" or "People get hurt." At the same time, avoid frightening language such as "People need to *flee* their homes" or "Lives are destroyed." Avoid extreme and emotion-laden terms, e.g., destroyed, terrible, awful.
- Foster hope and a positive outlook. Highlight the ways that people help one another; how families recover from significant losses; how families and communities can thrive following crises.
- Remind children that grown-ups are present during emergencies. It is not the job of children to plan for emergencies. In emergencies, grown-ups take care of children and make sure they are safe.

Section Two: Ways to Explore This Book

Topic 1: Information Gathering

Aim: To help students to understand the book by interpreting pictures and words, making connections with real-life scenarios, and drawing conclusions.

Teachers may wish to read the book in its entirety and then discuss its content. Alternatively, they may go through the book page by page and elicit discussion. The book is from Malia's perspective; this provides an opportunity for students to get into Malia's mind and try to interpret the situation as she did. The following are discussion points:

- What is a wildfire? Why is it unsafe?
- What types of emergencies happen in the world (e.g., storms, floods, heat waves)?
- How do communities and families prepare for emergencies?
- What helpers are present in emergencies? (e.g., woman in brightly colored vest, first aid, first responders, neighbors)?
- Why do they have to leave Malia's home so quickly? Why can't they bring all their belongings?
- What does Malia's mom mean when she says Malia can take three things and "put the rest in your heart"?
- There are several houses in Malia's neighborhood. Discuss where all the families will go when they leave their homes.



Topic 2: Understanding Emotions

Aim: To help students to understand feelings in themselves and others.

Children will benefit from exploring the thoughts and feelings that Malia has at different points of the book. Teachers can highlight that there is no one right answer. Moreover, other kids in Malia's position may think or feel differently than Malia. Some kids may be scared, while others may be sad or even mad. Some kids may show their feelings through tears or yelling, while others may stay silent. Below are some examples of discussion questions:



- What might Malia be feeling when she first sees the flames and smoke (e.g., excited, confused, scared)?
- Why might Malia be hiding behind her mother's leg when the woman in the bright vest arrives?
- Malia noticed that her daddy came home before dinner time; what thoughts may she be having about that (e.g., this is serious, something is wrong, this doesn't feel right)?
- Malia's mother and father start to pack, but Malia hides behind the couch. What might she be feeling (e.g., shocked, scared, sad)?
- What might Malia be thinking when she and her family go to the car (e.g., Will I get to go back home? Where are we going? I am happy I'm with my family)?
- What does the following mean: "Malia knows she brought what is important"? Why is her family important to her?

Topic 3: Managing Emotions

Aim: To help students manage strong feelings.

Teachers can ask younger children to share what they do when they are mad, sad, or scared. Older students may get into groups to make a **coping plan** for when they, or other kids, have strong feelings. The following are important areas to consider and discuss as a group:

- It is normal and acceptable to have strong feelings. We can usually trust our feelings because they are telling us if something is wrong. Feelings sometimes don't feel good, but they come and they go and we can get through it.
- Ask for help. Encourage students to reach out to a *trusted* adult in times of need. This is often a parent. However, it could be a coach, a teacher, or another mentor. Adults do not always know how children are feeling and it is important to share.
- Find what works. All kids have different things that help them to feel better. Some children like to be with others (siblings, parents, friends), and others prefer to be alone. Children can make a list of things that help them to feel better when they are scared, sad, or mad. Examples include: drawing, listening to music, reading a book, watching a show/YouTube, playing outside, going for a walk.

Example of a Coping Plan:

Situation	What Am I Feeling	What Can I Do to Feel Better?
My brother left a mess in my room	Mad	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set a limit with the person who made me mad• Take a deep breath• Go for a walk
My friend told me they don't want to play with me	Sad	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask for a hug• Tell someone how I feel• Listen to a song that I like• Spend time with another friend
I have to get a needle	Nervous	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare ahead of time (e.g., ask for the plan, ask questions that will help me understand the situation better)• Listen to relaxing music• Think of a place/memory that makes me happy• Pay attention to the things I can see, feel, and hear in my environment (help bring myself back to the present)

About Heather Prime

Dr. Heather Prime is a child and family psychologist and assistant professor at York University, Toronto, Canada. She studies child and family well-being, and how strong family relationships can help children to cope with stress and adversity. She develops family-centered interventions designed to prevent and treat children's mental health challenges. Dr. Prime works with children and their families to help strengthen bonds, make changes, and foster hope. She believes in the healing power of families.

