Plants Growing in the Ashes of Australia's Fires

(January 2020)

Extreme brushfires have been ripping through Australia since last fall, killing about half a billion animals and a vast number of trees and plants. More than 15.6 million acres have gone up in flames so far. To give you an idea of how big that is, a football field is just 1.32 acres. The bad news is that at least 140 fires are still burning, and they are not forecasted to stop any time soon.

Despite the large scale of the fires, there are small hints of hope popping up. In some spots, life is coming back. A local photographer, Murray Lowe, has taken shots of plant life rising from hills of ash. One day, Murray went to investigate how fire had affected the Dharug National Park, home to distinct species only found in southwest Australia.

With each careful step, Murray took note of the ash around him. All of a sudden, his gaze fell upon something that gave him quite a happy shock: patches of green grass coming up through the ash piles and pink leaves sticking out of tree trunks. Murray took shots of these things and posted them online. His uplifting snapshots were shared hundreds upon hundreds of times.

The kinds of plants he found can live through many fires, so they can recover rapidly after flames consume them. Some plants do this by resprouting. Their buds are insulated under thick bark, so they are protected from flames. A lot of shrubs and grasses are protected by mud, so they can sprout quickly as well. Other plants come back from the brink through seeds that can take a lot of heat. Plus, the time after a fire is perfect for small seedlings to grow.

Even with quick-sprouting buds and seeds, forests and other kinds of woodlands take many years to

grow back. Australia's massive, hot fires, plus the lack of water, means many plants are still dying. Only time will tell what will happen, but until then, we have Murray's snapshots to plant hope in our hearts.

Teacher Resources

Please note: this non-controlled readable text passage features a ***description text structure***. As such, it is written to be ***at least 80% decodable at Substep 4.2***. A specific decodability score is listed below.

- This text passage is 80.49% decodable at Substep 4.2.

Text Easability Scores
If you would like to measure the text easability scores of this passage, please follow the directions below.

1. Visit the Coh-Metrix Text Easability Assessor website at *http://tea.cohmetrix.com/*. If you do not already have a login and password, create one. It is free and easy to sign up for access to the website.
2. Once you have created an account and sign in, you will be taken to a page with an empty, white text box. Copy and paste the text from this passage into the empty, white text box. Make sure you are only copying and pasting the body of the passage. Do not include the title, date, or any of the resources present in the passage.
3. When you have pasted the passage into the text box, click on the red button beneath the text box that says "Analyze." There will be a short delay and after a few seconds, you will see a bar graph appear to the right of the screen.
4. The bar graph will give you the percentages for several text characteristics including: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion.
5. Below the bar graph, the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level is also included for your benefit.
6. Lastly, a paragraph is provided that explains the meaning of the measurements of the text characteristics for your particular passage.
7. Once you have completed measuring your passage, you can click on the "Clear" button below the text box and measure another passage, if you wish.

This text passage is archived under *World.*

