

# Through My Eyes— Australian Disaster Zones: Mia

AUTHOR

**DIANNE WOLFER**

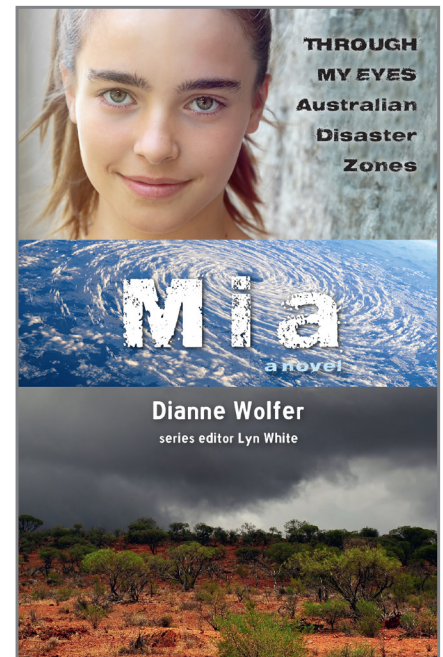
SERIES EDITED BY

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary/Lower Secondary



## SYNOPSIS

Thirteen-year-old Mia lives on a bush block in the Pilbara, where she assists her mother's work as a vet and equine therapist. Although she is used to the seasonal cyclones that threaten the West Australian coast, nothing can prepare her for the ferocity of Cyclone Veronica when she finds herself home alone and needing to protect their property and the animals she loves.

When her friend Nick arrives, pleading for help, and her favourite horse is injured, will Mia be able to withstand the greatest challenges of her life? As the storm intensifies, can she save her beloved animals?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dianne Wolfer is an award-winning author of 21 books, translated into several languages. Recent publications include her second title in the Aussie STEM Stars series, *Skye Blackburn-Lang: eating bugs for the planet*, and *The Last Light Horse*, the fourth book in her acclaimed WWI 'Light' series, which has inspired stage productions and musical adaptations. Dianne writes across genres. Her fantasy quest novel *The Shark Caller* was sparked by the ancient practice of calling sharks and was written during PhD research into anthropomorphism and animal characters in children's literature. Her second PhD title, *The Dog with Seven Names*, won the 2019 Speech Pathology Award, was shortlisted for the Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature and was a CBCA Notable Book. She is an active member of the Australian writing community, having served six years as WA Advisor for SCBWI, and was winner of the Nance Donkin Award for Children's Literature. More details can be found on her websites, [www.diannewolfer.com](http://www.diannewolfer.com) and [www.animalswhotalk.com](http://www.animalswhotalk.com).

## ABOUT THE SERIES EDITOR

Series editor and series creator Lyn White has extensive experience as a primary school teacher-librarian and EAL teacher and in 2010 completed postgraduate studies in Editing and Communications at the University of Melbourne. Lyn is passionate about children's literature and has great expertise in engaging students with quality texts. Her work with refugee children motivated her to create the acclaimed Through My Eyes series of books set in contemporary war zones. Lyn created and edited the Through My Eyes Natural Disaster Zones series to pay tribute to the courage and resilience of children who are often the most vulnerable in post-disaster situations. Lyn continues to teach EAL and is an education consultant and conference presenter.

**STUDY NOTES****BEFORE READING**

- Locate the Pilbara region on a map and research the following topics:
  - What is mined in this area?
  - How large is the industry as a proportion of Australia's GDP?
  - What benefits does mining bring to the area?
  - How does mining negatively impact the area?
  - Aboriginal history in the Pilbara
  - Aboriginal cultural sites: with special attention given to what happened at Juukan Gorge in 2020
  - Other industries existing in the Pilbara: agricultural/livestock/tourism?
  - Weather patterns and geography of the landscape
  - Size of the Pilbara and distance between one of its biggest towns—Karratha—and the closest city to your school.
- Discuss the images on its cover.
  - What are the clues that the novel is disaster fiction?
  - How is the natural disaster represented?
  - What are your expectations of the type of language that will be used? List some words you might expect to see.
  - Does this seem like a book you will enjoy? Why or why not?

**WHILE READING****Chapter One**

- Why might the author have wanted to start the novel with Mia waking from a nightmare?
- What is equine therapy? Why might it be significant that Mia and her mum run equine therapy sessions?
- Mia has taught herself some Auslan to communicate with Rosa. What does this single fact tell you about the sort of person she is?
- Make a list of adjectives to describe Mia and her mother. When complete, think carefully about the things each said or did in the chapter that helped you choose those adjectives.

**Chapter Four**

- “I never finished school, but Mother Nature is the best teacher. Those ants are tiny, but they know a thing or two about barometric pressure.” (p 38) Ants are not the only creature to change behaviour before major weather events. Find out more about how birds, bees, cattle and dogs react. Why do you think animals and insects might behave as they do when they feel severe weather approaching? Choose one creature and research how and why it changes its behaviour.
- ‘Last year Mia also started a gratitude journal. She closes her eyes for a moment and feels grateful that Biff is resting his head on her foot, then she returns to those hatchling problems ...’ (p 40) When Mia feels anxious she pictures things that make her world happy and jots them down in a gratitude journal. Try writing or drawing an entry every day in your own gratitude journal for a month.
- What other techniques does Mia use to build resilience and maintain her mental health in the face of anxious thoughts? What other ways might you be able to help others in your school be resilient and mentally healthy?

**Chapter Twelve**

“I was nervous,” Mia admits, “and scared I’d do something wrong.”

“That’s always how I feel when I assess new patients,” Mum replies.

“Really?”

“Mmhmm.”

“I didn’t know that.” (pp 115–16)

- Why might Mia have been surprised by her mother’s comment? Do you think that Nick might have been similarly surprised if Mia talked to him about her bouts of anxiety? What does this exchange tell us about the differences

between how we see ourselves and how others might see us?

### Chapter Twenty-one

- “... It’s hard to not feel anxious, and want to give up, but let’s do something instead. If we each choose a problem and take steps to improve things, we can all make a difference.” (pp 201–202) In groups of two—one for the affirmative and one for the negative—debate this statement as it relates to climate change.

### Chapter Twenty-two

- ‘Mia touches her blue necklace and thinks about all the things that have happened over the past few weeks. Some good, some terrifying, but Veronica has left her with a better sense of who she is and what she wants to become.’ (p 216) In what ways has Mia changed over the course of the novel and how have these changes ‘left her with a better sense of who she is and what she wants to become’?

### AFTER READING

- Watch the movie *Red Dog* and compare and contrast its depiction of the Pilbara and its inhabitants with what is described in *Through My Eyes—Australian Disaster Zones: Mia*.
- Learn more about the five cyclone strength categories and three alert colours.
- Using the story as a template, write an action scene involving Cyclone Veronica from a different POV, such as Bandit, Jimmy or Erin.