

PAT BIGHAM

Class grouping:

Whole class, pairs, individual

Time:

60–90 minutes

Purpose:

The purpose of these three 30-minute activities is to introduce students to the context of Pat Bigham's work prior to visiting the *Her Place* exhibition, where they will be able to explore Pat's contributions to her community in more depth. In this three-part lesson, students will contemplate the notion of 'unconscious bias', explore the role of the Country Fire Authority (CFA), research the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires, and respond creatively to a quote from Pat Bigham about her work.

Important note: Activity 2 of this lesson plan requires students to investigate the Ash Wednesday fires, including finding an image to represent the event. Activity 3 requires students to write an imaginative response from the point of view of a CFA firefighter. Please ensure that all students in the class are comfortable with these tasks before proceeding.

Activities:

1. Unconscious bias: Firefighters
2. CFA brainstorm and Ash Wednesday research
3. Creative response: 'Dogs are good listeners.'

Preparation and materials:

- Books and pens/pencils
- Student access to the internet
- Teacher access to the internet (Optional: Surgeon's dilemma)
- 1 x prompt page for Activity 3 for each student (or a digital copy provided to your class)

Activity 2

Task in pairs

CFA and Ash Wednesday

Pat Bigham began her career with the CFA in the 1980s. The devastating Ash Wednesday fires of 1983 were an important turning point in her professional journey.

Step 1. Ask students if they have heard of the CFA. What do they know about the organisation? Write contributions up on the board.

Step 2. Read students the CFA Fact Sheet and then explain that this lesson is based on Pat Bigham, a CFA firefighter of over 35 years experience who was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal in 2008 for outstanding service to her community, brigade and the CFA.

Step 3. Ask each pair of students to answer the following questions about Ash Wednesday:

- How many fires broke out on Ash Wednesday?
- In which parts of Australia did the fires occur and where did they start?
- How did the fires that caused Ash Wednesday start?
- What was the toll of Ash Wednesday in terms of life, property and land?
- Find an image that you think sums up the devastation of Ash Wednesday. Write a short sentence explaining why you chose that particular image.

Step 4. Ask each group to provide the answer to one of the questions above. Then ask students to volunteer to share their chosen image with the class. If there are more groups than questions, you may want to ask the groups who didn't answer a question to share their images first. Discuss the images that the students have chosen.