

# Sevensteps



## Step 1: Plan for Success CBCA Award Winners on the Story Graph

One of the best ways to learn is to see examples, like these story graphs.

### How to use them:

- Explore favourite stories and how they work
- Look for moments of tension (the pebble, rock and boulder)
- Compare the many ways stories start and end
- Inspire students to create their own story graphs!

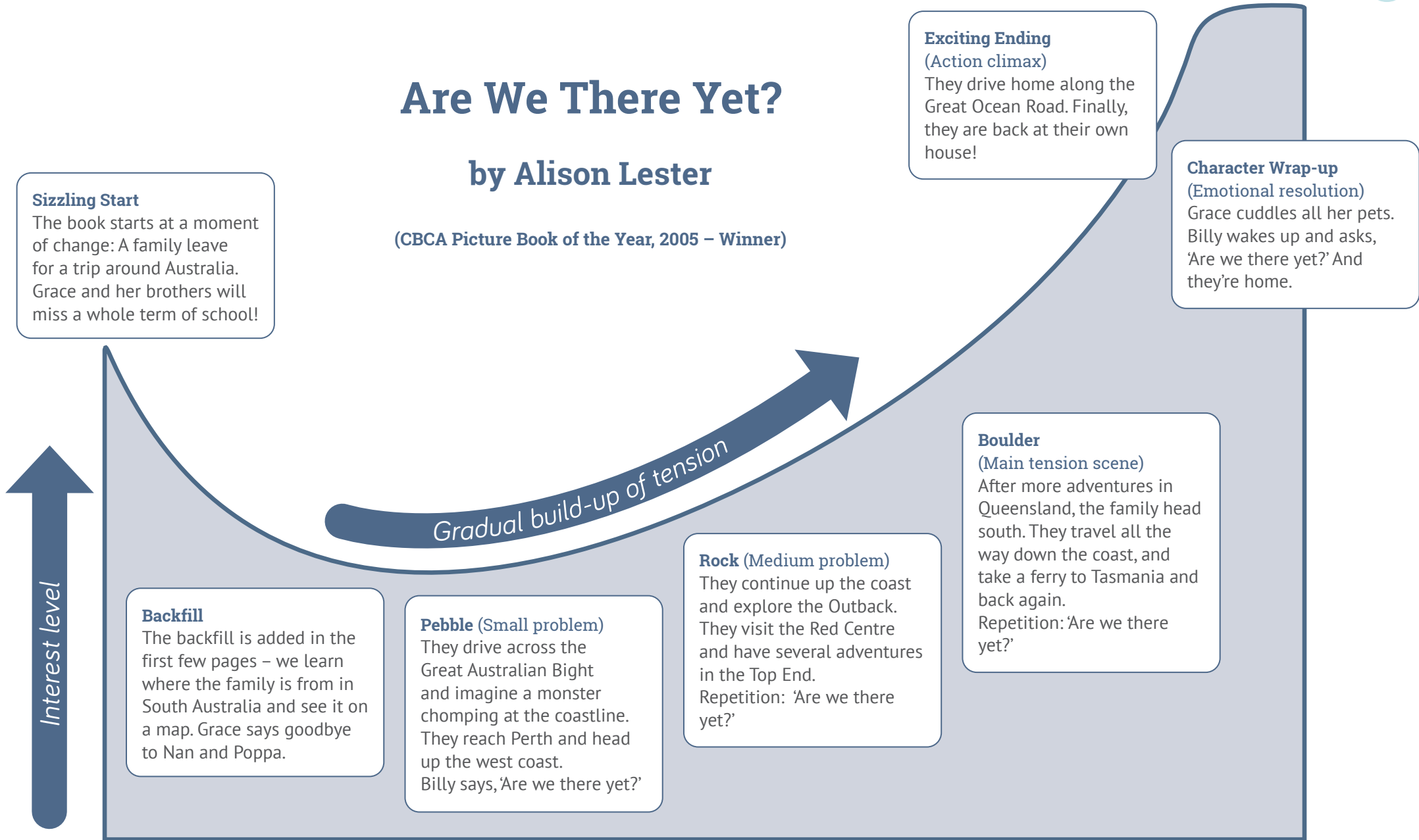


There are many more sets of story graphs available, covering books with themes from friendship and belonging to sustainability and First Nations histories and cultures, as well as secondary texts. Members can find them on *Teacher Hub*.

# Are We There Yet?

by Alison Lester

(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 2005 – Winner)



**Sizzling Start**

The book starts at a moment of change: A family leave for a trip around Australia. Grace and her brothers will miss a whole term of school!

**Backfill**

The backfill is added in the first few pages – we learn where the family is from in South Australia and see it on a map. Grace says goodbye to Nan and Poppa.

**Pebble (Small problem)**

They drive across the Great Australian Bight and imagine a monster chomping at the coastline. They reach Perth and head up the west coast. Billy says, 'Are we there yet?'

**Rock (Medium problem)**

They continue up the coast and explore the Outback. They visit the Red Centre and have several adventures in the Top End. Repetition: 'Are we there yet?'

**Boulder**

(Main tension scene)  
After more adventures in Queensland, the family head south. They travel all the way down the coast, and take a ferry to Tasmania and back again. Repetition: 'Are we there yet?'

**Exciting Ending**

(Action climax)  
They drive home along the Great Ocean Road. Finally, they are back at their own house!

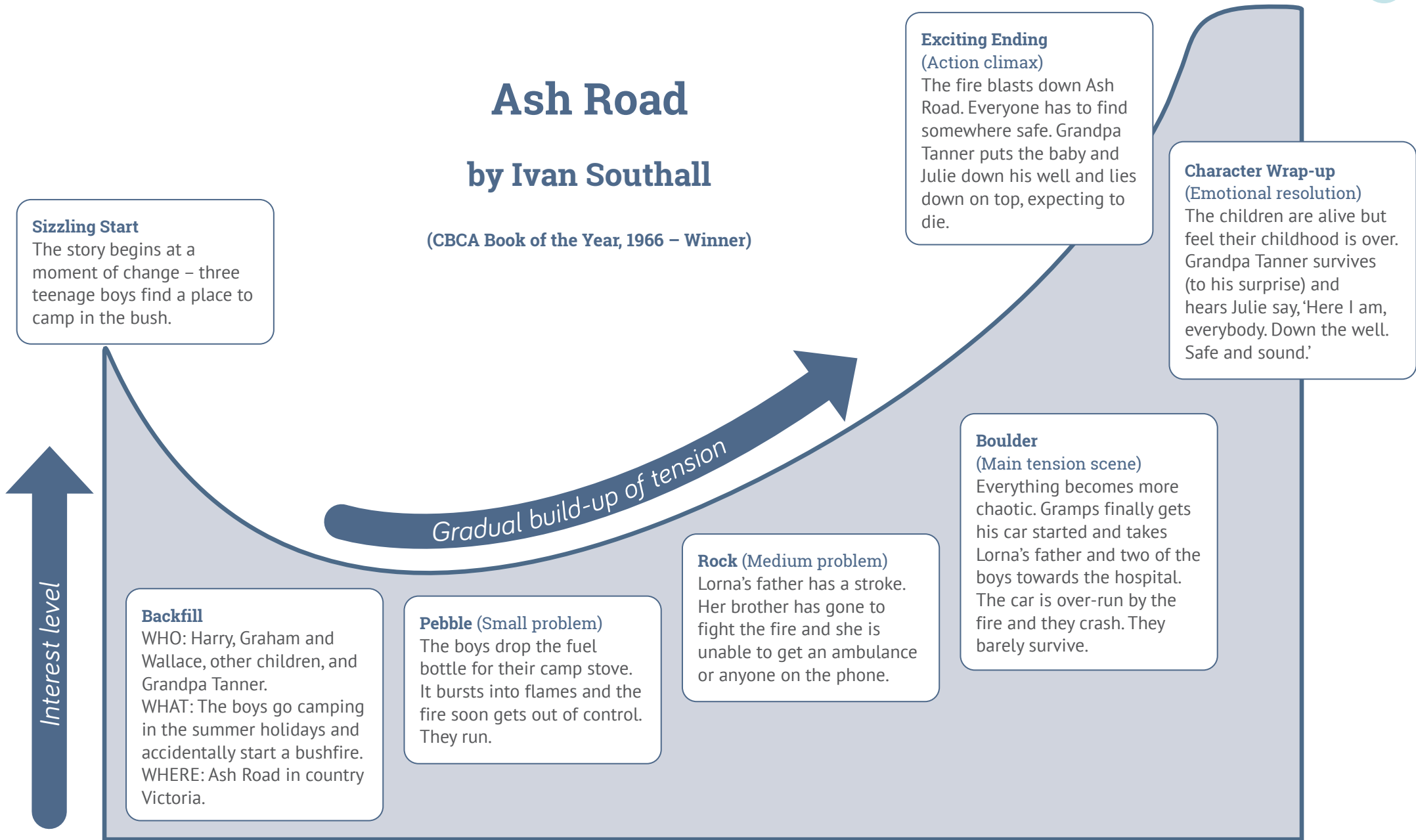
**Character Wrap-up**

(Emotional resolution)  
Grace cuddles all her pets. Billy wakes up and asks, 'Are we there yet?' And they're home.

# Ash Road

by Ivan Southall

(CBCA Book of the Year, 1966 – Winner)



**Sizzling Start**

The story begins at a moment of change – three teenage boys find a place to camp in the bush.

**Backfill**

WHO: Harry, Graham and Wallace, other children, and Grandpa Tanner.  
WHAT: The boys go camping in the summer holidays and accidentally start a bushfire.  
WHERE: Ash Road in country Victoria.

**Pebble (Small problem)**

The boys drop the fuel bottle for their camp stove. It bursts into flames and the fire soon gets out of control. They run.

**Rock (Medium problem)**

Lorna's father has a stroke. Her brother has gone to fight the fire and she is unable to get an ambulance or anyone on the phone.

**Boulder**

(Main tension scene)  
Everything becomes more chaotic. Gramps finally gets his car started and takes Lorna's father and two of the boys towards the hospital. The car is over-run by the fire and they crash. They barely survive.

**Exciting Ending**

(Action climax)  
The fire blasts down Ash Road. Everyone has to find somewhere safe. Grandpa Tanner puts the baby and Julie down his well and lies down on top, expecting to die.

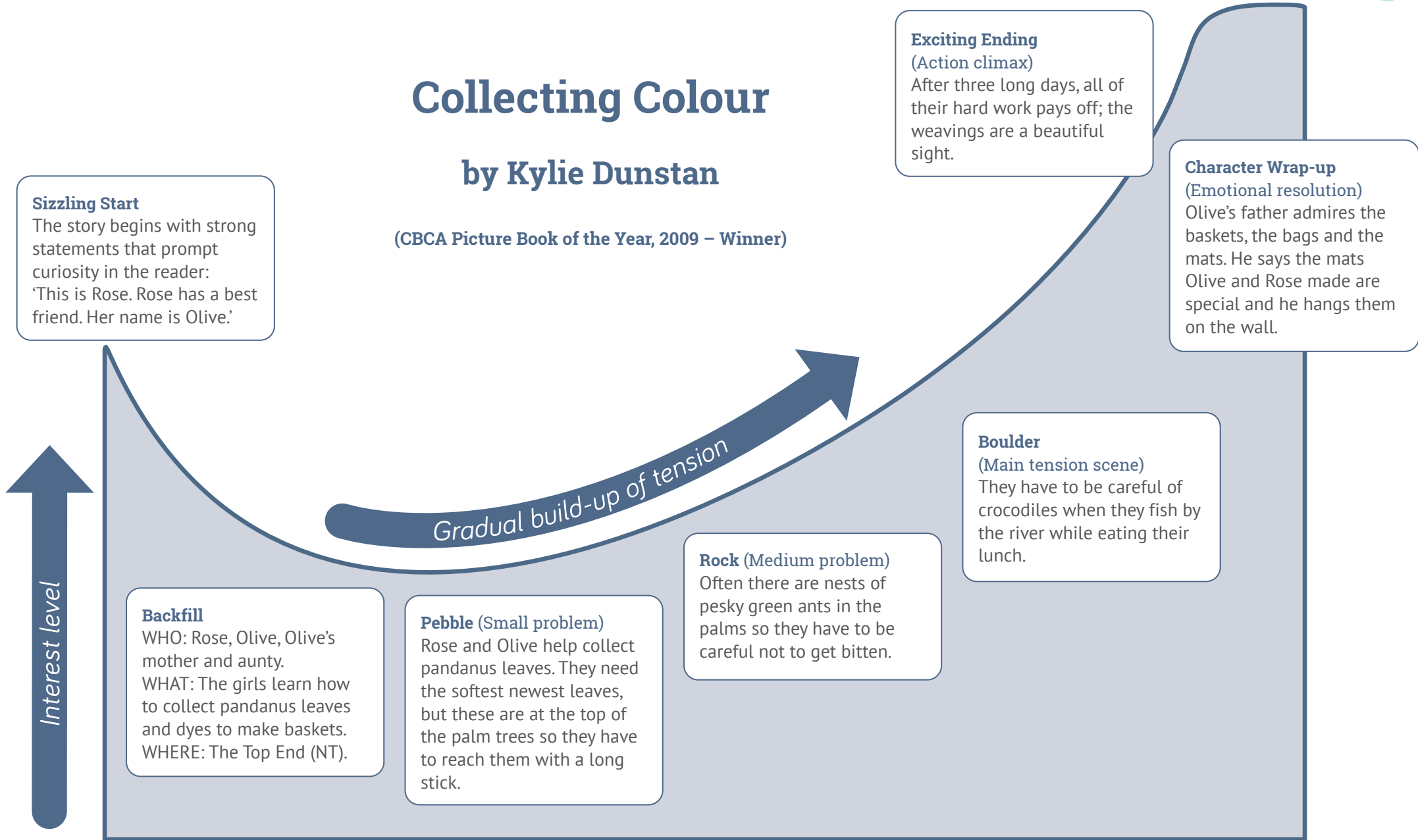
**Character Wrap-up**

(Emotional resolution)  
The children are alive but feel their childhood is over. Grandpa Tanner survives (to his surprise) and hears Julie say, 'Here I am, everybody. Down the well. Safe and sound.'

# Collecting Colour

by Kylie Dunstan

(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 2009 – Winner)



**Sizzling Start**

The story begins with strong statements that prompt curiosity in the reader: 'This is Rose. Rose has a best friend. Her name is Olive.'

**Backfill**

WHO: Rose, Olive, Olive's mother and aunty.  
WHAT: The girls learn how to collect pandanus leaves and dyes to make baskets.  
WHERE: The Top End (NT).

**Pebble (Small problem)**

Rose and Olive help collect pandanus leaves. They need the softest newest leaves, but these are at the top of the palm trees so they have to reach them with a long stick.

**Rock (Medium problem)**

Often there are nests of pesky green ants in the palms so they have to be careful not to get bitten.

**Boulder**

(Main tension scene)  
They have to be careful of crocodiles when they fish by the river while eating their lunch.

**Exciting Ending**

(Action climax)  
After three long days, all of their hard work pays off; the weavings are a beautiful sight.

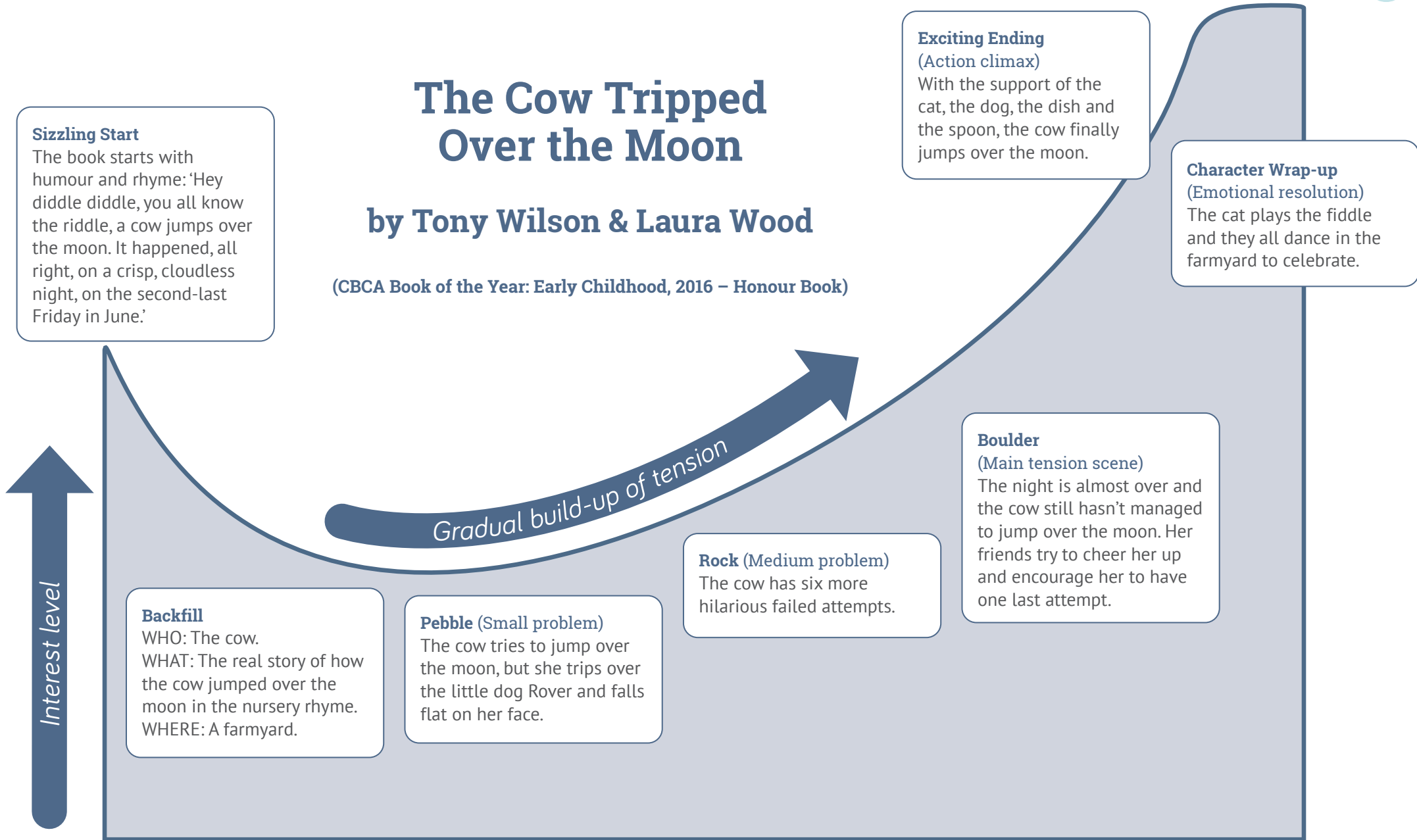
**Character Wrap-up**

(Emotional resolution)  
Olive's father admires the baskets, the bags and the mats. He says the mats Olive and Rose made are special and he hangs them on the wall.

# The Cow Tripped Over the Moon

by Tony Wilson & Laura Wood

(CBCA Book of the Year: Early Childhood, 2016 – Honour Book)



**Sizzling Start**

The book starts with humour and rhyme: 'Hey diddle diddle, you all know the riddle, a cow jumps over the moon. It happened, all right, on a crisp, cloudless night, on the second-last Friday in June.'

**Backfill**

WHO: The cow.  
WHAT: The real story of how the cow jumped over the moon in the nursery rhyme.  
WHERE: A farmyard.

**Pebble (Small problem)**

The cow tries to jump over the moon, but she trips over the little dog Rover and falls flat on her face.

**Rock (Medium problem)**

The cow has six more hilarious failed attempts.

**Boulder**

(Main tension scene)  
The night is almost over and the cow still hasn't managed to jump over the moon. Her friends try to cheer her up and encourage her to have one last attempt.

**Exciting Ending**

(Action climax)  
With the support of the cat, the dog, the dish and the spoon, the cow finally jumps over the moon.

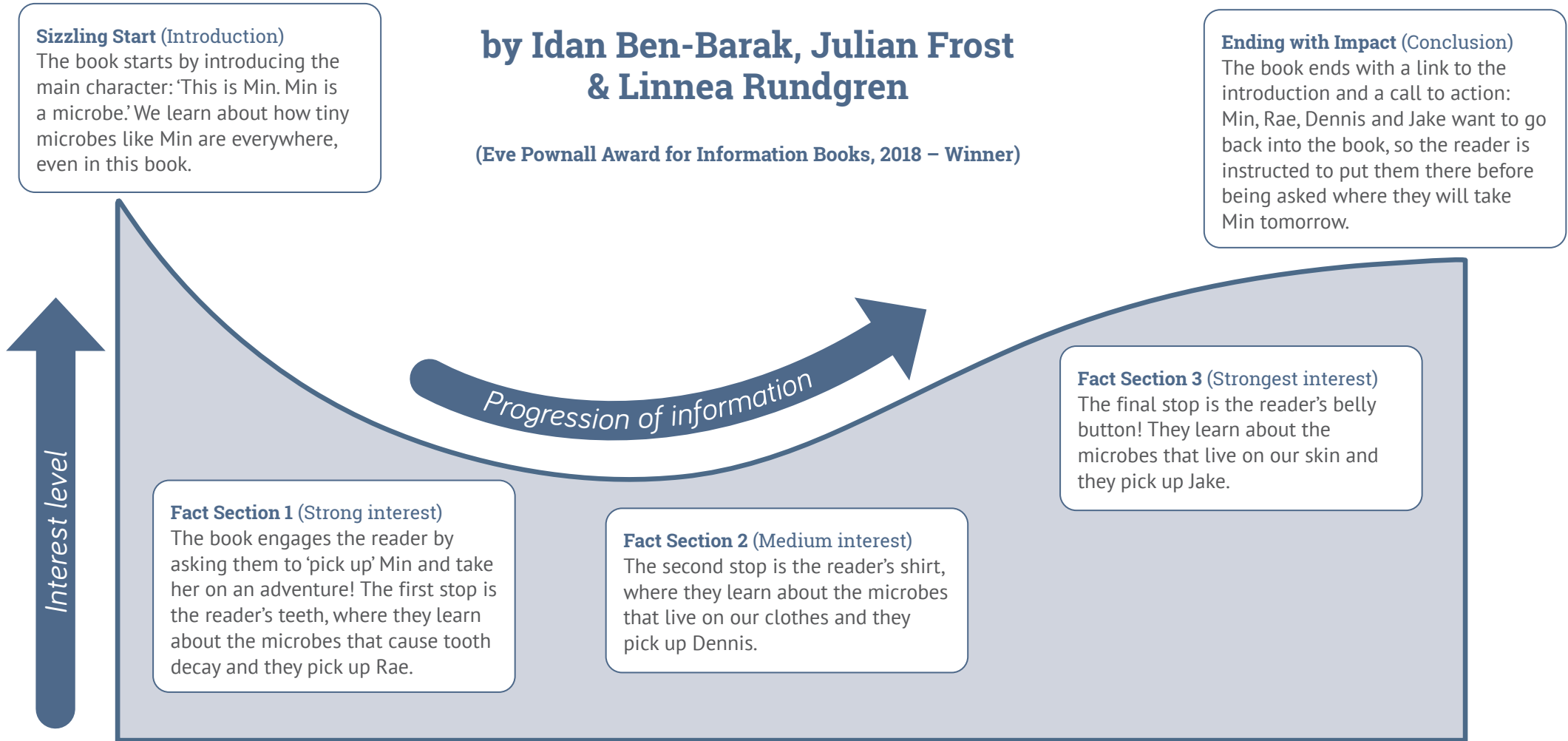
**Character Wrap-up**

(Emotional resolution)  
The cat plays the fiddle and they all dance in the farmyard to celebrate.

# Do Not Lick This Book: It's Full of Germs

by **Idan Ben-Barak, Julian Frost & Linnea Rundgren**

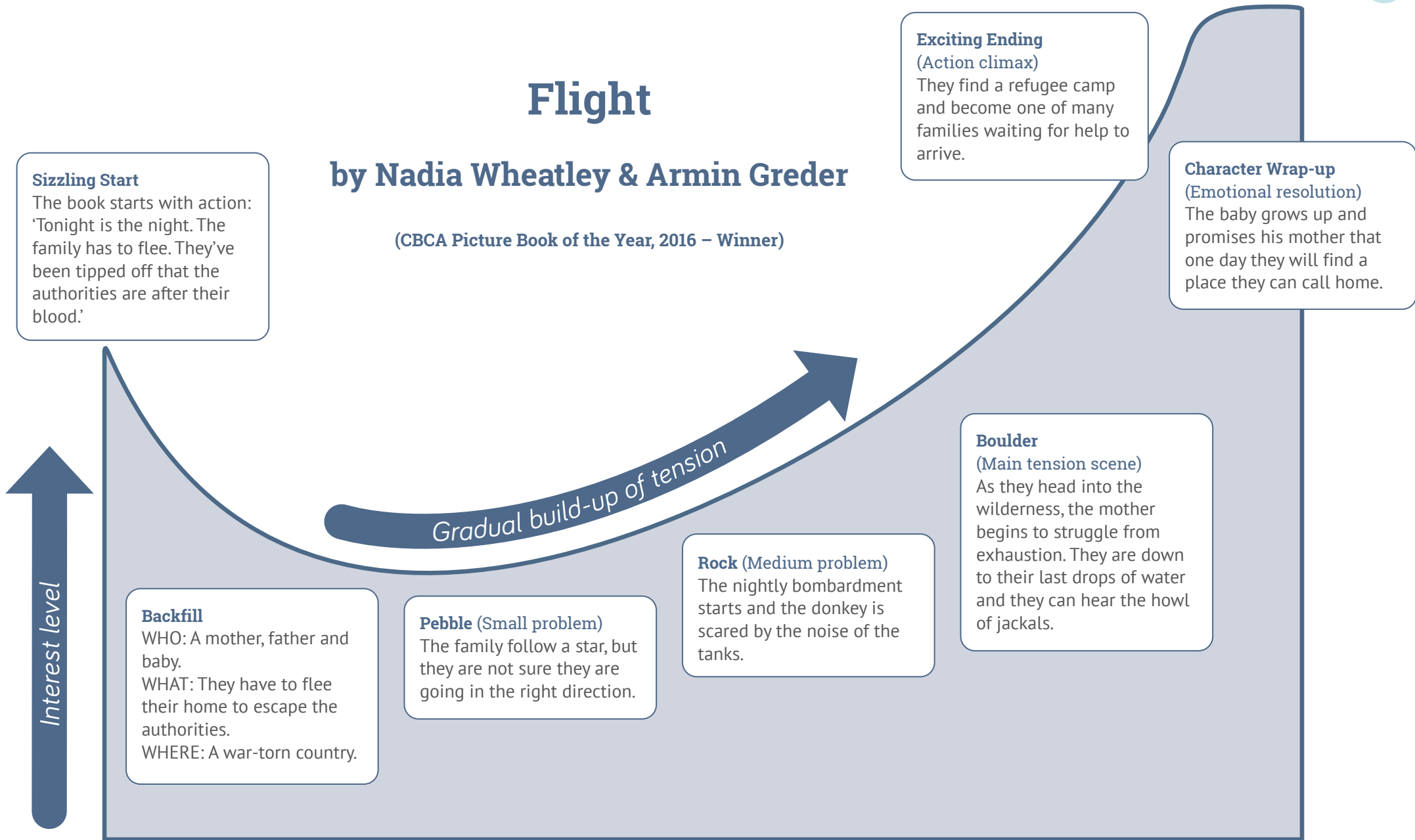
(Eve Pownall Award for Information Books, 2018 – Winner)



# Flight

by Nadia Wheatley & Armin Greder

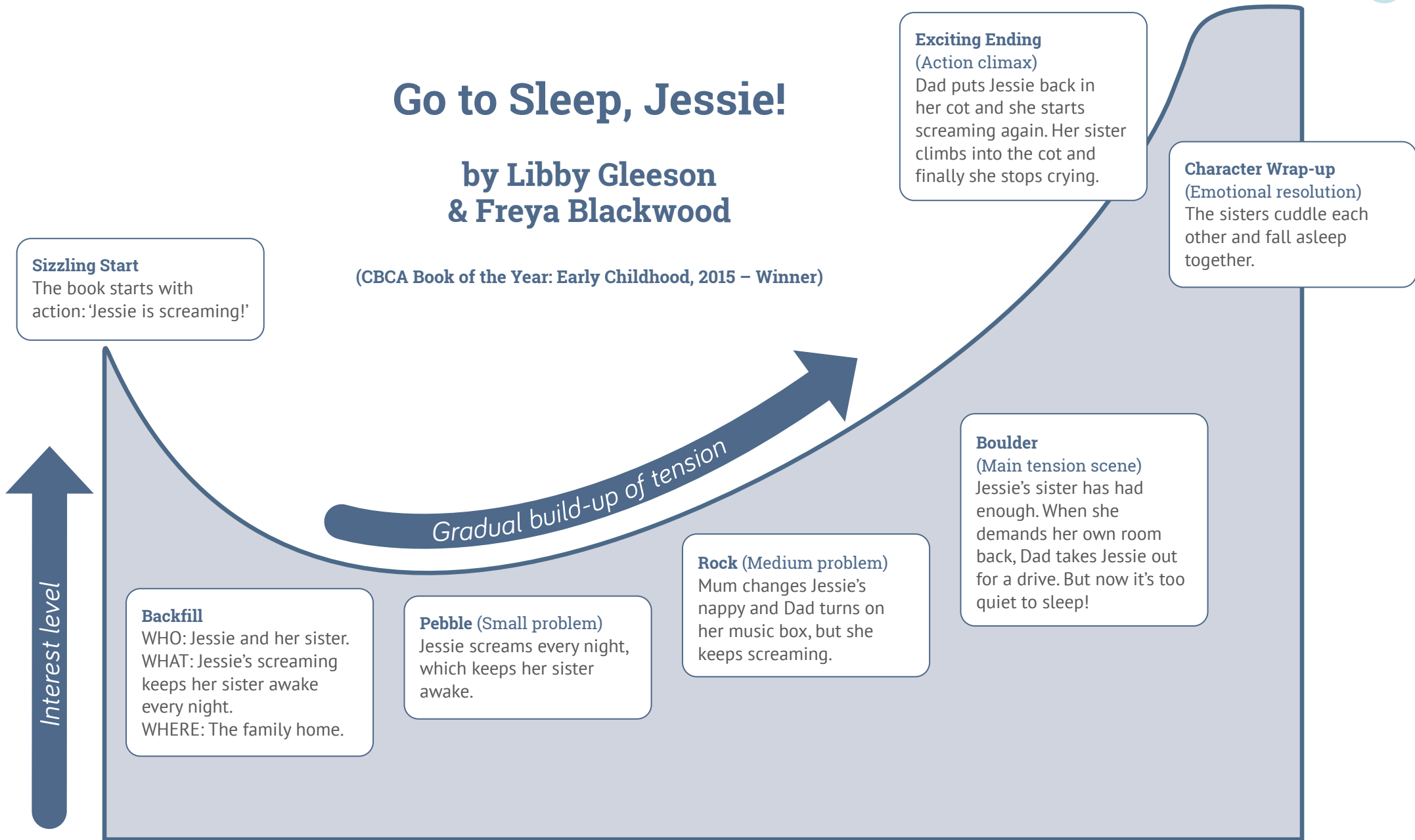
(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 2016 – Winner)



# Go to Sleep, Jessie!

by Libby Gleeson  
& Freya Blackwood

(CBCA Book of the Year: Early Childhood, 2015 – Winner)

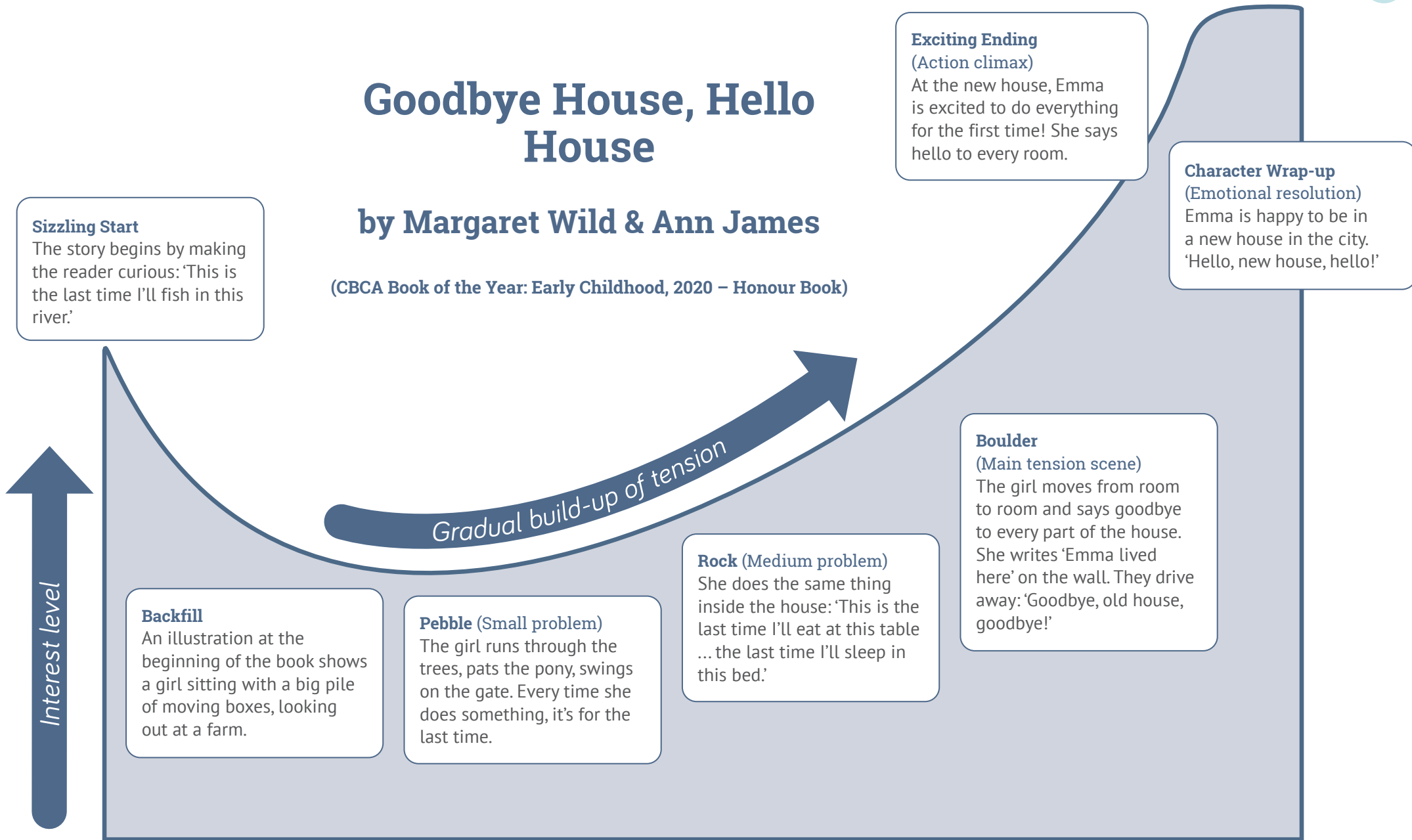




# Goodbye House, Hello House

by Margaret Wild & Ann James

(CBCA Book of the Year: Early Childhood, 2020 – Honour Book)



**Sizzling Start**  
The story begins by making the reader curious: 'This is the last time I'll fish in this river.'

**Backfill**  
An illustration at the beginning of the book shows a girl sitting with a big pile of moving boxes, looking out at a farm.

**Pebble (Small problem)**  
The girl runs through the trees, pats the pony, swings on the gate. Every time she does something, it's for the last time.

**Rock (Medium problem)**  
She does the same thing inside the house: 'This is the last time I'll eat at this table ... the last time I'll sleep in this bed.'

**Boulder**  
(Main tension scene)  
The girl moves from room to room and says goodbye to every part of the house. She writes 'Emma lived here' on the wall. They drive away: 'Goodbye, old house, goodbye!'

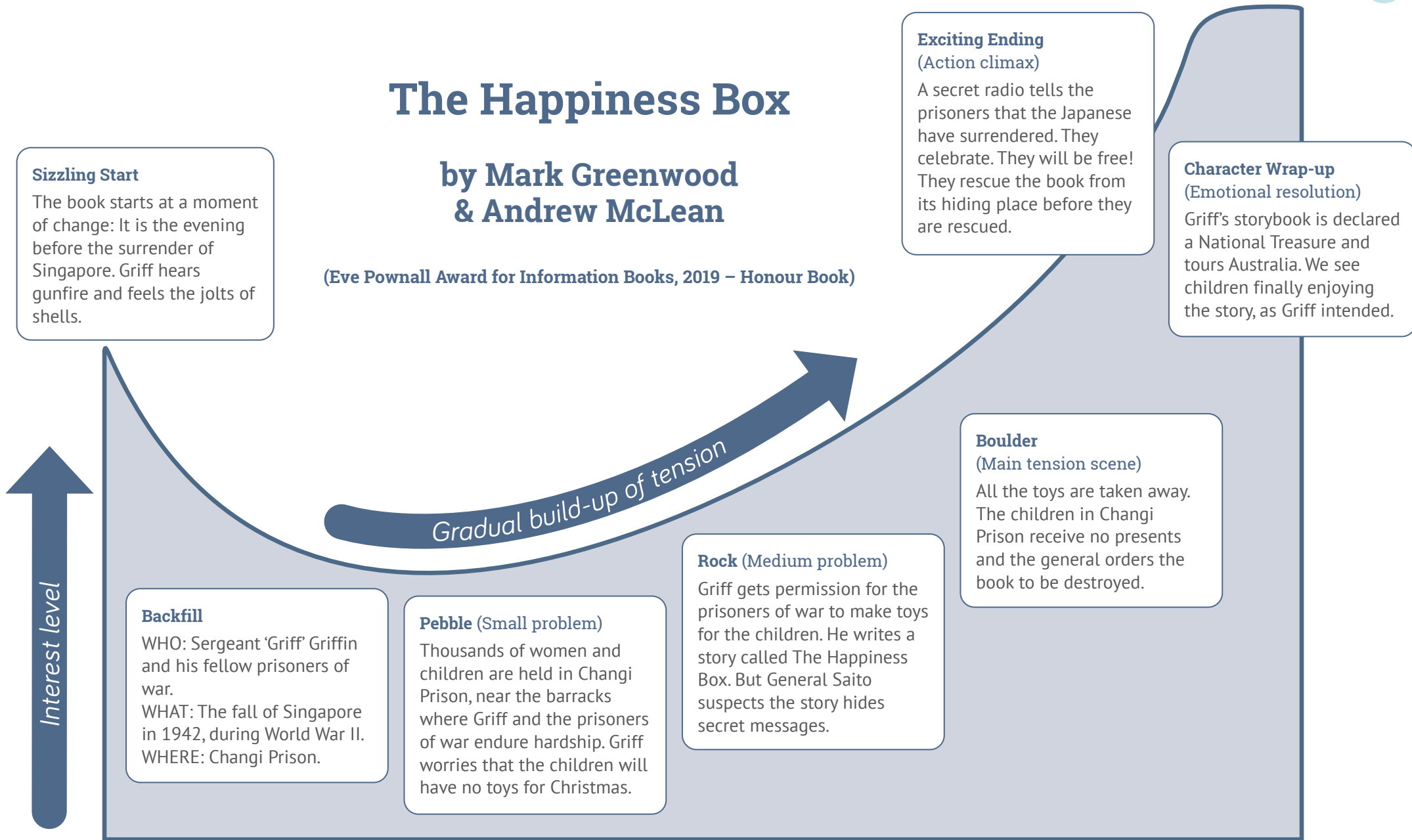
**Exciting Ending**  
(Action climax)  
At the new house, Emma is excited to do everything for the first time! She says hello to every room.

**Character Wrap-up**  
(Emotional resolution)  
Emma is happy to be in a new house in the city. 'Hello, new house, hello!'

# The Happiness Box

by Mark Greenwood  
& Andrew McLean

(Eve Pownall Award for Information Books, 2019 – Honour Book)



**Sizzling Start**

The book starts at a moment of change: It is the evening before the surrender of Singapore. Griff hears gunfire and feels the jolts of shells.

**Backfill**

WHO: Sergeant 'Griff' Griffin and his fellow prisoners of war.  
WHAT: The fall of Singapore in 1942, during World War II.  
WHERE: Changi Prison.

**Pebble (Small problem)**

Thousands of women and children are held in Changi Prison, near the barracks where Griff and the prisoners of war endure hardship. Griff worries that the children will have no toys for Christmas.

**Rock (Medium problem)**

Griff gets permission for the prisoners of war to make toys for the children. He writes a story called The Happiness Box. But General Saito suspects the story hides secret messages.

**Exciting Ending**

(Action climax)  
A secret radio tells the prisoners that the Japanese have surrendered. They celebrate. They will be free! They rescue the book from its hiding place before they are rescued.

**Character Wrap-up**

(Emotional resolution)  
Griff's storybook is declared a National Treasure and tours Australia. We see children finally enjoying the story, as Griff intended.

**Boulder**

(Main tension scene)  
All the toys are taken away. The children in Changi Prison receive no presents and the general orders the book to be destroyed.

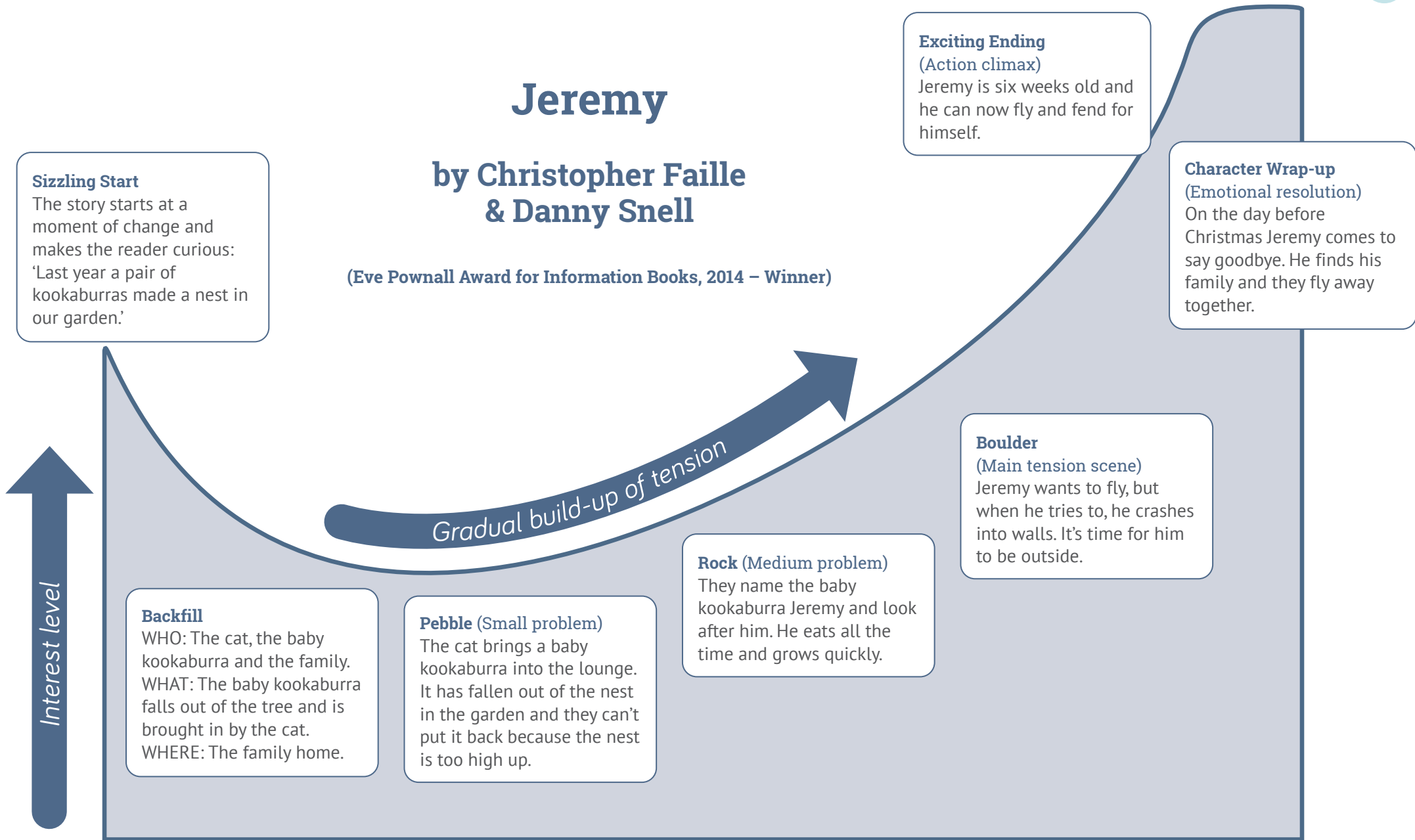
Interest level

Gradual build-up of tension

# Jeremy

by Christopher Faille  
& Danny Snell

(Eve Pownall Award for Information Books, 2014 – Winner)



# Koala

by Claire Saxby & Julie Vivas

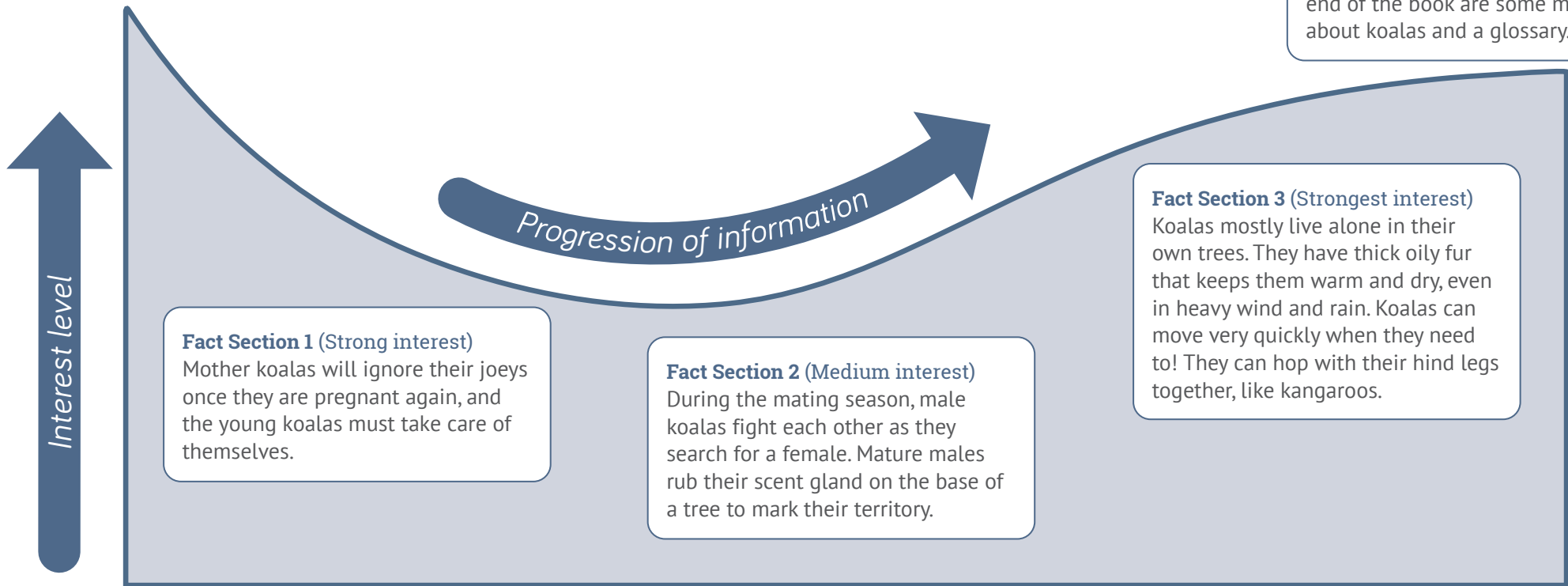
(Eve Pownall Award for Information Books, 2018 – Honour Book)

**Sizzling Start (Introduction)**

The book begins with action: 'In a high tree fork, a grey ball unfurls.' The writer paints a word picture of the young koala in his tree. Informative text on the same page tells us what koalas eat.

**Ending with Impact (Conclusion)**

The koala has found a new home – the ending links back to the introduction by showing the koala happy in a tree once more. At the end of the book are some more facts about koalas and a glossary.



**Fact Section 1 (Strong interest)**

Mother koalas will ignore their joeys once they are pregnant again, and the young koalas must take care of themselves.

**Fact Section 2 (Medium interest)**

During the mating season, male koalas fight each other as they search for a female. Mature males rub their scent gland on the base of a tree to mark their territory.

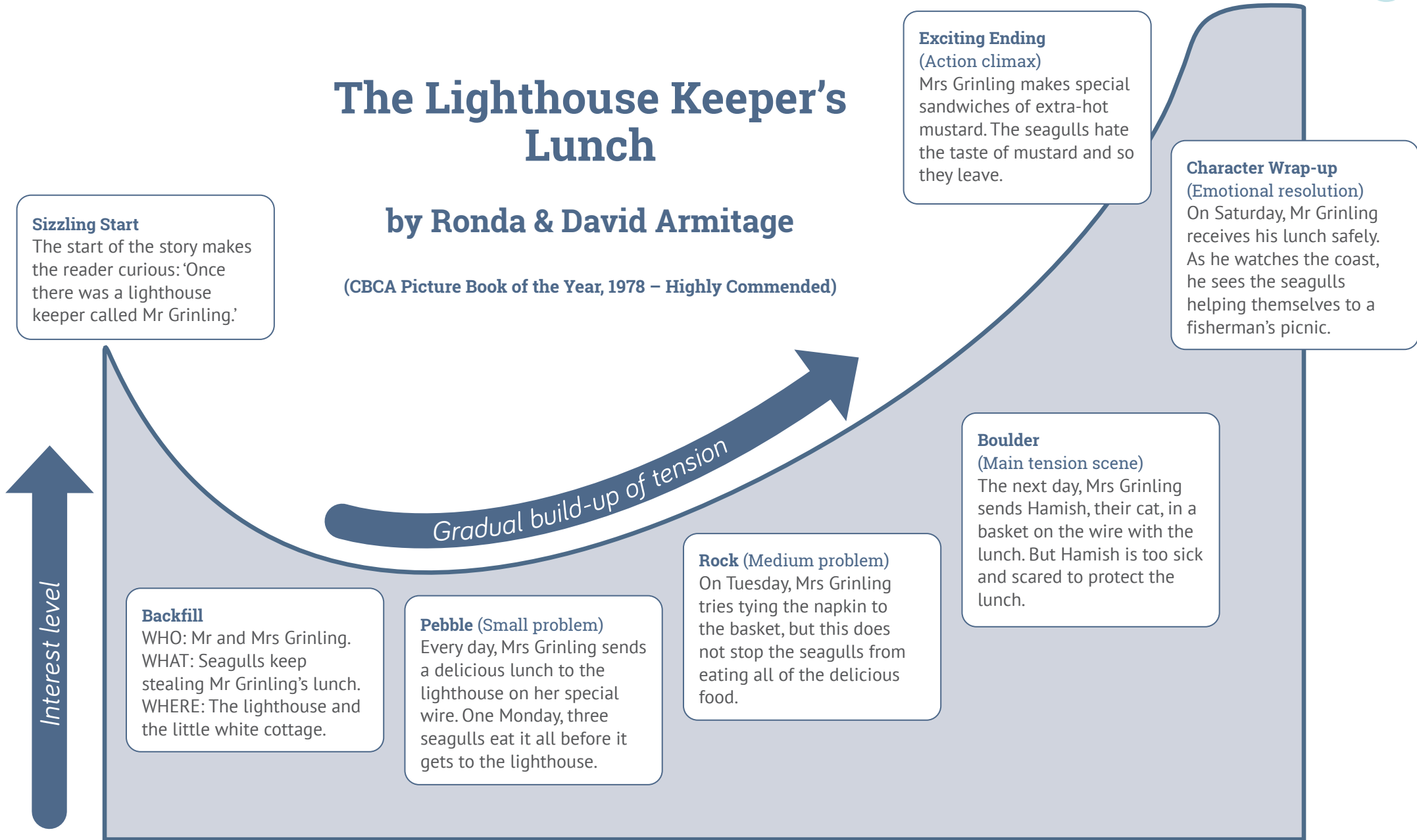
**Fact Section 3 (Strongest interest)**

Koalas mostly live alone in their own trees. They have thick oily fur that keeps them warm and dry, even in heavy wind and rain. Koalas can move very quickly when they need to! They can hop with their hind legs together, like kangaroos.

# The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch

by Ronda & David Armitage

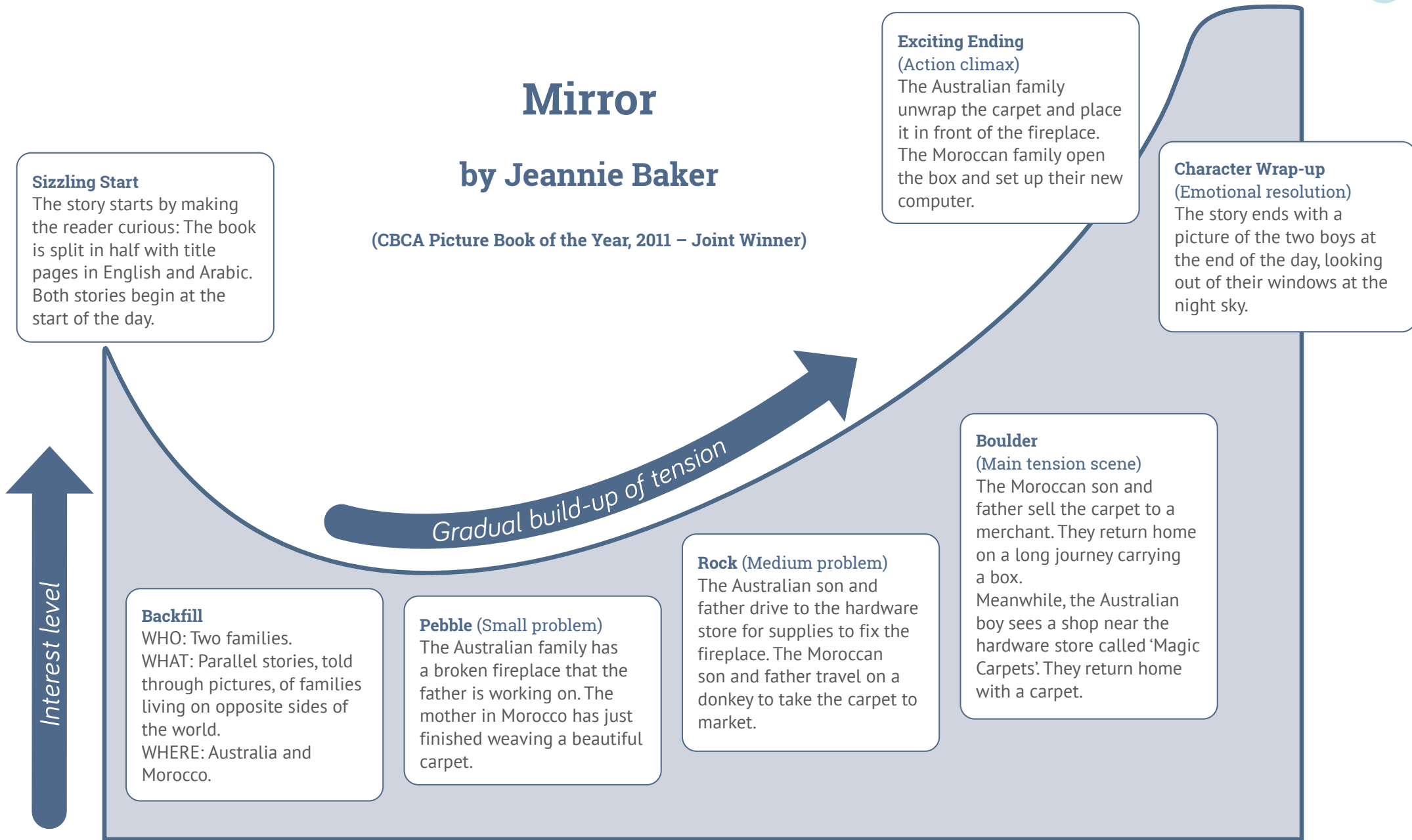
(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 1978 – Highly Commended)



# Mirror

by Jeannie Baker

(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 2011 – Joint Winner)



**Sizzling Start**  
The story starts by making the reader curious: The book is split in half with title pages in English and Arabic. Both stories begin at the start of the day.

**Backfill**  
WHO: Two families.  
WHAT: Parallel stories, told through pictures, of families living on opposite sides of the world.  
WHERE: Australia and Morocco.

**Pebble (Small problem)**  
The Australian family has a broken fireplace that the father is working on. The mother in Morocco has just finished weaving a beautiful carpet.

**Rock (Medium problem)**  
The Australian son and father drive to the hardware store for supplies to fix the fireplace. The Moroccan son and father travel on a donkey to take the carpet to market.

**Boulder (Main tension scene)**  
The Moroccan son and father sell the carpet to a merchant. They return home on a long journey carrying a box. Meanwhile, the Australian boy sees a shop near the hardware store called 'Magic Carpets'. They return home with a carpet.

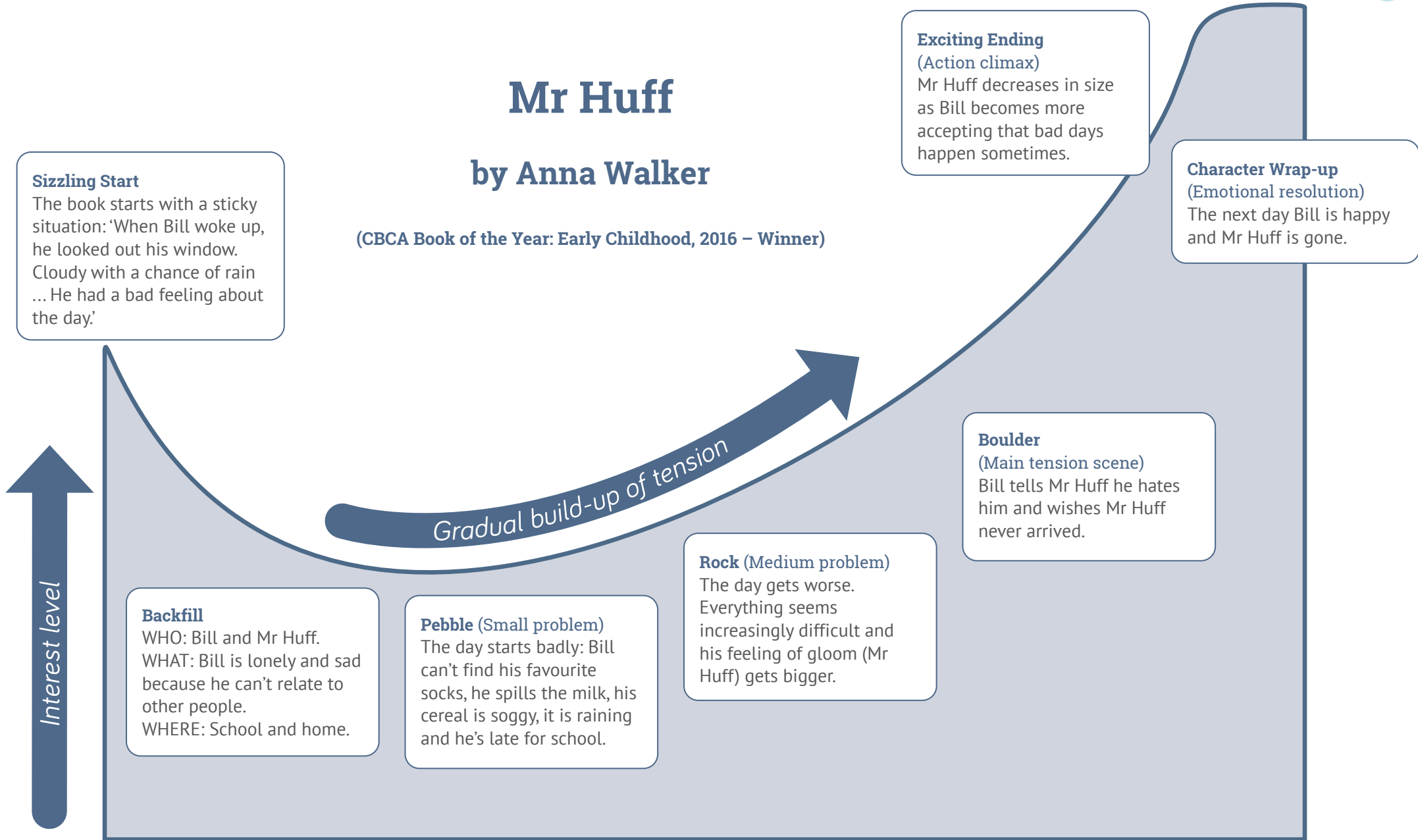
**Exciting Ending (Action climax)**  
The Australian family unwrap the carpet and place it in front of the fireplace. The Moroccan family open the box and set up their new computer.

**Character Wrap-up (Emotional resolution)**  
The story ends with a picture of the two boys at the end of the day, looking out of their windows at the night sky.

# Mr Huff

by Anna Walker

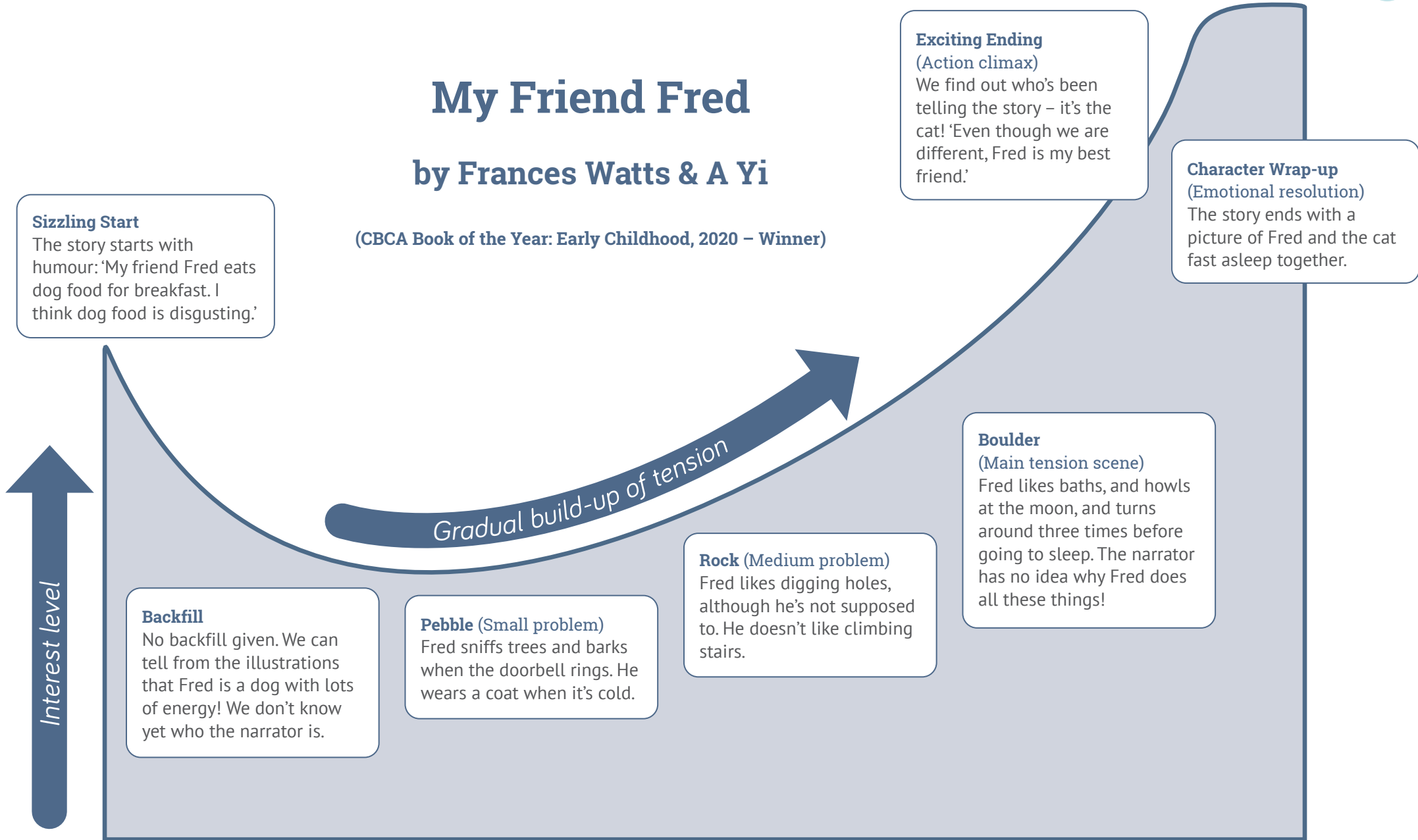
(CBCA Book of the Year: Early Childhood, 2016 – Winner)



# My Friend Fred

by Frances Watts & A Yi

(CBCA Book of the Year: Early Childhood, 2020 – Winner)



**Sizzling Start**  
The story starts with humour: 'My friend Fred eats dog food for breakfast. I think dog food is disgusting.'

**Backfill**  
No backfill given. We can tell from the illustrations that Fred is a dog with lots of energy! We don't know yet who the narrator is.

**Pebble (Small problem)**  
Fred sniffs trees and barks when the doorbell rings. He wears a coat when it's cold.

**Rock (Medium problem)**  
Fred likes digging holes, although he's not supposed to. He doesn't like climbing stairs.

**Boulder**  
(Main tension scene)  
Fred likes baths, and howls at the moon, and turns around three times before going to sleep. The narrator has no idea why Fred does all these things!

**Exciting Ending**  
(Action climax)  
We find out who's been telling the story – it's the cat! 'Even though we are different, Fred is my best friend.'

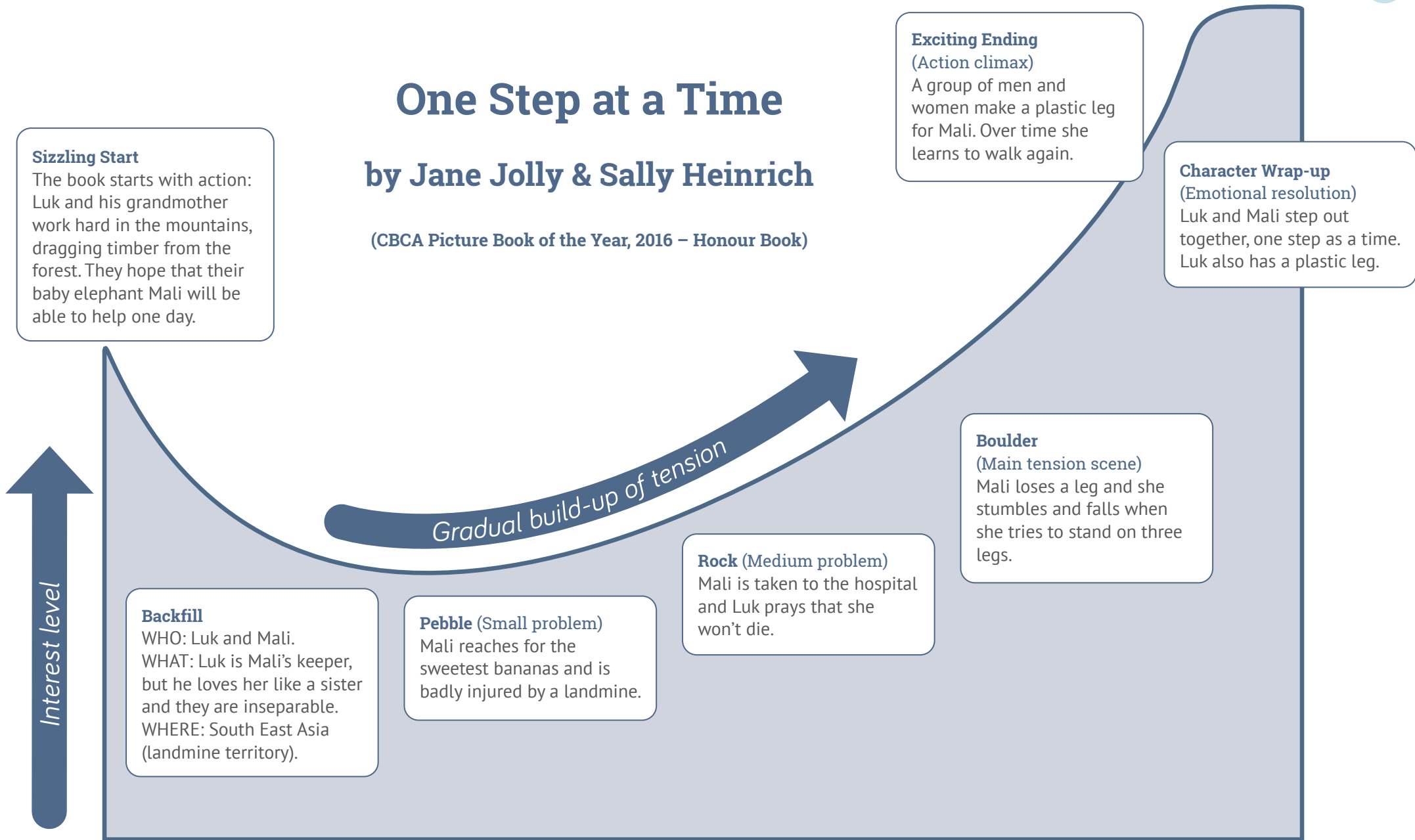
**Character Wrap-up**  
(Emotional resolution)  
The story ends with a picture of Fred and the cat fast asleep together.



# One Step at a Time

by Jane Jolly & Sally Heinrich

(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 2016 – Honour Book)



# The Peasant Prince

## by Li Cunxin & Anne Spudvilas

(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 2008 – Honour Book)

### Sizzling Start

The story starts with action: a little boy and his father fly a kite in their peasant village in China.

### Exciting Ending

(Action climax)  
Finally, after 10 years, Cunxin's parents can come to see him dance in America! He sees them from the stage, their faces beaming with pride.

### Character Wrap-up

(Emotional resolution)  
He remembers a story his father told him when they were flying the kite, about a little frog that climbed out of a dark well to see the whole world.

### Boulder

(Main tension scene)  
He practises very hard and eventually becomes one of the best dancers in China. He longs to see his family, but at 18 he goes even further away to dance in America.

### Rock (Medium problem)

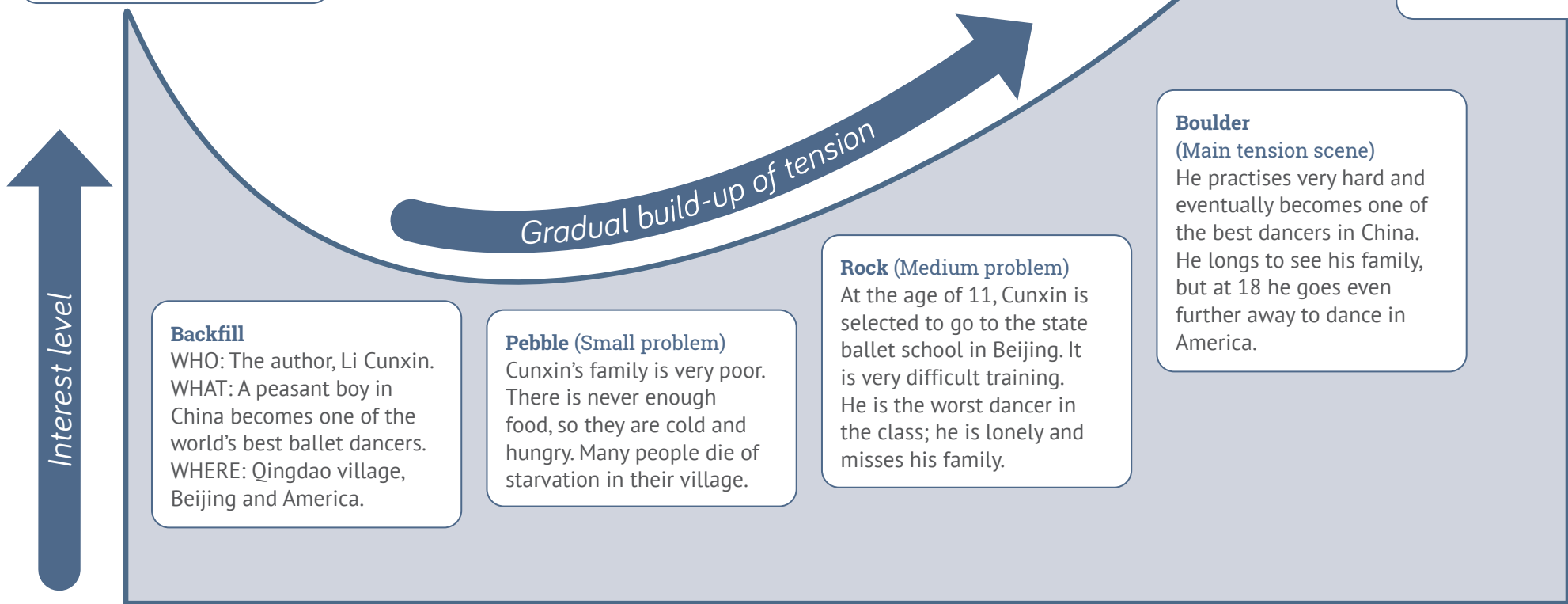
At the age of 11, Cunxin is selected to go to the state ballet school in Beijing. It is very difficult training. He is the worst dancer in the class; he is lonely and misses his family.

### Pebble (Small problem)

Cunxin's family is very poor. There is never enough food, so they are cold and hungry. Many people die of starvation in their village.

### Backfill

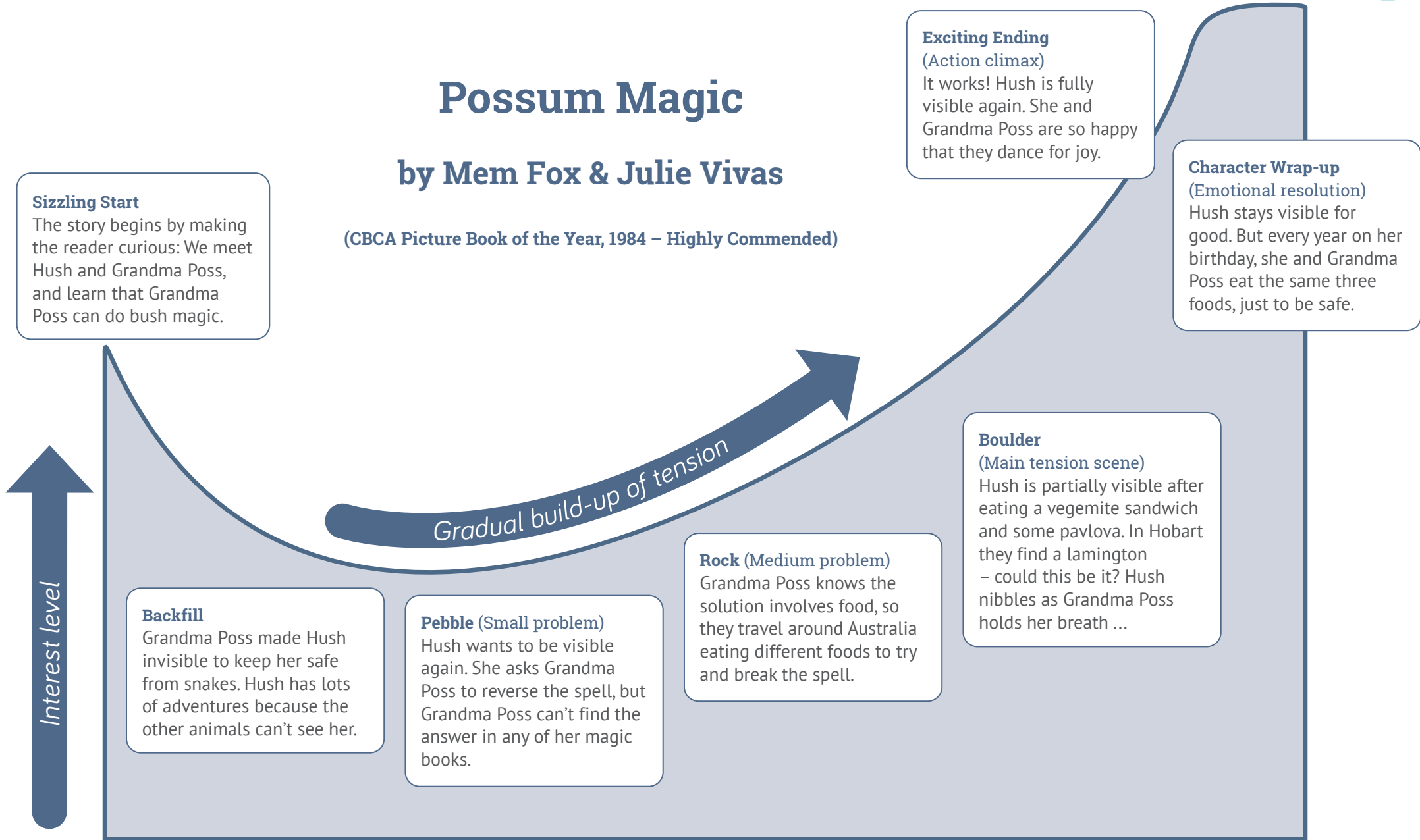
WHO: The author, Li Cunxin.  
WHAT: A peasant boy in China becomes one of the world's best ballet dancers.  
WHERE: Qingdao village, Beijing and America.



# Possum Magic

by Mem Fox & Julie Vivas

(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 1984 – Highly Commended)



**Sizzling Start**  
The story begins by making the reader curious: We meet Hush and Grandma Poss, and learn that Grandma Poss can do bush magic.

**Backfill**  
Grandma Poss made Hush invisible to keep her safe from snakes. Hush has lots of adventures because the other animals can't see her.

**Pebble (Small problem)**  
Hush wants to be visible again. She asks Grandma Poss to reverse the spell, but Grandma Poss can't find the answer in any of her magic books.

**Rock (Medium problem)**  
Grandma Poss knows the solution involves food, so they travel around Australia eating different foods to try and break the spell.

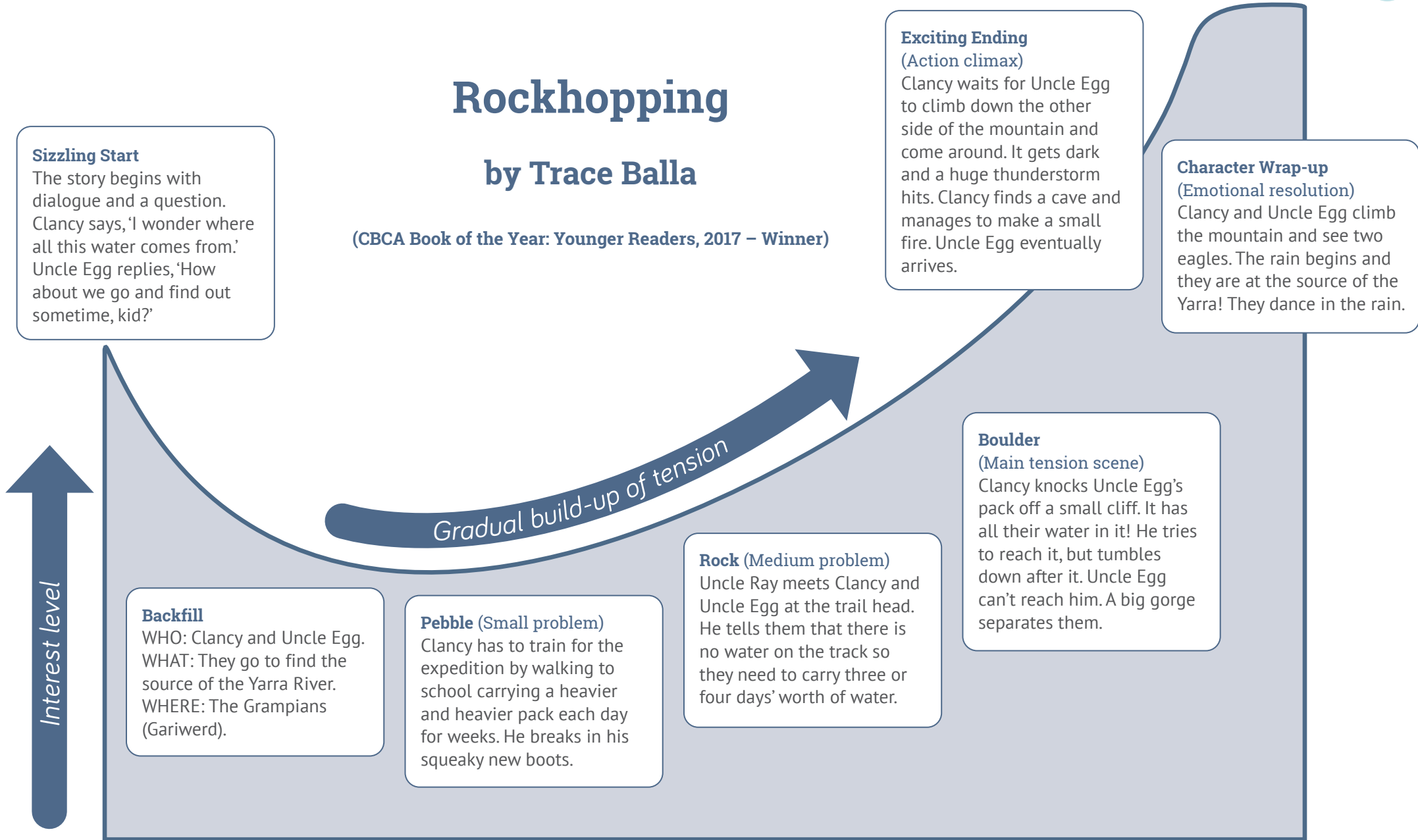
**Boulder**  
(Main tension scene)  
Hush is partially visible after eating a vegemite sandwich and some pavlova. In Hobart they find a lamington – could this be it? Hush nibbles as Grandma Poss holds her breath ...

**Exciting Ending**  
(Action climax)  
It works! Hush is fully visible again. She and Grandma Poss are so happy that they dance for joy.

**Character Wrap-up**  
(Emotional resolution)  
Hush stays visible for good. But every year on her birthday, she and Grandma Poss eat the same three foods, just to be safe.

# Rockhopping by Trace Balla

(CBCA Book of the Year: Younger Readers, 2017 – Winner)



**Sizzling Start**

The story begins with dialogue and a question. Clancy says, 'I wonder where all this water comes from.' Uncle Egg replies, 'How about we go and find out sometime, kid?'

**Backfill**

WHO: Clancy and Uncle Egg.  
WHAT: They go to find the source of the Yarra River.  
WHERE: The Grampians (Gariwerd).

**Pebble (Small problem)**

Clancy has to train for the expedition by walking to school carrying a heavier and heavier pack each day for weeks. He breaks in his squeaky new boots.

**Rock (Medium problem)**

Uncle Ray meets Clancy and Uncle Egg at the trail head. He tells them that there is no water on the track so they need to carry three or four days' worth of water.

**Boulder**

**(Main tension scene)**  
Clancy knocks Uncle Egg's pack off a small cliff. It has all their water in it! He tries to reach it, but tumbles down after it. Uncle Egg can't reach him. A big gorge separates them.

**Exciting Ending**

**(Action climax)**  
Clancy waits for Uncle Egg to climb down the other side of the mountain and come around. It gets dark and a huge thunderstorm hits. Clancy finds a cave and manages to make a small fire. Uncle Egg eventually arrives.

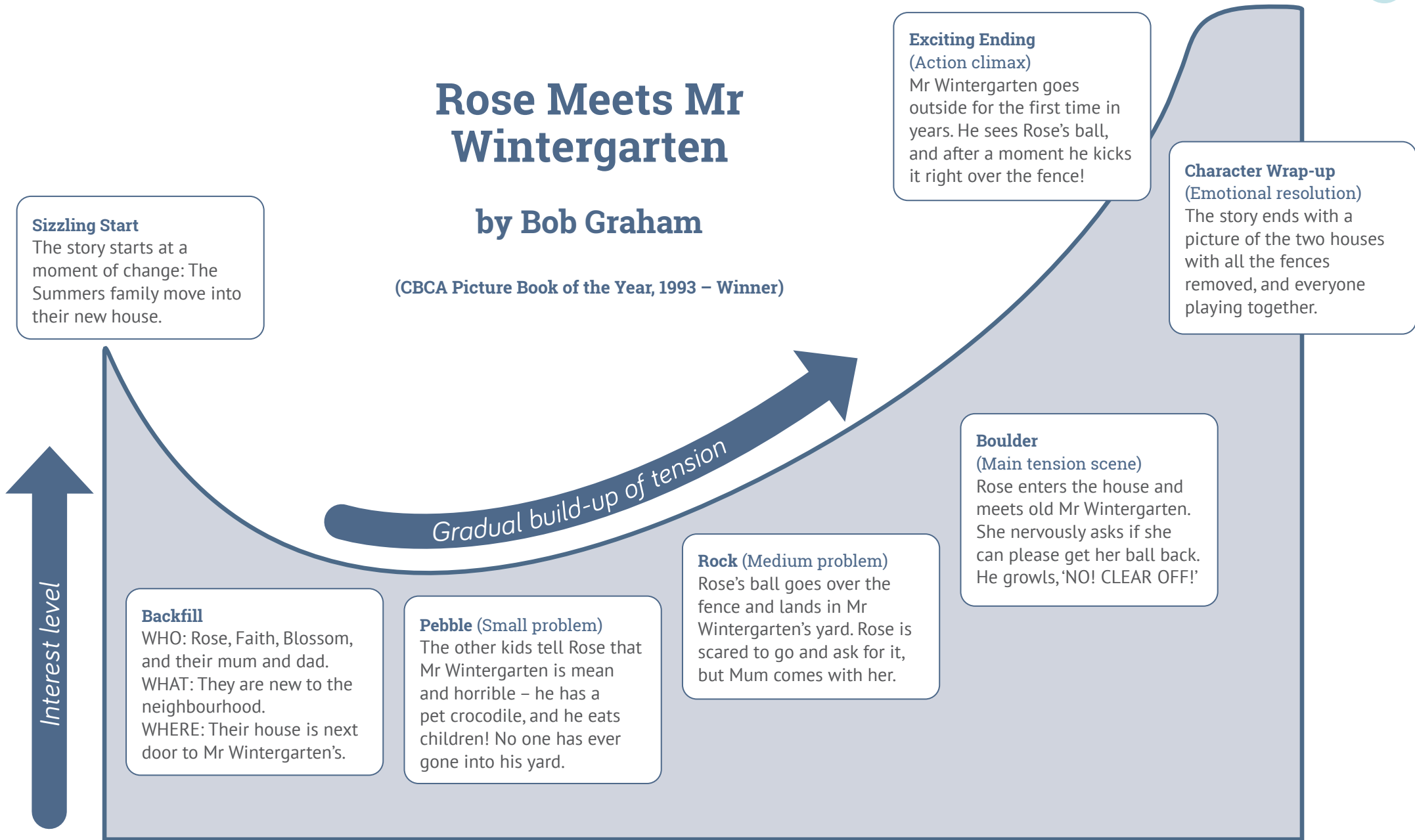
**Character Wrap-up**

**(Emotional resolution)**  
Clancy and Uncle Egg climb the mountain and see two eagles. The rain begins and they are at the source of the Yarra! They dance in the rain.

# Rose Meets Mr Wintergarten

by Bob Graham

(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 1993 – Winner)



**Sizzling Start**  
The story starts at a moment of change: The Summers family move into their new house.

**Backfill**  
WHO: Rose, Faith, Blossom, and their mum and dad.  
WHAT: They are new to the neighbourhood.  
WHERE: Their house is next door to Mr Wintergarten's.

**Pebble (Small problem)**  
The other kids tell Rose that Mr Wintergarten is mean and horrible – he has a pet crocodile, and he eats children! No one has ever gone into his yard.

**Rock (Medium problem)**  
Rose's ball goes over the fence and lands in Mr Wintergarten's yard. Rose is scared to go and ask for it, but Mum comes with her.

**Boulder**  
(Main tension scene)  
Rose enters the house and meets old Mr Wintergarten. She nervously asks if she can please get her ball back. He growls, 'NO! CLEAR OFF!'

**Exciting Ending**  
(Action climax)  
Mr Wintergarten goes outside for the first time in years. He sees Rose's ball, and after a moment he kicks it right over the fence!

**Character Wrap-up**  
(Emotional resolution)  
The story ends with a picture of the two houses with all the fences removed, and everyone playing together.

# Simpson and His Donkey

by Mark Greenwood  
& Frané Lessac

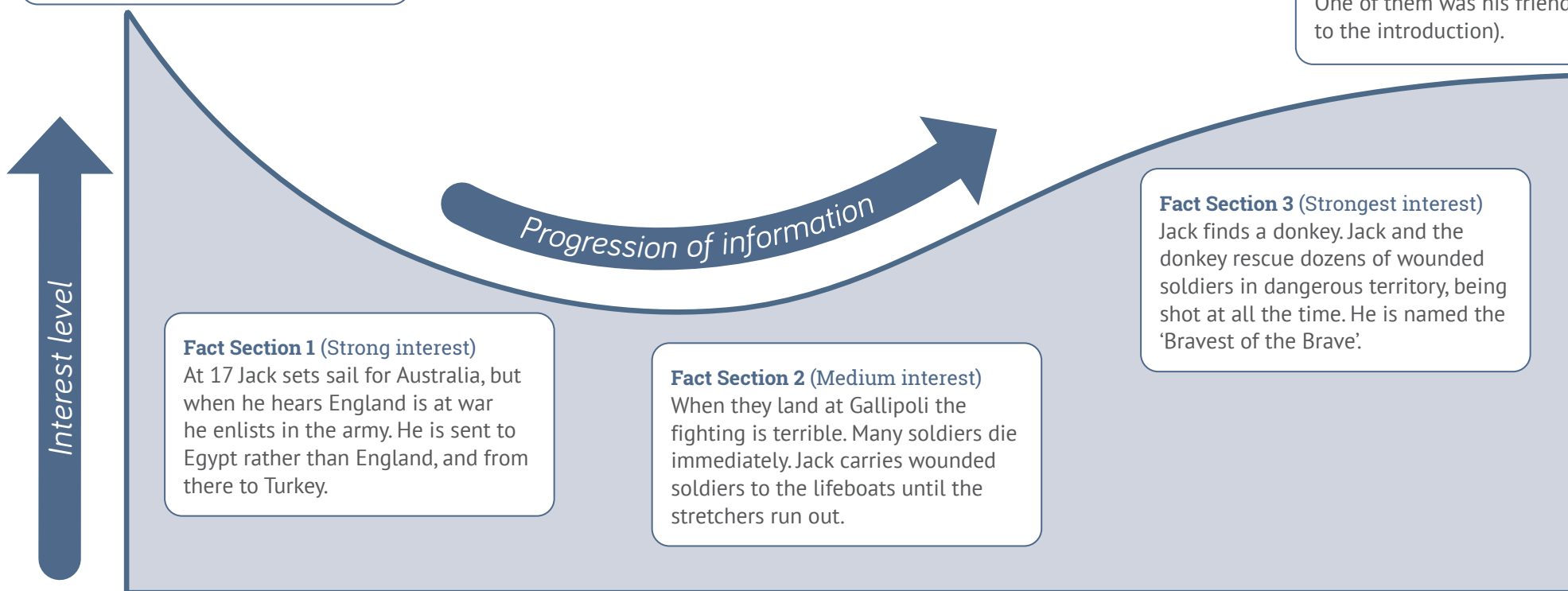
(Eve Pownall Award for Information Books, 2009 – Honour Book)

## Sizzling Start (Introduction)

The book starts by painting a word picture of Jack's childhood. In the summer he leads donkeys along the beach for a penny a ride with his friend Billy, and in the winter he delivers milk to support his family, but he dreams of sailing away on a great adventure.

## Ending with Impact (Conclusion)

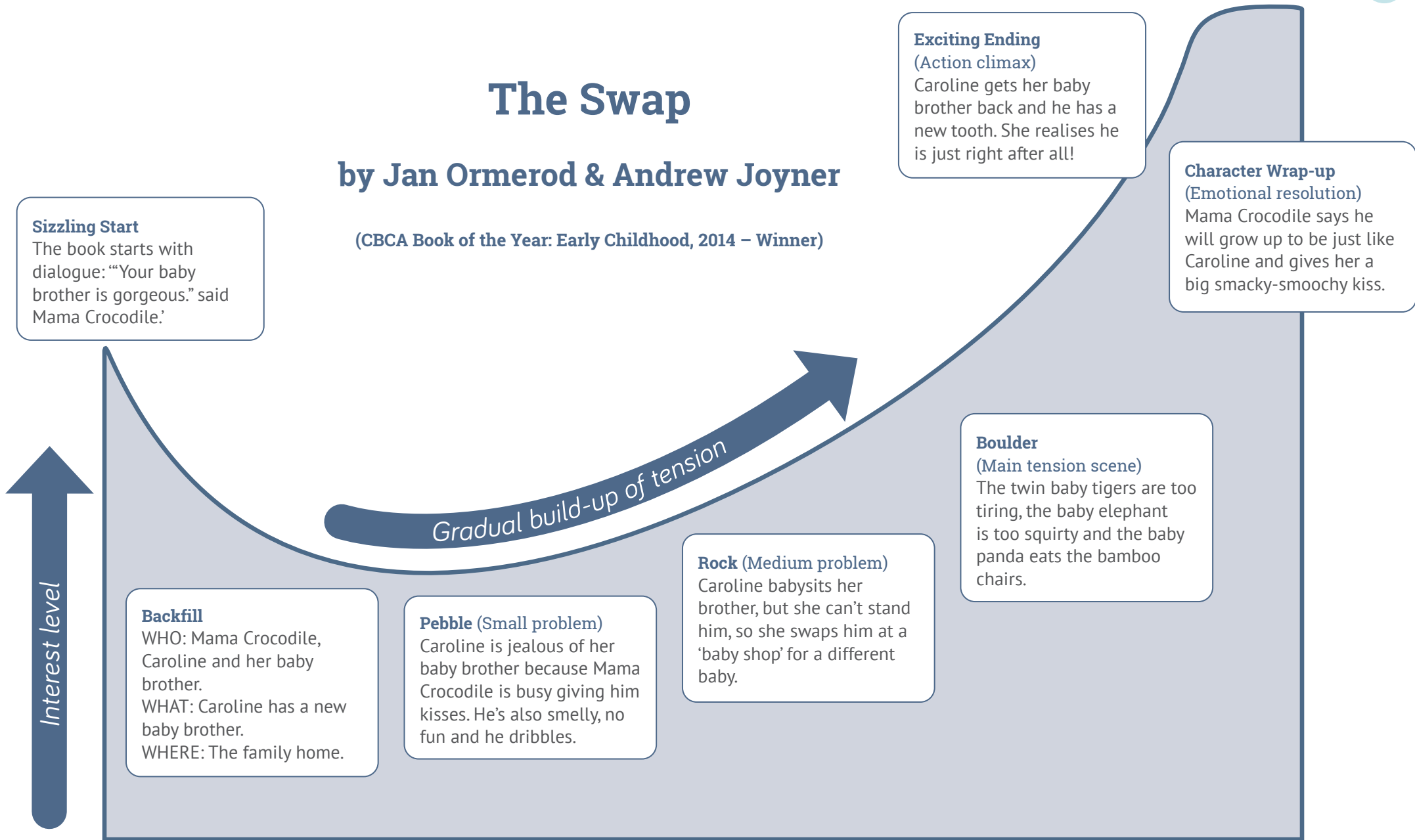
Early one morning as he lead his donkey up Dead Man's Ridge, Jack is shot through the heart by a Turkish soldier and killed instantly. Duffy, the donkey, returns alone. Jack Simpson rescued over 300 men in 24 days. One of them was his friend Billy (link to the introduction).



# The Swap

by Jan Ormerod & Andrew Joyner

(CBCA Book of the Year: Early Childhood, 2014 – Winner)



**Sizzling Start**  
The book starts with dialogue: "Your baby brother is gorgeous." said Mama Crocodile.'

**Backfill**  
WHO: Mama Crocodile, Caroline and her baby brother.  
WHAT: Caroline has a new baby brother.  
WHERE: The family home.

**Pebble (Small problem)**  
Caroline is jealous of her baby brother because Mama Crocodile is busy giving him kisses. He's also smelly, no fun and he dribbles.

**Rock (Medium problem)**  
Caroline babysits her brother, but she can't stand him, so she swaps him at a 'baby shop' for a different baby.

**Boulder**  
(Main tension scene)  
The twin baby tigers are too tiring, the baby elephant is too squirty and the baby panda eats the bamboo chairs.

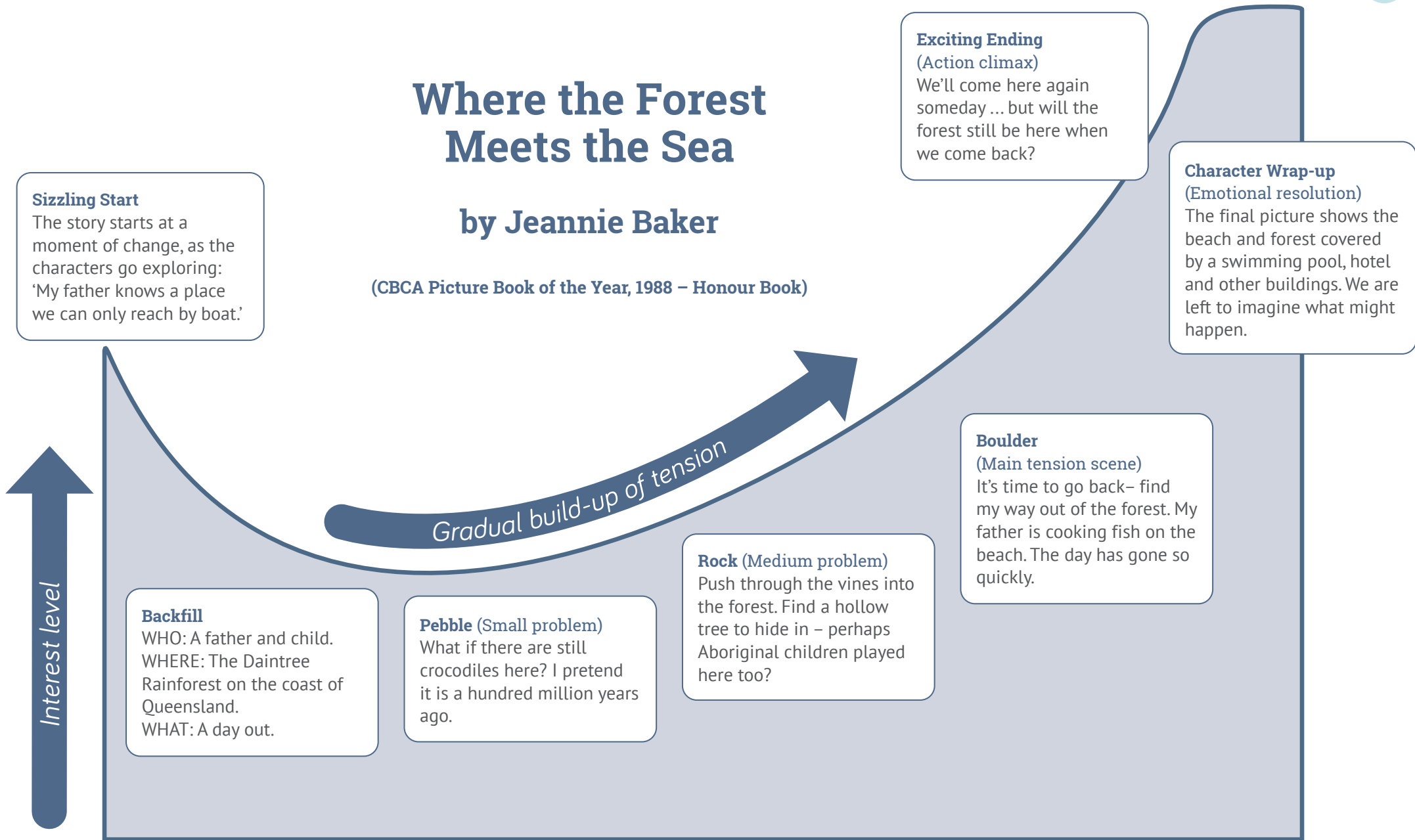
**Exciting Ending**  
(Action climax)  
Caroline gets her baby brother back and he has a new tooth. She realises he is just right after all!

**Character Wrap-up**  
(Emotional resolution)  
Mama Crocodile says he will grow up to be just like Caroline and gives her a big smacky-smoochy kiss.

# Where the Forest Meets the Sea

by Jeannie Baker

(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 1988 – Honour Book)



**Sizzling Start**  
The story starts at a moment of change, as the characters go exploring: 'My father knows a place we can only reach by boat.'

**Backfill**  
WHO: A father and child.  
WHERE: The Daintree Rainforest on the coast of Queensland.  
WHAT: A day out.

**Pebble (Small problem)**  
What if there are still crocodiles here? I pretend it is a hundred million years ago.

**Rock (Medium problem)**  
Push through the vines into the forest. Find a hollow tree to hide in – perhaps Aboriginal children played here too?

**Boulder**  
(Main tension scene)  
It's time to go back– find my way out of the forest. My father is cooking fish on the beach. The day has gone so quickly.

**Exciting Ending**  
(Action climax)  
We'll come here again someday ... but will the forest still be here when we come back?

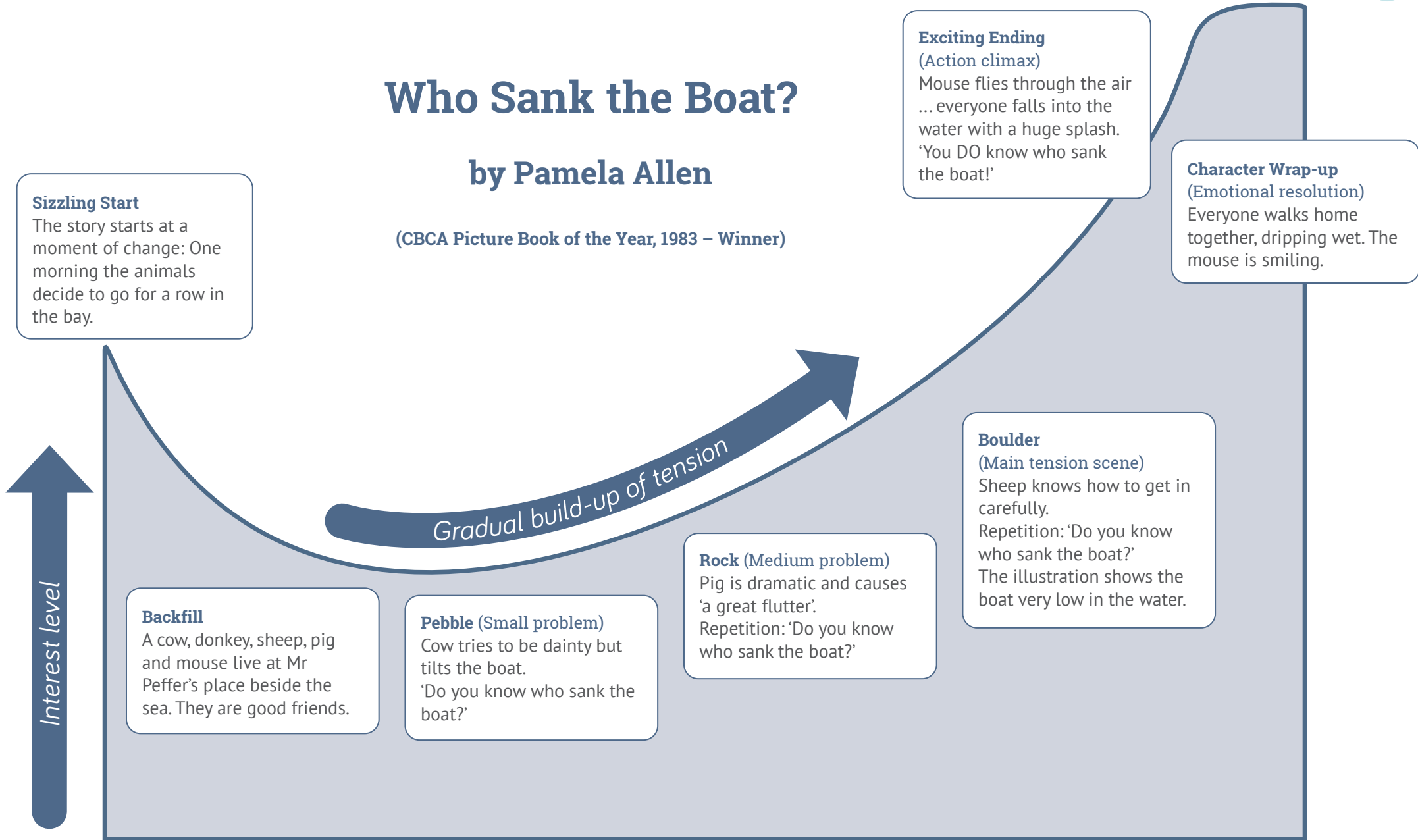
**Character Wrap-up**  
(Emotional resolution)  
The final picture shows the beach and forest covered by a swimming pool, hotel and other buildings. We are left to imagine what might happen.



# Who Sank the Boat?

by Pamela Allen

(CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 1983 – Winner)



**Sizzling Start**  
The story starts at a moment of change: One morning the animals decide to go for a row in the bay.

**Backfill**  
A cow, donkey, sheep, pig and mouse live at Mr Peffer's place beside the sea. They are good friends.

**Pebble (Small problem)**  
Cow tries to be dainty but tilts the boat.  
'Do you know who sank the boat?'

**Rock (Medium problem)**  
Pig is dramatic and causes 'a great flutter'.  
Repetition: 'Do you know who sank the boat?'

**Boulder**  
(Main tension scene)  
Sheep knows how to get in carefully.  
Repetition: 'Do you know who sank the boat?'  
The illustration shows the boat very low in the water.

**Exciting Ending**  
(Action climax)  
Mouse flies through the air ... everyone falls into the water with a huge splash.  
'You DO know who sank the boat!'

**Character Wrap-up**  
(Emotional resolution)  
Everyone walks home together, dripping wet. The mouse is smiling.