

# Lesson Plan: When Disaster Strikes

By Rachel Roberson

## Featured resources

**KQED's The Lowdown:** When Disaster Strikes: Sonoma Students and Teachers Talk Disaster Preparedness



## Opening quick write prompt:

Lesley McClurg/KQED

If you had five minutes to evacuate your home and weren't sure if you'd be back, how would you feel in that moment? What would you take with you? Explain why you would choose these items.

Alternate prompt for students who have experienced an evacuation: What advice would you give to a fellow student who has never experienced this? What should they do to stay calm? What are the best things to bring?

*A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.*

## Objective

- Students will analyze how to prepare for a natural disaster.
- Students will reflect on the best ways to respond to others affected by disasters and write or create their own responses.

## Essential Question and Lesson Context

**What can I do to prepare for a disaster in my community? How can I help others affected by disasters?**

Wildfires burned whole neighborhoods in Northern California in a matter of minutes. In Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, hurricane winds and flood waters wreak havoc on buildings, power lines and roads. No community is entirely safe from natural disasters, but there are actions everyone can take to be better prepared. Through the stories of teachers and students affected by the devastating wildfires in Sonoma County, this lesson focuses on ways to prepare for a disaster and how to respond and help rebuild once the immediate danger has passed.

## Key vocabulary

*Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the reading, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).*

Word	Simple definition
<b>Displacement</b> (n.)	Removal from a specific area <i>The fire caused long-term <b>displacement</b> of many residents of destroyed areas.</i>
<b>Evacuate</b> (v.)	To leave a dangerous place <i>Residents had to <b>evacuate</b> their homes as the wildfire came closer.</i>
<b>Incur</b> (v.)	To have or experience something unwanted <i>Some communities <b>incur</b> major problems with damaged roads and power lines after a disaster.</i>
<b>Memorabilia</b> (n.)	Objects that relate to memories or a particular person, souvenirs of events <i>In case of a disaster, many people take important <b>memorabilia</b> with them because those items can't be replaced.</i>
<b>Traumatic</b> (adj.)	Feeling upset or depressed because of a difficult experience <i>Going through a disaster is a <b>traumatic</b> experience for everyone involved.</i>

## Investigate

- Discuss the quick-write prompt. Be sure to touch on both parts of the question: how students would feel during an evacuation and what they would take. If your students have experienced an evacuation or a similar scenario, discuss the advice they'd give others. (**Note:** *If the disaster is recent, students may still be processing the experience. Have students share in small groups or with a partner before calling on volunteers for an all-class discussion.* )
- Explain that students will be reading about ways to prepare for a disaster and how to be helpful to communities recovering from disasters. If needed: review with students the types of disasters that might happen in your community or discuss recent examples of disasters they may have heard about (ex: wildfires in Sonoma, Napa and Mendocino counties and in Montana, hurricanes in Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico, Superstorm Sandy, tornadoes in Oklahoma, etc.)
- Ask: What are some things your family is already doing to prepare for a disaster or what have you heard is important when preparing for a disaster?
- Create a T-chart on the board or online document with the column headings: Preparing for a disaster and How to help/recover after a disaster. Share the T-chart document with students or have them copy the T-chart into their notes.
- As a class or in small groups, students read [The Lowdown post](#). As they read, they should add to the T-chart with suggestions for how to prepare AND how to help after a disaster. (**Note:** *Let*

*students know not to copy the entire Disaster Emergency Bag checklist onto the list, but instead include “prepare emergency bag.”)*

- **Check for understanding after reading:** Call on students to add to the T-chart to capture the information in [The Lowdown post](#). Add to the list until it reflects the information about preparing for a disaster and how to help and recover following a disaster.
- **Transition to the Make and Share:** Explain that students will work individually or in small groups to create a resource or project that will do one of two things: 1) Educate their school, neighborhood or community about ways to prepare for a disaster or 2) Help or support recovery efforts in places that have experienced a disaster.

## Make and share

- Ask: What suggestions did students and teachers in [The Lowdown post](#) make about preparing for and recovering from the wildfires in their community? Highlight those ideas in the T-chart.
  - Examples from the post: Many students made suggestions about what to pack in a “go bag.” After the danger had passed, one teacher had students write thank-you notes to first responders.
- In groups or individually, students decide if they want to create a disaster preparedness resource or do a project to respond to a disaster that’s already happened. Encourage students to think about how they can use their skills with a quick all-class brainstorm to get started.
  - Brainstorm examples: If students speak other languages, they can create multilingual resource about what to put in an emergency bag. Since students often lack access to money, they can find a way to thank first responders or write to local businesses for donations.
- Decide as a class or let the students know their options for creating their resource or project.
  - Example: They could do a video public service announcement or an infographic or pamphlet with disaster preparedness information. They could design thank-you cards to send or create a photo collage to inspire donations.
  - [AdobeSpark](#), [piktochart](#), [Prezi](#), [Canva](#), and [Thinglink](#) are all free, online tools that can be used for infographics, posters, cards, pamphlets or presentations. [WeVideo](#) is a free, online video editing tool.
- Students present their resources and projects with the class OR complete a gallery walk that allows them to see each group or individual’s project. If relevant, ask students to brainstorm ideas about how to get the information to each project’s intended audience.

## Assessment/reflection

- Tell students they will have a chance to share their thoughts on this issue in the comments section of [The Lowdown](#). The first time they comment, students must sign in to [Disqus](#), a free discussion app embedded in The Lowdown.
  - To sign in to [Disqus](#), click the “Comments” button at the bottom of the post.
  - Click the blue “Get Started” button in the gray “Welcome to Disqus” box.
  - Students will need to enter a username. We recommend first name, last initial.
  - After signing in for the first time, students must verify their email address before commenting. A verification email will appear in their inbox once they sign in to Disqus.
  
- Students revisit the opening prompt and reflect on what they have learned. They can do this as an in-class assignment, though we encourage students to post their comments section of [The Lowdown](#):
  - What would you take if you had a very short time to evacuate in a disaster? How has your decision about what to take changed after learning about disaster preparedness and recovery?

*[Circle chats](#), small-group discussions and [think-pair-share](#) provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.*

## Extension/homework

**Share your resources:** Have students make a plan for sharing their disaster preparedness or disaster response project with their intended audience or the general community. Schedule a time for groups to report back about what they did. Consider partnering with organizations, such as the Red Cross, local fire or police departments, or community emergency response groups to get the word out. The [Community Preparedness Toolkit](#) from Ready.gov has links to a variety of organizations.

## Common Core standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1</a>	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7</a>	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1</a>	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.