

Fire on the Mountain

TEACHER GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Lightning sparks a forest fire deep in the mountains near the town of Waterton. Days later, the sky is still blue and the air is clear, so it doesn't seem like an emergency—until crews of firefighters begin to arrive. Cricket and her friends watch deer and birds escaping early, but what about the bigger, slower animals? And what about the little animals, like porcupines and squirrels? Or salamanders and snakes? Cricket searches for a way to help until the fire surprises everyone and races down the mountain towards the town. Will her home and the animals she loves survive?

This is the fifth title featuring Cricket and her friends, following *Cougar Frenzy*, *Bats in Trouble*, *Salamander Rescue* and *Ospreys in Danger*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PAMELA McDOWELL was born in Calgary, Alberta, and has lived almost all of her life there. She graduated from the University of Victoria in British Columbia in 1988 and began her first career in education. Pamela taught junior high and high school in Alberta and British Columbia, and she enjoys getting back into the classroom to share her books with students. Pamela started writing articles for local and national magazines, eventually moving to freelance writing for newspapers and has written more than 200 human interest articles for *The Calgary Herald*. Since 2010, she has written more than fifty non-fiction books for children. Pamela's fiction focuses on the diverse animals and habitats of Alberta. As a teenager, she chose volunteering at the Calgary Zoo over hanging out at the mall. On weekends at the zoo, she made friends with Peaches the porcupine and spent part of each day cuddling Rosie the boa constrictor. Her interest in prickly, furry, slimy, slinky animals continues in her stories.

ABOUT THE WRITING OF THE BOOK

The wildfire that ripped through Waterton Lakes National Park in 2017 captured headlines throughout Alberta and across the country. Heroic efforts by firefighters from all over the province helped to save the town and historic buildings—but the Kenow Fire was devastating, forever changing the landscape.

This story was inspired by the Kenow Fire. In her research, Pamela spoke with park wardens, ecologists, biologists and fire captains, read all the news articles she could find and studied the fire analysis report. With all of that information, she could have written a 300-page book! Pamela's biggest challenge was deciding on the most interesting and dramatic parts of the Kenow Fire story and placing her characters right in the middle of the action.

TEACHING IDEAS CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

PRE-READING IDEAS

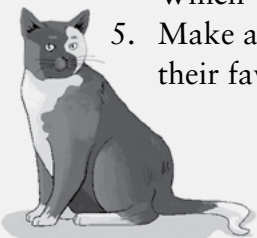
- What are some causes of wildfires? What conditions might cause a wildfire to grow out of control?
- Have you ever been lost or separated from your family? What did you do? How did you feel? How did you feel after you were reunited with them?
- Do you think fire can ever be good for a forest? Why or why not?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Cricket feel worry? How do you feel worry?
2. How do Cricket and Tyler help prepare their home for the fire?
3. What is Tyler's brilliant idea to help feed the firefighters?
Why do the kids have to hurry to put the plan into action?
4. What is an assembly line? Have you ever worked in an assembly line?
Could you work an assembly line by yourself?
5. Cricket and Tyler had prepared 'go bags' so they could leave town quickly if necessary.
What do you think they packed in their 'go bags'? What would you pack in yours?
6. How did the fire tear people and animals apart from one another? How did it bring them together?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. In Chapter Two, the girls notice the bighorn sheep's eyes. Look up pictures of animals' eyes and create a poster showing the different shapes and colors: bighorn sheep, cougar, osprey, salamander, owl, etc.
2. Survey your classmates to find out who likes or hates thunderstorms. Create a tally chart to record your data, then draw a graph to show the results. Do the same for rainstorms. Is there a difference?
3. Big wildfires are often in the news. Write a newspaper article about the fire in the book. Don't forget a headline, your byline and a picture with a caption.
4. Make a poster showing how different animals might respond to fire. Which ones will climb trees? Which will go underground? Which will fly away? Which will run and which will swim?
5. Make a list of the different sandwiches mentioned in the story then survey your classmates to ask their favorites. Prepare a bar graph to show the results. Don't forget a title and labels for each axis.



WEBSITES OF INTEREST

1. Parks Canada timelapse video as the Kenow Fire burns past a remote camera attached to a tree. It shows wildlife using the trail shortly before and after the wildfire burned through: youtu.be/LflNb658-D4
2. Watch lightning strikes as they happen, all over the world: www.lightningmaps.org
3. Animals of Waterton Lakes National Park: www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ab/waterton/nature/faune-wildlife
4. One year after the Kenow Wildfire. This video from Parks Canada follows a bear family after the fire: youtu.be/lUtq9WHAWKI
5. Science for Kids video: How wildfires help! youtu.be/EZk0UADrn20

PRAISE FOR *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*

“Fast-paced, yet easy to follow...Readers learn how forest fires can start and spread, as well as how animals behave when threatened by forest fires and what people can do in hope of protecting their property. Recommended.”

–CM: CANADIAN REVIEW OF MATERIALS

“This eye-opening, empowering book will appeal to those who enjoy natural disaster stories, or altruistic readers who want to know how to help keep themselves, their family, their community, and the environment as safe as possible during an emergency.”

–SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

More in the Cricket McKay series

