

# KINGLAKE-350 BY ADRIAN HYLAND



A STUDY GUIDE BY JILL FITZSIMONS

## INDEX

- Introduction
- About the Author
- Honours
- Background and Context
- Genre
- Narrative Structure and Perspective
- Setting
- The People of *Kinglake-350*
- The Fire – a Character in Itself
- Views/Values
- Language choices
- The Outcomes
- Classroom and Homework Activities
- Supplementary Resources

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hyland lives in St Andrews, very near Kinglake, with his wife and two children, one of whom was a student at Strathewen Primary School when it burnt down. He works primarily as a writer and teacher at La Trobe University. Hyland spent many years living and working with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, a fact which underlies much of his work, in particular his sense of landscape. Although he and his family were not personally struck by the fire, many of their friends were, and many of those perished. The wish to honour those people, and the emergency services workers who did their best to save them, were his primary motivations in writing *Kinglake-350*.

Hyland is also the author of the crime fiction novels: *Diamond Dove*, which won the Ned Kelly Award for 'Best First Crime Novel,' and *Gunshot Road*.



## HONOURS

*Kinglake-350* was shortlisted for the 2012 Prime Minister's Awards for Non-Fiction and for **The Age Book of the Year**. Sections of the book also appear in an anthology of the *Best Australian Science Writing*, published by New South Publishing, an imprint of UNSW Press.

## INTRODUCTION

On the surface, *Kinglake-350* is a piece of reportage on Australia's worst natural disaster. It examines how individuals responded to the crisis, particularly focusing upon the experiences of Roger Wood, the police officer in charge of Kinglake on the day. It tells the story of CFA fire fighters, DSE rangers, members of the public trapped in burning houses.

But ultimately, the book goes way beyond this, constructing what amounts to a full-scale challenge to some of the dominant paradigms of our society. Hyland is criticizing the mechanistic, technology-dependent approach that has dominated our approach to the environment.

Important to Hyland's thinking is the quote from St Augustine which prefaces the book: "This awful catastrophe is not the end but the beginning". Hyland wants to ensure that the lessons of Black Saturday will be learnt, that the deaths that occurred will not have been in vain. That future generations will be safer. Reflecting on the Royal Commission's report, Hyland remarks, "one of the dispiriting features of these inquiries is the assiduity with which those recommendations are ignored once the trauma has passed." (p. 243)

Hyland's central thesis is that we, as a culture, have failed to understand or come to terms with our environment. We have ignored it, or built walls of plastic or steel to shield ourselves from it. He quotes fire scientist, Nic Gellie, who argues: "As we've become more addicted to the trappings and technologies of the virtual world...we are losing our awareness of the natural one." (p.244)

Hyland employs two distinct strategies in *Kinglake-350*.

These are:

- To tell the stories of various individuals who were caught unawares and unprepared for the fury of the onslaught. The story of couple Drew Barr and Angie Connor and their two children, for example: their terrifying ordeal is captured in vivid detail. He also employs the novelist's techniques: in the chapter 'Snapshots', he produces a chilling, fictionalized account of a family's final moments. (p. 143)

- Throughout the course of the book, Hyland creates a complex, multi-faceted portrait of the factors which have brought us to this pass. These include environmental, historical, psychological, anthropological and geographical determinants. These causes tend to be interwoven. In a section called 'Fire: An Illuminated History', for example, he shows how white settlers arrived in an environment which had been shaped by fire for thousands of years. Eucalyptus trees, in particular, are more than just adapted to fire; they need fire to thrive. Hyland shows that early white settlers made two fundamental mistakes: at first, they increased fire regimes, burning widely as a means of clearing the land. This had the effect of encouraging fire-loving plants. Then, as towns and farms became established, they tried to eradicate fire completely. The outcome of this was that, when fires did come, as they inevitably did, they were devastating holocausts, in contrast to the gentle mosaic burning which had characterized Aboriginal Australia.

*Kinglake-350* concludes with a sombre meditation on what fire means for Australian society, both now and in the future. He is particularly concerned with the implications of global warming, pointing out that the frequency of blow-up days like Black Saturday will become two to three times more common, according to CSIRO studies. He also presents a dark picture of the fire-devastated communities in the period after the fires, with sharp increases in domestic violence, depression and post-traumatic stress.

Therefore, given the sensitive nature of the subject matter, teachers need to approach the teaching of this text with care and awareness that students may find some of the text upsetting.

But *Kinglake-350* is not, ultimately, a pessimistic book. Hyland gives a range of suggestions for the ways in which we can increase our awareness of fire. (pp. 246-248) These boil down to the need to develop a greater respect for and understanding of our environment.

The author finds inspiration in the actions of the handful of individuals who rose to the occasion and performed heroic deeds on that dreadful day. He acknowledges, "We can do amazing things when we see a need." (p. 249)

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

*Kinglake-350* is set in Victoria on February 7, 2009, a day which earned the grim epithet: Black Saturday. This literal and figurative title vividly captures the physical and emotional devastation the catastrophic mega-fires wrought on the communities of Kinglake, Kinglake West, St Andrews, Strathewen, Kilmore East, Flowerdale, Pheasant Creek, Wandong and Toolangi. *Kinglake-350* also explores the terrible impact and heartbreaking legacy of the fires beyond February 7, 2009, while also celebrating the resilience of many of those affected.

Black Saturday was responsible for the largest amount of fatalities ever recorded in Victoria, as well as causing horrific injuries, destroying people's homes and businesses and causing many people to suffer displacement and ongoing psychological, physical, social and financial problems.

The Victorian summer of 2009 was brutally unforgiving: Victorians suffered seemingly endless days of scorching heat, including three days straight of temperatures in excess of forty three degrees. The meteorological context in which this relentless summer occurred is also extremely important: Victoria was in the midst of a terrible twelve year drought. In the suburbs, gardens and nature-strips were dead and strict water restrictions meant that watering the gardens, running under the sprinkler and putting the hose on the car were distant memories. Victoria's beautiful bush land was also crisp and dry, ready to ignite.

The historical context of the mega-fire is another important concept to grasp. This fire was not without precedent; in fact, Hyland observes: "we are running out of days for which to name them: Black Thursday, Red Tuesday, Black Tuesday, Black Friday, and Ash Wednesday." (p. 160) In the 1980s, Victoria had been devastated by the Ash Wednesday Fires and in 1939, Black Friday wreaked such unspeakable devastation that Hyland described it as a "holocaust."

And yet, as Hyland propounds, many Victorians living in these beautiful, but fire prone areas, had fallen prey to a misguided sense of security, so the social context within which the fire occurred is another key idea to explore. Even though many recognized the conditions as perilous, others simply weren't able to comprehend the reality of a bushfire ever actually occurring. Some were as thoroughly prepared as could be reasonably expected, others were not. Cruel fate was yet to make its presence felt. Given the conditions, scientists and fire chiefs (p.1) were predicting fire and many warnings were issued by The Bureau of Meteorology, the Victorian Premier, John Brumby and the media. Also important was the policy of the time that residents in fire prone areas had the right to exercise free will and make a personal choice as to whether they would 'Stay or Go.' Because many of those who were thoroughly prepared were unable to successfully defend their homes, this approach has now been called into question.

Another aspect of the social landscape of *Kinglake-350* which Hyland portrays is that of a society out of touch with its surroundings, more in tune with computers and televisions and the insides of their houses than their natural environment. One of the darker images the reader will take away from the book is that of residents staring at a CFA website which is telling them that the fire which is about to kill them is still many miles away.

By contrast, Hyland paints an admiring portrait of the communities in these towns and the unstinting and courageous efforts of the emergency crews such as the CFA, the SES, the police and the DSE. He pays tribute to their bravery and generosity of spirit, so this aspect of the social context of *Kinglake-350* is one worth underlining, especially given the upsetting nature of a great deal of the content.

Black Saturday also occurred in the context of a widespread media and social media explosion and the fires were covered extensively by television, radio, online mediums and via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

Victoria, and indeed Australia, rallied to the cause and many everyday Australians and celebrities performed great acts of generosity by conducting raffles and organizing relief concerts to raise money to support the victims of the fires. Millions of others donated money or clothing and offered shelter to help those in such desperate need of compassion and support.

The terrible events of Black Saturday led to widespread soul-searching and blame, as people affected tried to make sense of why the fires occurred, why people weren't adequately warned, why people did not heed authority's warnings, and why the response to the fires was so often shambolic and inadequate. Other thorny issues which manifested themselves in the post-fire period included whether or not the government should offer support to people whose homes were uninsured and whether or not people should rebuild homes in such fire-prone areas in light of the events. In this respect, the political context of the fires is well worth exploring, especially given that a Royal Commission was established to investigate the fires and many key figures involved in the fire were heavily scrutinized by the media.

#### **Other contexts to explore:**

- The cultural context of fire and its use by Indigenous Australians over time
- The psychological context of arson and its place in Australian society

## **GENRE**

*Kinglake-350* is a work of non-fiction, but it is, in effect, an amalgam of genres. Students could examine the ways in which Hyland brings together a number of different styles: the book includes elements of reportage, tribute, criticism and thriller, as well as extensive scientific, historical, anthropological and psychological research.

Hyland's background is in crime writing novels and even though *Kinglake-350* is a work of non-fiction, he brings many of the novelist's techniques to the book. Hyland has said that, whenever he puts pen to paper, he wants 'to write prose that sings'. The novelist's hand is also apparent when he imagines what it would have been like for a family prior to their death in the fires. In addition, he often uses foreshadowing and narrative hooks to create suspense and anxiety in the reader and to increase the reader's empathy for the characters. For example, at one stage, Wood receives a frantic call from his family, and then the phone cuts out. Readers are not told what the fate of Wood's family is until much later.

## NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND VOICE

The title of *Kinglake-350* finds its genesis in the frantic call sign: ‘Kinglake-350 to VKC. Urgent, do you read me? The fire’s here now. God help us...’ and events are largely viewed from the third-person narrative perspective of Roger Wood, a local policeman who performs numerous acts of bravery on the day and is responsible for the saving of many lives.

Another feature of Hyland’s work is the way in which the experiences of individuals such as Wood and members of the CFA and DSE are interspersed with chapters that function as brief essays. These brief interludes, on a range of subjects such as the psychology of arson and the history of fire in Australia, enable Hyland to offer the reader a complex and challenging reading experience.

*Kinglake-350* also has a strong visual component. Maps are supplied to enable the reader to understand the spread and impact of the fire more completely and to grasp how quickly they spread. Photographs of Wood and Caine, the fires and the decimated landscape are also included to put faces to the name of the police and to provide a more concrete view of fire and its legacy.

A significant part of *Kinglake-350*’s success is due to Hyland’s ability to make it feel like events are happening in real time. The exposition immediately creates a deep unease about what is about to unfold and Hyland uses foreshadowing to increase the reader’s dread. (pp.11-12)

The overall arrangement of *Kinglake-350* has been carefully planned and students might like to consider why the text is sequenced in the way it is. Students could be encouraged to wonder why one chapter succeeds another, why the photographs appear in the order they do and what role the quote from St Augustine and Lisa Jacobson’s poem play in the epigraph.

When asked about the decisions he made in constructing and arranging *Kinglake-350*, Hyland explained that one of the problems he faced was how to make the background information - the ecology, the fire science, the meteorology, etc. – interesting to the general reader. One trick he hit upon early was, wherever possible, to tie it to individuals. The reader will see this in the opening pages; rather than simply describe the drought which was the precursor to the fire, he describes Roger Wood picking up a handful of leaf litter, watching it float away, and then segueing into the factors that have desiccated the land. (p. 18)

Hyland also uses scientific description as a counterweight to some of the dreadful things the reader is witnessing. The most graphic example is in ‘Snapshots’, when he imagines a family dying in the fire. The text then swings into a section called ‘Fire: An Illuminated History’ to provide the reader with some relief after the trauma of the preceding chapter.

## SETTING

The beauty of places such as Kinglake, St Andrews and Strathewen, and the enormous cost of real estate in inner city areas, have made these towns an extremely popular choice for many people. The communities have a varied demographic, drawing people as diverse as “farmers and greenies, university lecturers and labourers, tradespeople and teachers, musicians and shop assistants”. (p. 7) Hyland expands upon the appeal of the lifestyle offered by such places: “[You can] wake up and smell the eucalypts, listen to the kookaburras chortle on the setting sun. An ideal place to raise a family or see out your days.” (p. 7)

Hyland also portrays the social setting of *Kinglake-350* as a place of stark contrasts. While on the one hand these towns are close knit communities which enjoy “Aussie Rules” and the “Whittlesea Country Music Festival,” (p.7) the physical geography of the setting, described as a place of “isolation and...wuthering, gloomy forests” (p.15) means that this idyllic geographical setting also makes it a beacon for trouble – “Those lonely tracks make a good place to dump cars; bury evidence or bodies.” (p. 15)

In the exposition of *Kinglake-350*, Kinglake is depicted as a place of tremendous beauty: “the vegetation is thick and varied – red box and peppermint gums on the lower slopes, towering mountain grey gums in the upper reaches. Such beauty, however, is not without its dangers. Man-made structures such as “serpentine bends and narrow lengths” with a “sheer drop to your left, fifty, a hundred metres in places, an even steeper slope climbing to your right” built to access what seems an inaccessible place, are a reminder that humankind seeks to live in such places at their peril. The road is “a bugger of a place...to get caught during a bushfire [and a] death trap.” (pp. 5-6) The tale of a bikie killed in a motorcycle accident on “The Windies” is grim reminder of the price to pay for entering a place that isn’t meant for vehicles, or unwary humans for that matter.

In addition, Hyland’s ominous observation: “Some of those trees are fifty metres tall; the radiant heat alone could kill you from hundreds of metres away”, foreshadows what is to come. Coupled with his description of the physical landscape being “parched” (p.1) with “ripping northerly winds [and] humidity barely registering”, (p. 5) the image of this physical landscape as unpredictable and deadly is well and truly established.

Although the environment is depicted as powerful and forbidding, in many ways, it’s depicted as vulnerable and fragile, abused and exploited. Hyland constructs an image of the environment as a victim of humankind’s materialism and greed. The leaf litter Wood finds on the morning of Black Saturday serves as a reminder of humankind’s disrespect for nature. Hyland observes, “That simple handful of litter bears testament to years of drought, devastating climate change, an environment, already the most flammable in the world, tormented and stretched to breaking point.” (p. 19)

Internal settings are also important in *Kinglake-350* and Hyland depicts people locked away in their houses with “air conditioners [roaring]” in front of the television or the computer screen to emphasise the values of those who are disconnected from their environment. Linking these internal settings to values such as consumerism and sedentary, insular living, enables Hyland to emphasise his point, that ours is a culture which has failed to come to terms with its own environment, and that, sooner or later, there is a price to be paid for such ignorance. “Environments don’t go away just because you ignore them. They need to be worked at, handled with care, respected; and if they are not, they can come back and savage you. Empires from the Mayan to the Egyptian have collapsed because this adamantine truth was disregarded.” (p. 253)

## THE PEOPLE OF *KINGLAKE-350*

### Leading Senior Constable Roger Wood

Wood is portrayed as a hero: he is clear-headed, brave and selfless and demonstrates remarkable leadership while others are panicking and chaos is breaking out. Hyland provides readers with details of Wood’s personal context to enable the reader to develop a complex picture of him beyond his role as a policeman on Black Saturday. Readers are told in the exposition that he lives on “an eight hectare” farm “on the outskirts of St Andrews” with his family: Jo, his wife of thirteen years; his four children: Darcy, Tiahn, Kasey and Dylan and eight horses. The reader is also told that he and Jo lost a child, Jesse, at eleven months. (pp. 3-4) These background details are important because they help imprint the idea that Wood is a family man who values open space and rural living and has already experienced significant personal trauma.

In addition, the reference to his decision to send his children to Strathewen Primary because “it’s more of an extended family than a school” underlines the store he places on relationships and the notion of local community. (p. 4) Later in the narrative, when Wood is unsure if his wife and children have survived the fires, this earlier information heightens the narrative tension because the reader has formed a connection with Wood’s family and the grief they have already suffered. (p.193) The value that Wood places on community also manifests itself in his the extraordinary bravery he later demonstrates on behalf of his fellow residents. (p. 204)

Hyland positions the reader to view Wood, professionally and personally, as the steady pair of hands required to handle the horror about to unfold. He provides a brief overview of Wood’s career which establishes him as a man of varied and considerable experience, as does the collective endorsement that he possesses “the ability to inspire confidence.” (p. 10) The description of Wood’s appearance as a “big, handsome fellow” also increases his attraction as the text’s hero, as does the photo which appears first in a collection of photos in the middle of *Kinglake-350*.

Hyland also fleshes out Wood's character by profiling him and his partner using the work of sociologist, Samuel Oliner, to help readers understand which particular qualities and attributes enabled the two men to do all that they did on Black Saturday. Hyland summarises Oliner's observations about heroic types: "rescuers tend to have a strong relationship with their parents, a wide range of friends and a sense of empathy; they feel an inescapable duty to help others. They also tend to have a belief that they can shape their own destiny." (p.199) These qualities are borne out in Wood's decision to evacuate a convoy of "critically injured victims" in the middle of the night "through treacherous, burnt-out terrain". (p.202) Hyland's adverbs and adjectives help to intensify the bravery of Wood's actions and portray him as a saviour and, with his partner, Cameron Caine, a worthy winner of the Victorian Police's Valour Award.

Wood's narrative arc also underlines the cost that such bravery and generosity of spirit can have on individuals. To this end, Wood is not presented as an invincible figure and Hyland documents his fallibility by describing the emotional and physical toll Black Saturday inflicted on him, especially in the period after the fire. This is important because it normalizes the inevitable effects of trauma on people. Eventually, after being so stoic, clear-headed and courageous, Wood finds himself "slumped against [his] car window, weeping" at the death of friends. He suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress, as well as an excruciating neck injury which requires surgery and then endures "a slow, painful recuperation period". (p.253) Here, Hyland's choice of adjectives helps the reader to comprehend the cost survivors also endure.

### **The unprepared, disbelieving and disconnected**

Hyland characterises some locals as unprepared, ignorant and dangerously - sometimes fatally - casual in their approach to the fires. This portrait of recklessness is summed up in the grim observation: "The Bureau of Meteorology might have issued hundreds of warnings during the days leading up to February 7, but how much attention the residents of Victoria paid to those warnings is open to question." (p.13)

He enables readers to gain an insight into the fatal flaws in the human condition that were exposed on Black Saturday by imagining the thought processes of those, who in response to "The CFA's gold standard for warnings...a day of Total Fire Ban," reason: "There's been hundreds of those in the past; nothing's ever happened...Really, what are the odds of getting hit?" (p. 13) Hyland's intention is clear here – he is inviting condemnation of such complacency and this is borne out in his recreation of the mindset of the disbelievers: "And if by chance a fire does come, you know the routine...start the pump if you've got one. If not, a mop and bucket should do the trick..." (p.14)

Moreover, he highlights the irresponsibility of many locals by praising the behaviour of prepared individuals who "*had* fire plans...left early...arranged their defences...primed their pumps." Here, Hyland's choice of "*had*" and his decision to italicize it, serve to accentuate his criticism of the general lack of preparedness. Hyland is struck by the unwillingness of many of those living on the urban fringes to embrace a sense of personal agency. He characterizes many of holding the view that the locus of control lay with others and that if anything did happen: "surely the CFA would let you know?" (p. 14)



Hyland is also fiercely critical of some authorities, who he believes were dangerously complacent or hidebound by bureaucratic regulations. Again, his strategy is to give voice to the thinking patterns of those authorities, some of whom suffered from hubris, making the fatal error of believing “major conflagrations were a thing of the past” and believing that in any event, arsenal like “sky cranes and water bombers” would ensure Victoria’s safety. (p. 14)

Hyland also takes aim at the disconnected, who survive more out of dumb luck than anything else, such as the drunken Meg who refuses to evacuate but miraculously survives. (p. 205) He also challenges those he believe suffer from a lack of “situational awareness” and as a consequence, spend more time in front of the television than noticing what’s going on in their external environment and those who were shopping on the day of the fires, instead of preparing their homes or evacuating. (p.139)

## The CFA

Hyland uses the CFA as a prime vehicle for showcasing people’s goodness and decency and their capacity to do extraordinary things when tested. He paints an admiring portrait of the tough, no-nonsense types that inhabit the CFA with his observation: “The Victorian County Fire Authority is ...a bullshit-free zone” driven by the collective understanding that “you can pack up and piss off” if you don’t want to tow the party line, crystallises the sincerity and authenticity of the CFA.

Indeed, the strength of many of the women of the CFA and their excellent practical sense is a common motif in *Kinglake-350* and figures such as Trish Hendrie and Carole Wilson are depicted as honest, quick-thinking and compassionate individuals. For example, their need to confess to Wood that they had broken into a doctor’s surgery for medical supplies is a moment of bittersweet humour because it celebrates their goodness and initiative. In addition, the portrait of CFA member, Di MacLeod, surrounded by chaos, confusion and experiencing an overwhelming dread about her own fate, finding the time to hose down a passing kangaroo with the wish: ‘Good luck, feller,’ also promotes an enormously positive impression of the women of the CFA.(p. 171)

## THE FIRE – A CHARACTER IN ITSELF

It is important for students to note the Black Saturday fire actually plays a role as a character and is *Kinglake-350’s* antagonist. Even though the CFA and DSE have fought the foe on many other occasions, this time the fire is more destructive, brutal and unpredictable than they could have imagined. *Kinglake-350* offers the view that Victorians have ignored this nemesis at their peril and will now face the consequences.

To achieve this effect, Hyland personifies the fire: “every branch, every leaf and twig was alive and writhing, straining, breaking loose, whipping away” which heightens the sense of the fire as some evil, angry agent of revenge. Indeed, students could examine the characterization of the fire as an immortal or supernatural force by examining the way Hyland imbues the fire with not only savagery, but poetry: “the wind...picks up those first fingers of flame and transforms them into something extraordinary, propels them in long, expanding ellipses out into the grasslands...”

## VIEWS AND VALUES

Hyland’s text offers students a wealth of material to examine the views and values espoused and exhibited, not only by Hyland himself, but by a rich tapestry of characters. *Kinglake -350* also provides students with a variety of contexts, which will enable them to consider how time, place and space might influence an individual or group’s views and values.

- Activities to develop knowledge and understanding of the embedded views and values of the text can be found in **Classroom and Homework Activities**.

## LANGUAGE CHOICES

Hyland says of his writing that he is very conscious of the sounds and colours of words, and tries to incorporate that consciousness into everything he writes. When he was at university, he studied Old English and Icelandic and was influenced by the writings of Gerald Manley Hopkins, David Jones and Dylan Thomas. Hyland has also written articles about topics such as synaesthesia – because he sees colours in words, and believes that sometimes those colours influence his language choices.

Hyland also believes the rhythm of the language (which is affected by all of the above, especially consonants) is crucial. Indeed, he always tells his own students to read their work out loud, ‘slowly and deliberately’, as the Clancy Brothers said of a reading of *Finnegan’s Wake* he heard as a child. Students might also be interested to know that Hyland’s publishers, Text, run a writing competition called the *Text Young Adult’s Prize*. They receive thousands of entries and the judges will sometimes use the rhythm of the first page as a guide to whether they think the piece has merit. Hyland has a great saying: “If the writer’s got a tin ear, if the rhythm is dead, chances are the book won’t be much good.”

Passages such as:

“Survival inside the building is rapidly becoming impossible. The room is thick with acrid smoke. The air rattles with a deafening chorus of shrieking smoke alarms, kids and dogs, venting gas bottles, exploding cars and cans of fuel. Above it all, the fire itself roars with a noise to wake the dead. Their eyes sting, their throats ache, their faces are racked with hollow and fear.” (p. 128)

and

“Cattle bellow and panic, crush fencelines and become entangled in wire, are roasted alive. Horses bolt through blackened paddocks with rolling eyes and tails ablaze. Birds ignite in the air and arc to earth like comets. Sheets of corrugated iron go swinging on the wind like butcher’s knives. Gas bottles fall over: they absorb the heat, and when they eventually explode they shoot across the yard like torpedoes, take out the neighbour’s living room. A woman watches as a blood-red rose of melting glass blossoms in her window.” (p. 140)

are a rich source of teaching material. In these passages alone, a class can discuss Hyland’s use of assonance, alliteration, simile, personification, anaphora and tri-colon and examine how these combine to give the sentence a distinct rhythm. These passages could also be used to discuss Hyland’s uses of the five senses to transport the reader into the world of the victims.

## THE OUTCOMES

### Unit 3

#### AREA OF STUDY 1 – Adaptations and transformations

At this point in time, no adaptations of the text have been made, so the text is not suitable for this outcome.

## Unit 3

### AREA OF STUDY 2 – Views, values and contexts

#### Some topics:

1. In *Kinglake-350*, Hyland argues that we misunderstand our environment at our peril.
2. Despite its horror and sadness, *Kinglake-350* is in many ways a celebration.
3. *Kinglake-350* is a sober meditation on humankind's folly and frailty.
4. *Kinglake-350* offers a bleak view of the human condition.
5. *Kinglake-350* explores Australia's duality.
6. In *Kinglake-350*, Hyland casts a critical eye on our disconnection from the natural world.
7. Despite its fears for our future, *Kinglake-350* is not a pessimistic book.
8. *Kinglake-350* showcases the complex ways we respond to disaster.
9. A multi-media presentation which explores how Hyland draws on his historical, cultural, social and ideological contexts to illustrate his attitudes and concerns. Students might like to use free, cloud-based software such as Prezi ([www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)), PowerPoint, iMovie or Windows Moviemaker.
10. A multi-media presentation which compares the wide-ranging views and values expressed in *Kinglake-350*, justifying your interpretation.

## Unit 3

### AREA OF STUDY 3 – Considering alternative viewpoints

*Kinglake 350* was widely reviewed by high profile academics, journalists, writers and reviewers in a range of prestigious publications. This provides students with a variety of critical analyses to examine and respond to in relation to this particular outcome. Students will enjoy the number of choices available to them and will, in turn, be exposed to an interesting array of styles and formats which they can then use as inspiration for their own reviews.

#### Television

The ABC television show, *First Tuesday Bookclub*, reviewed *Kinglake-350* in October 2011. This episode is available for viewing and downloading online, as is a transcript of the programme and comments viewers have posted in response to the show. The programme features a range of voices and strong, diverse views. It is presented in a panel format and chaired by Jennifer Byrne.

This show can be accessed at: <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/firsttuesday/s3284220.htm> (*First Tuesday Book Club*)

#### Print/online media

Tom Griffiths, Professor of History in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University, reviewed *Kinglake-350* in the online newsletter, *Inside Story*: 'From the ashes' (12 October, 2011). Griffiths' review also appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Griffiths' review is beautifully written, wide-ranging and thoughtful and is an example of a positive review. This review is extremely detailed and literary and is accompanied by comments posted by readers in response to his review. Griffiths also weaves a review of Karen Kissane's, *Worst of Days: Inside the Black Saturday Firestorm* into his review. This review would be an excellent choice for highly able students.

- This review can be accessed at: <http://inside.org.au/from-the-ashes/> (Tom Griffiths, *Inside Story*)

Matthew Ricketson, professor of journalism at the University of Canberra, reviewed *Kinglake-350* in the online magazine, *The Walkleys*: 'In the line of fire' (23 October 2011) and the same review also appeared in *The Age*. Ricketson offers an admiring portrait of *Kinglake-350* while still offering some constructive criticism.

- This review can be accessed at: <http://www.walkleys.com/books/4688/> (Matthew Ricketson, *The Walkley Foundation*)

**Author and academic, Delia Falconer’s review, ‘Harrowing stories of Victoria’s Black Saturday inferno’ which appeared in *The Australian*, August 13, 2011 is the least positive of the reviews and therefore provides the students with an example of a negative critique. Her criticism of *Kinglake-350* is balanced by praise too, so this review will provide students with an example of a review that doesn’t just see things in black and white.**

- This review can be accessed at: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/books/harrowing-stories-of-victoria-black-saturday-inferno/story-e6frg8nf-1226112493317>

### Activity: Preparation for Area of Study 3

As you read/watch/listen to the reviews of *Kinglake-350*, complete the following table:

Title and author of review	Source and form	Key claims	Evidence	Claims you agree with and why.	Claims you disagree with and why.

## Unit 4

### AREA OF STUDY 1 – Creative response

*Kinglake-350* lends itself perfectly to this particular outcome. Hyland's writing style offers much for students to emulate in terms of voice, tone, structure, characterisation, imagery, use of setting and form. In addition, the range of the attitudes and concerns explored by his writing offer students plenty of scope to compose an original, complex and sophisticated piece of writing which demonstrates a real understanding of the relationship between their reading and their writing.

This text may also inspire students to respond imaginatively to the text in a range of ways. As well as more traditional forms of writing, students may choose to use this text to create a multi-modal response.

### **Possible Creative Response Scenarios:**

Additional 'Snapshots' written in the third person, but from the narrative perspective of:

#### **Existing characters:**

- Roger Woods' wife, Jo. This response would provide students with an opportunity to fill in a 'gap' in the text. How did Jo experience the fire?
- Meg, who features on p. 205 and p. 57. This response could explore her reasons for staying and experiences of the fire. What was her attitude to the fire? Who did she see on the day?
- Wendy Duncan, who was badly burned by the fires, recounts her rescue and her path to recovery.
- Lisa Jacobson, the poet who composed the poem which appears in the epigraph: 'Girls and Horses in the Fire.' What inspired her to write this poem?
- Fire scientist Kevin Tolhurst. Given the text uses a great deal of hard evidence and scientific terminology, this would provide students with the opportunity to write in a scientific style.
- Tony Fitzgerald documents the health problems he has suffered since the fires and explores the role the fires played in his ill health. (p. 252)
- Cameron Caine
- Colleen Keating, pp. 65-66

#### **New characters**

- An indigenous Australian. This response could reflect on the different relationship Europeans have with fire and the land and the resultant consequences. This would provide students with the opportunity to create a new voice in the text.(pp. 149-155)

- An arsonist. This response could explore their motivation for lighting fires and their response to the fires.
- A local, three years later.
- A great deal of criticism has been levelled at those in commanding positions. What was it like to them in the midst of such pandemonium? Take the reader in their world and in doing so, create a new perspective in the text.
- A journalist
- A politician
- A CFA member
- A person working in D24 (Victorian Police Communications Centre)
- A lawyer
- An ecologist
- A psychologist
- A scientist
- A meteorologist
- An animal rescuer

#### Unit 4

#### AREA OF STUDY 2 – Critical analysis

*Kinglake-350* is a 'List A text' which means it can be used to fulfil outcomes but will not be assessed in the final examination. Therefore it is unlikely this text would be chosen for this outcome given that this is the final assessment task before the final examination.

## CLASSROOM AND HOMEWORK ACTIVITIES

### Activity A: Jigsaw activity

Divide the class into groups to complete the following tasks:

Using *Kinglake-350*:

1. Define these terms: bushfire; reportage; megafire; anthromorphism; displacement; arsonist; ecology; CFA; DSE; SES; D24; Vicfire; sclerophyll; leachates; Carboniferous Age; Permian Age; Holocene Period. Explain these terms to the class.
2. Find a map of Victoria and locate: Kinglake; West Kinglake; Strathewen; St Andrews; Flowerdale; Kilmore East; Pheasant Creek; Wandong; Toolangi and Mt Sugarloaf. Describe to the class where these places are in relation to Melbourne. Find some images of these locations before and after Black Saturday.
3. Undertake some research to find out:
  - How many people were killed or injured by the fires? What estimates have been offered of the financial cost of the fires?
  - What is the psychological cost of fire? (p. 161)
  - How many animals were killed or injured by the fires?
  - How many homes or businesses were lost?
  - How many people were displaced and what were the long term effects of this displacement?
  - How many fires were thought to have been deliberately lit or due to negligence?
  - Who are the CFA? How are they different to the SES and DSE?
  - What problems did the CFA/SES/Victorian Police encounter in trying to disseminate information/co-ordinate a response?
  - What is the history of fire in Australia? ('Legends of Destruction': pp. 160-161.)
4. Create a table using cardboard and textas or mind-map software such as Inspiration or Prezi (free cloud based software: [www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)) to provide a visual map of the main groups which appear in *Kinglake-350*. You might like to use some of these titles to group your characters: authority figures, locals, children, organisations, experts, heroes, villains, victims and partners.
5. Examine the chapter titles. Can you think of any alternative titles? Justify your choices.
6. List the names of ten chapter titles. What questions do these chapter titles prompt you to consider?
7. Consider the arrangement of the chapters and photographs. Is there meaning in Hyland's sequencing? What makes you say that? For example, consider the ordering of 'Silent Night' and 'Saving People'.

### Activity B: In pairs

Watch 'Meet the Author', an interview with Adrian Hyland, which features on the *First Tuesday Bookclub* website. This interview can be accessed on:  
<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/firsttuesday/s3310363.htm>

As you watch the interview, complete the table below, taking note of:

- 6 values Hyland seems to endorse or condemn
- 5 views espoused by Hyland
- 3 facts which are provided about Hyland's personal context
- 4 images you are offered help you imagine the social context of *Kinglake-350*?

	Description	Evidence
View		
Value		
Author's context		
Social context		

### Activity C: Individual activity:

1. Listen to Adrian Hyland's interview with the CFA at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/kids-schools/secondary-school-resources/> or his interview with Richard Aedy, on Radio National's, Life Matters.

2. As you listen, check off any of the following values he seems to endorse or condemn:

- Understanding our environment
- Knowledge
- Complacency
- Being attuned to your environment

- Community
- Bravery
- Generosity of spirit
- Ignorance
- Sincerity
- Honesty
- Resilience
- Respect for the land
- Materialism
- Forward planning
- Learning from the past

3. When you have finished listening to the interview, justify three of your choices in a short paragraph.

#### Activity D: Jigsaw Activity: views , values and context

Depending on class numbers, allocate a number of rows to small groups and have the small group report back to the whole class.

<b>Key passage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Page number</li> <li>• Who said it?</li> <li>• Context in which it was said.</li> </ul>	<b>Embedded value</b>	<b>Overt or implied view</b>	<b>What leads you to draw this conclusion?</b>
'This awful catastrophe is not the end but the beginning' (epigraph -St Augustine -Latin philosopher and theologian, 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> centuries.			
'The Bureau of Meteorology might have issued hundreds of warnings during the days leading up to February 7, but how much attention the residents of Victoria paid to those warnings is open to question.' (p. 13) -Hyland -After the fires, as a local resident and critical observer.			
'Way to go.'(p.14)			

(p. 250)			
	Human decency		
'The lesson of how to live with our environment has yet to sink into our bones.' (p. 245)			
		Flawed humanity	
	resilience		
	heroism		
	community	Nature has a remarkable ability to regenerate itself.	
	rebirth		
(p.66)	Common sense and human life		
(p. 59)	survival	The will to live is strong	
		The idea that as a people we can overcome adversity and learn from our mistakes, is not a universal truth.	
'One of the dispiriting features of these inquiries is the assiduity with which those recommendations are ignored once the trauma has passed.'(p.243)			
(p. 247-8)		More should be done to monitor and control the behaviour of known or suspected arsonists.	
		The fires have led to increased social problems.	

		Wood was a man who had an unshakeable belief that he could control his own destiny.	
'When trouble comes, you help each other out.' (p.15)			
	Close connection to family		
	empathy		
For some, sitting in a darkened room with the TV on and the air-con blasting, the first they know of the approaching conflagration is when the roof blows off or the veranda bursts into flame.'(p.139)		Many of us spend too much time watching television and not enough time being observant about our surroundings.	
'There are hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest in decline throughout Australia because of the inappropriate use of fire.' (p.150) -Neil Davidson, botanist -Studies have been examining why health of eucalypts is poor.			
'But Aboriginal burning...was an extraordinarily complex procedure.' (p. 153) -Hyland -Looking at Indigenous Australia's relationship with fire.			
(p. 242)			
'Balls of steel, those fellers. Balls of steel.' (p.203) -CFA Volunteer, Jim Macleod -After the fires			
'In the first place, the DSE had carried out targeted burns, in the years before Black Saturday.' (p. 248) -Hyland			

-Examining success of Castella			
'We can do amazing things when we see a need. There is a need now.' (p.249)  -Hyland  -Reflecting on heroic efforts of locals and need to use wisdom gained to affect change.			
'So how does contemporary Australia respond to the dilemma of fire? With lawyers. (p. 242)			

### Activity E: Characterisation

Complete the following table for each of the following characters:

- Roger Wood
- Cameron Caine
- Trish Hendrie
- Tony Fitzgerald
- Jo Wood
- Phil Petschel
- Carole Wilson

Name of character (Does his/her actual name seem significant?)	
Appearance	
Does Hyland's description influence the reader to endorse or condemn this character?	
Personality	
Values (as revealed by behaviour/actions, responses or dialogue)	
Views/attitudes (as revealed by behaviour/actions, responses or dialogue)	
Traits	

Interests	
Outlook i.e. worldview  (How would the individual describe the world they live in? What words would you use to describe his/her worldview/outlook on life?)	
Personal history – What events from the past seem to have influenced the development of this person?	
Who is this person in relationship with /connected to? What is the nature of this relationship?	
Are any of these close relationships?	
How would you describe the quality of the relationship this person has with other (specific) individuals?	
Which of these relationships change?	
Which key moments influence this change? (Turning points)	
Do any of his/her values change over the course of the text?	
Do any of his/her views change over the course of the narrative?	
Think about the fate of each character. Do you think the character is rewarded or punished in some way for the values he/she possesses? What meaning do you ascribe to this?	
Which values seem to be important to Hyland?	

- When you've completed your table, develop your notes into a short response that summarises the similarities and differences between each character. Include illustrative quotes.

**Activity F: This activity is designed to develop your knowledge of the text's narrative structure, plot and settings.**

Episode sequence organisers are particularly helpful for mapping Roger Wood's movement on Black Saturday. They are also terrific for controlling knowledge of 'who is who' in *Kinglake-350* and where they fit in in the overall scheme of things! Given that the text is interspersed with various sidebars of information, it's helpful to create a visual map of *Kinglake-350* in order to develop a clearer sense of why Hyland has arranged the text the way he has. You can find an example of an episode sequence organiser at this address:

<http://edweb.tusd.k12.az.us/Templates/nonlinguisticrepresentations.htm>

You can also create episode sequence organisers using mind-mapping software such as *Inspiration*. You could also use resources such as: [www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com); [www.glogster.com](http://www.glogster.com) (free cloud based software); *Word's Smart Art* or a big piece of cardboard and your favourite textas.

**Activity G: Setting**

**There are a variety of different settings in *Kinglake-350*:**

1. List three adjectives to describe each of the settings. How do the characters feel in this setting?
2. What might this setting symbolise about the individual?
3. Explain in a paragraph how Hyland uses one particular setting to help his reader understand a particular individual or idea or value.

**Activity H: Comparison matrix – settings**

1. Complete the following table.
2. Contrast two of the settings from *Kinglake-350*. Discuss how Hyland uses these different settings as devices for exploring particular ideas and highlighting important values.

3. Summarise the influence different settings have on a character from Kinglake-350.

				Similarities and differences
<b>Description of setting</b>				
<b>How do characters feel in the setting?</b>				
<b>What might this setting symbolise about the character, an idea or value?</b>				

### Activity I: Oral Activity

Using Activity H, present your findings to the class.

### Activity J: Passages for close analysis:

Hyland uses a range of literary techniques in his writing to transport the reader into the nightmarish world of the Black Saturday Fires and help convey his key ideas and themes. This affords students a terrific opportunity to study how a writer uses a variety of literary devices for different effects and purposes. Students can then use some of the same techniques in their own writing.

1. An author's **language choices** can have a real impact on the reader.
  - a) Underline or highlight the nouns Hyland chooses to describe the fire on the following pages: 65, 66, 68, 128, 160
  - b) Use a thesaurus to compile a list of 3 synonyms for the words you've underlined.
  - c) Is the image of the fire created by these nouns positive or negative? What makes you say that?
  - d) Describe the impact you imagine Hyland wanted these nouns to have on his audience? Identify Hyland's intended audiences.
  - e) Think about how Hyland's use of language affects you. What feelings are evoked in you as a reader of this text?
  - f) Complete this sentence: "Hyland chooses nouns such as .... to position his reader to..."
  
2. Hyland also uses **personification** to create the sense that the fire is a living thing. This is also known as anthropomorphism. Read the following pages: 15, 68, 92, 105, and 250. Underline or highlight the human qualities Hyland gives the fire. (Look for the verbs/abstract nouns.)
  - a) What impact is this personification designed to have on the reader?
  - b) How would you describe the tone adopted by the narrative voice in these excerpts?
  - c) Complete this sentence: 'Hyland's use of personification enables...'
  
3. Hyland also uses language features such as: **adjectives and verbs, alliteration, similes, metaphor, analogy and specific details** to create powerful imagery in the reader's mind.

(Students might like to consider which medium has the greater impact on the reader: Hyland's writing or the maps and photographs which are included in *Kinglake-350*?)

- a) Read the following pages, identifying as many language features as you can: 5-7, 19, 43, 46, 68-69, 94, 122, 139-140, 193, 195, 212, 222, and 225.
  - b) How does Hyland use imagery to help convey particular ideas about the fire?
  - c) Use your answers above to develop some perspectives on the text. You might like to use some of these sentence starters: Hyland demonstrates...or *Kinglake-350* aims to...
4. Hyland also uses a great deal of specific terminology in his writing; he uses scientific, physiological and psychological terms, hard evidence and firefighter-speak to help the reader come to terms with the enormity of the fire and its impact on humans.
- a) Underline or highlight examples of these which appear on pages: 63, 69, 70, 87, 93-4, 109, 111-113, 122, 139
  - b) What do you think Hyland's motivation was in using these particular terms?
5. Another feature of Hyland's writing is his use of direct and indirect speech, often as an amplifier. Hyland also includes a great deal of colloquial language to imbue his text with a gritty realism and, at times, humour.
- a) Read the following pages: 19, 23, 35, 47, 101, 189, 203, 209, and 220. What's the intended effect of the swearing/cursing in these particular instances?
6. Hyland also varies the length and construction of his sentences a great deal. A particular feature is his use of tri-colon and anaphora. Read pgs. 13, 68 and 138. What do you notice about the construction of Hyland's sentences? What patterns do you notice in his paragraphs?
7. Page 48 contains an example of onomatopoeia. Can you find it? What other examples of onomatopoeia can you find in the text? List them.
8. Hyland also uses the absence of sound very effectively. Read p. 195. How does Hyland's use of silence affect you?

**Other features worth examining:**

- Idiomatic expressions – p. 12
- Assonance – p. 128 & 140
- Use of italics – pp. 12-13

- Inclusion of voices outside of the text – pp. 152-155

## USEFUL SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

### Author interviews

These are excellent for helping to establish the views of the author and will appeal to auditory and visual learners.

### Podcasts – all available to listen to or download

- **Adrian Hyland speaks with Jon Faine on 774 ABC's, *Conversation Hour*, 29/8/2011:**  
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2011/08/29/3304856.htm>
- **Adrian Hyland and Roger Wood speak with Richard Aedy on Radio National's, *Life Matters*:**  
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/roger-wood-kinglake-cop/3698626>  
(Radio National, Life Matters)

### Print

- Hyland, A., (2011) *Kinglake-350*. Melbourne: Text Publishing.
- **Adrian Hyland speaks with Meg Mundell about Kinglake-350:**  
<http://www.readings.com.au/news/adrian-hyland-talks-to-meg-mundell-about-kinglake-350>

### Documentary

This documentary by filmmaker, Celeste Geer, documents the community of Strathewen's attempts to heal and regenerate itself after the Black Saturday bushfires. Geer's documentary offers a very real glimpse into the myriad of ways people respond to trauma and would provide students with an excellent understanding of the context of the fires and crystallise the values of community, generosity and resilience endorsed by *Kinglake-350*.

Documentary is available by accessing the film's website.

This documentary is supported by two excellent resources:

- The film's website:

*And Then the Wind Changed*: <http://www.thenthewindchanged.com>



- The Australian Teachers of Media's *and Then the Wind Changed* Study Guide by Katy Marriner. This is available from: <http://www.metromagazine.com.au> as a free download.

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