

BEST NZ BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS 2024



MEET GIRISHA, NIXON AND MARYAM, OUR CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARDS AMBASSADORS

Our 2024 awards ambassadors are all avid readers who attend Te Kura o Whare Rā - Fernworth Primary School in Waihōpai Invercargill.

Six-year-old Girisha thinks reading is important for learning. One of the things she has learnt from books is what to do in an earthquake. She likes drawing too - especially people, dogs and cats - and she'd love to illustrate books one day.

Nixon, who is nine, likes reading action books, and books that are funny and put a smile on his face. He says reading helps you get to know complicated words, ones you will need when you get a job. He's started writing a book about a kid called Kendoshi who has an arch-nemesis who wears a mask, and who fights him over an artefact. He's keen to create a superhero character.

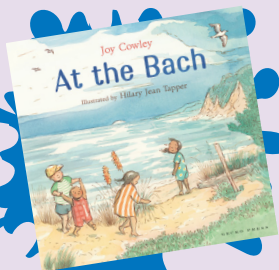
Reading calms seven-year-old Maryam, especially if it's while she's on her bed, and chapter books are her favourite. She's already written a comic about an evil pumpkin that comes to life at Halloween, but she'd really like to write a book about a fairy who has lost her wings.



DO YOU LOVE TO READ?
KIA ORA TAMARIKI! IF YOU ARE A KEEN READER LIKE OUR AMBASSADORS, WE'VE GOT THE PERFECT BOOK LIST FOR YOU. SELECTED AS FINALISTS BY THE JUDGES OF THE 2024 NEW ZEALAND BOOK AWARDS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS, THESE 28 BRILLIANT READS WILL TAKE YOU TO NEW WORLDS, AND HELP YOU EXPLORE NEW SUBJECTS. THEY ARE WAITING FOR YOU AT YOUR NEAREST BOOKSHOP, LOCAL LIBRARY, OR AT YOUR SCHOOL. SO HUNT THEM OUT AND LOSE YOURSELF IN AOTEAROA'S BEST BOOKS, CREATED BY TALENTED NEW ZEALAND AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS WITH YOUNG READERS JUST LIKE YOU IN MIND.

PICTURE BOOK AWARD

KIWI BACH NOSTALGIA, AN IRREPRESSIBLE PIG, COLOURFUL HENS, NIGHTTIME ADVENTURE, AND FINDING YOUR PLACE



AT THE BACH

BY JOY COWLEY, ILLUSTRATED BY HILARY JEAN TAPPER
PUBLISHED BY GECKO PRESS

An evocative and deceptively simple story that perfectly encapsulates the experience of beach holidays at a traditional Kiwi bach. With their soft colour palette, the illustrations have a nostalgic and dreamy quality, while carefully chosen words evoke a sense of place and time, and will send little ones off to sleep content and comforted.

DAZZLEHANDS

BY SACHA COTTER, ILLUSTRATED BY JOSH MORGAN
PUBLISHED BY HUIA PUBLISHERS

Meet a pig who refuses to follow the status quo and a farmer who is just trying his best to do things by the book. With entertaining, hilarious pictures and clever, humorous language, *Dazzlehands* is sure to delight all the whānau with its vibrancy and a refrain that will get stuck in your head (or hands!)



HATCH AND MATCH

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY RUTH PAUL
PUBLISHED BY WALKER BOOKS AUSTRALIA

A colourful collection of patterned chooks have lost their eggs and need help to find them. Children will love spotting the eggs and matching them with their mothers. With glorious, vibrant illustrations and expert rhyming and rhythm, this is a joyful celebration of a picture book which simply begs to be read aloud.

LUCY AND THE DARK

BY MELINDA SZYMANIK, ILLUSTRATED BY VASANTI UNKA
PUBLISHED BY PUFFIN, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

Lucy is afraid of the dark, until one night the Dark takes her on an adventure and they become best friends. Readers are swept along on the ride by powerful and emotive language and illustrations that capture the characters and their wonderful adventure in a distinctive and satisfying way. A positive message for dark-fearers everywhere.



PAKU MANU ARIKI WHAKATAKAPŌKAI

BY MICHAELA KEEBLE, ILLUSTRATED BY TOKERAU BROWN
PUBLISHED BY GECKO PRESS

A stream of consciousness story told from the viewpoint of a child finding their place in the world and making sense of their identity, whānau, culture and other big questions. This is a sophisticated picture book that pushes the boundaries of the genre, a riot of originality and creativity in both text and illustrations.



DOUBLEDIPPERS!

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY RAYMOND MCGRATH
PUBLISHED BY SCHOLASTIC NEW ZEALAND

While collecting rocks and shells, moving driftwood, shifting seaweed and giving a friend a much-needed hug, best buddies Big Blue and Little Blue learn about helpfulness, kindness and doing the right thing. Perfectly paced and delightfully drawn with humour and expression, this is a charming graphic novel for younger readers.

LOPINI THE LEGEND

BY FEANA TU'AKOI
PUBLISHED BY SCHOLASTIC NEW ZEALAND

Perfectionist Lopini is replaced as kapa haka leader and doesn't like the way this new experience of failing makes him feel. Deciding he needs to get better at not being the best, Lopini sets out to become a perfect failure. Realistic and recognisable characters fill this fun and easy read about resilience and friendship.



NINE GIRLS

BY STACY GREGG
PUBLISHED BY PENGUIN, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

Titch and her family move to her mother's hometown of Ngāruawāhia after her father loses his flash job in Auckland. Soon Titch hears of buried treasure and meets a talkative taniwha who tells her stories about her whānau, the river and the land. A beautifully written and deeply personal exploration of identity and belonging.

TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER

BY LEONIE AGNEW
PUBLISHED BY PUFFIN, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

With their tiny rural school under threat of closure, Lucas and his friends hatch a zany scheme to revitalise their town and save their school: faking UFOs. The plan swiftly spirals out of control and chaos ensues. Themes of community, connection and activism are woven throughout this laugh-out-loud comic caper.



THE GRIMMELINGS

BY RACHAEL KING
PUBLISHED BY ALLEN & UNWIN

Thirteen-year-old Ella lives on a horse-trekking farm in the South Island high country. When Ella utters a wish and a curse on the same day, she unwittingly unleashes a malevolent mythical creature with links to her own family's tragic past. Atmospheric and immersive, this tense tale of bravery and sacrifice is wonderfully written.

JUNIOR FICTION
WRIGHT FAMILY FOUNDATION
ESTHER GLEN AWARD

PENGUIN PALS, PERFECTLY IMPERFECT, TRUTH AND LIES, COSMIC CAPERS, AND THE MAGIC OF WORDS

YOUNG ADULT FICTION AWARD

BOY ON THE BRINK,
UNDER THE COVERS,
CONVICTS AND COLONIALS,
DEATH-WALKERS, AND
SOCIAL MISFITS



CATCH A FALLING STAR

BY EILEEN MERRIMAN

PUBLISHED BY PENGUIN, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

Jamie Orange has scored a lead role in the school musical – Shrek. Juggling school, writing, parents, rehearsals, friends and impossible attraction, Jamie careens through life in creative overdrive. As the pressure builds, Jamie spirals into crisis. A superbly written and frenetically paced novel that carries readers all the way to the brink.

NEW DAWNING

BY A M DIXON

PUBLISHED BY ONE TREE HOUSE

Generations after climate crisis, Merel and Ren live under The Covers on the isolated island of Littleton, in a society controlled by strict rules. As the friends navigate this shadowy world, their uncertainty about the status quo grows. With cohesive worldbuilding and convincing characterisation, this is a striking and immersive dystopian novel.



THE SPARROW

BY TESSA DUDER

PUBLISHED BY PENGUIN, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

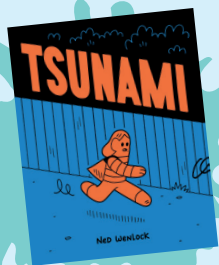
It's 1840 and solitary teen Harry arrives in Waitematā Harbour with colonists who intend to establish the settlement that will become Auckland. Determined to return to England, Harry must first find a way to survive. Combining meticulous historical research and magnificent storytelling, this is an unputdownable read, complete with villains and identity swapping.

TONIGHT, I BURN

BY KATHARINE J ADAMS

PUBLISHED BY MOA PRESS, HACHETTE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Penny Albright is a thorn witch. Her kind must perform as death-walkers or serve in the soulless Gilded army. Each night one thorn witch burns, patrols the veil between life and death, then returns. But one morning Penny's sister doesn't come back. Immersive worldbuilding, inclusive romance and intense action are combined in a spellbinding dark fantasy.



TSUNAMI

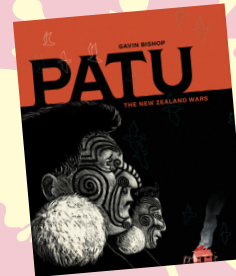
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY NED WENLOCK

PUBLISHED BY EARTH'S END PUBLISHING

Tsunami depicts the intertwined lives of self-righteous social misfit Peter, his bullying nemesis Gus, and new girl Charlie. In a disturbing portrayal of the casual brutality of Kiwi adolescence, a series of misunderstandings has terrible consequences. Deceptively simplistic illustrations are juxtaposed with serious subject matter in this impactful graphic novel for teen readers.

NON-FICTION ELSIE LOCKE AWARD

NEW ZEALAND WARS,
LOOKING CLOSER, A
TUATARA'S LIFE, REWILDING
INVENTIONS, AND
UNTANGLING KNOTS



PATU: THE NEW ZEALAND WARS

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY GAVIN BISHOP

PUBLISHED BY PUFFIN, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

A comprehensive, clear and beautifully illustrated history of the New Zealand Wars – from the musket wars of the 1840s through to the plunder of Parihaka in 1881 and beyond. Gavin Bishop succinctly tells the stories of the battles and the people involved while cleverly interweaving the history of his own tūpuna.

THE OBSERVOLOGIST: A HANDBOOK FOR MOUNTING VERY SMALL SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITIONS

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY GISELLE CLARKSON

PUBLISHED BY GECKO PRESS

With humour, amusing yet accurate illustrations and tips for developing 'observology' techniques, *The Observologist* invites readers to take a closer look at the world around them. Full of fascinating facts about creatures found in four easily accessible habitats, this appealing book makes examining insects and other small creatures seem like a very cool pastime.



TUATARA: A LIVING TREASURE

BY KATIE FURZE, ILLUSTRATED BY NED BARRAUD

PUBLISHED BY SCHOLASTIC NEW ZEALAND

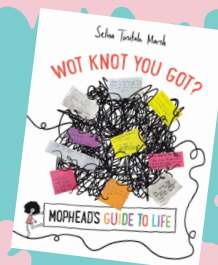
A baby tuatara pops out of her leathery egg. Readers follow her as she emerges from the burrow, eats, rests, avoids predators, grows and eventually lays her own eggs. With beautifully detailed illustrations and many fascinating tuatara facts, this tale of one of Aotearoa's living legends has been expertly crafted for younger readers.

ULTRAWILD: AN AUDACIOUS PLAN TO REWILD EVERY CITY ON EARTH

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY STEVE MUSHIN

PUBLISHED BY ALLEN & UNWIN

This is a book for everyone who is delighted by design, creative thinking and fascinating inventions – and anyone who cares about the implications of climate change. Dense with intricate illustrations, *Ultrawild* presents dozens of offbeat but plausible inventions aimed at rewilding our cities and saving our planet. A truly unique and inspiring read.



WOT KNOT YOU GOT: MOPHEAD'S GUIDE TO LIFE

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY SELINA TUSITALA MARSH

PUBLISHED BY AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY PRESS

Everyone has knots – problems that tie us up so tight we feel we can't get out of them. In this brilliant self-help book, full of wonderful wordplay and distinctive, fun illustrations, Mophead encourages children to solve their knotty problems by grabbing a pencil and creatively and playfully untangling themselves.

TE REO MĀORI WRIGHT FAMILY FOUNDATION TE KURA POUNAMU AWARD

HOW RAINBOWS HAPPEN,
A WARM FAREWELL,
GATHERING KAI MOANA,
A DIFFICULT BOOK, AND
THE FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL



DAZZLEHANDS

BY SACHA COTTER, ILLUSTRATED BY JOSH MORGAN
PUBLISHED BY HUIA PUBLISHERS

A farmer attempts to direct a farmyard production with a firm, creative vision for the animal players – but Pig has other ideas. Josh Morgan's technicolour illustrations burst and fizz with rhythm and comedic flair, and the result is a glittery explosion that is hard to put down. Every page is a fabulous, oversaturated visual delight.



PAKU MANU ARIKI WHAKATAKĀPŌKAI

BY MICHAELA KEEBLE, ILLUSTRATED BY TOKERAU BROWN
PUBLISHED BY GECKO PRESS

Paku Manu Ariki's ideas about himself and his world wheel and dance like a flock of birds, and he wants to share them. Crackling with the same free-ranging childlike energy, Tokerau Brown's bold and vibrant illustrations take readers on their own playful and imaginative yet deeply serious journey, and add layers of meaning to the text.



PATU: THE NEW ZEALAND WARS

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY GAVIN BISHOP
PUBLISHED BY PUFFIN, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

This concise and accessible history of the New Zealand Wars is given power and structure by Gavin Bishop's ambitious, masterful illustrated treatment. The wide-screen, mixed-media artwork makes full use of the book's large format to deliver its information clearly, while always remembering the people and the human cost involved.



HE TĀRŪ KAHIKA

BY MELINDA SZYMANIK, ILLUSTRATED BY ISOBEL JOY TE AHO-WHITE, TRANSLATED BY PĀNIA PAPA
PUBLISHED BY SCHOLASTIC NEW ZEALAND

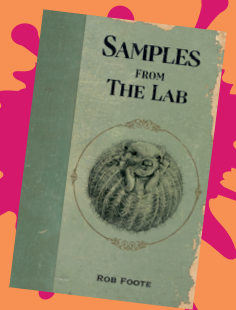
Rā and Ua (the Sun and the Rain) have never met and they're not sure it's a good idea. But their friends Ngā Kapua (the Clouds) disagree and trick them into meeting. The kaupapa of the water cycle and the intricate relationships of te taiao are explained as a modern fable in clear and poetic reo Māori.



NANI JO ME NGĀ MOKOPUNA POROHĪANGA

BY MOIRA WAIRAMA, ILLUSTRATED BY MARGARET TOLLAND
PUBLISHED BY BAGGAGE BOOKS

Nani Jo has one last story to tell her beloved mokopuna. Through the story of Taramainuku, this book shows the importance of poroporoaki to the grieving process, and also the importance of the return to Te Ao Mārama. The rhythms of the reo and the oral storytelling tradition fully inhabit the narrative, which demands to be read aloud.



SAMPLES FROM THE LAB

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY ROB FOOTE
PUBLISHED BY CREATIVITY UNLEASHED

Follow the results of Professor Fictitious Karacter's absurd and ultimately doomed experiments in genetic modification via this lavish reproduction of his lab notes. Packed with visual puns and ever-so-slightly queasy cuteness, the detailed and technically accomplished illustrations take the lead in this beautifully produced book.

TE PĪKARI PIPI

BY ANGIE BELCHER, ILLUSTRATED BY LILY UIVEL, TRANSLATED BY PĀNIA PAPA
PUBLISHED BY SCHOLASTIC NEW ZEALAND

Pē and his Māmā gather kai moana for the whānau and invent a little dance to help them while they work. Pānia Papa's translation into the rhythms of te reo Māori is exceptional, all within the context of mahinga mātaitai, a context familiar and relatable to many young readers. "Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi."



THE DREAM FACTORY

BY STEPH MATUKU, ILLUSTRATED BY ZAK ĀTEA
PUBLISHED BY HUIA PUBLISHERS

What happens to the dreamers when the source of their fantastic nightly visions, the dream factory, breaks down? With their deep blues and glowing pinks, Zak Ātea's whimsical and gorgeous illustrations work in glorious harmony with Steph Matuku's words to invite readers into a magical world packed with lush visual detail.



TE PUKAPUKA KA KORE E PĀNUHĪA

BY TIM TIPENE, ILLUSTRATED BY NICOLETTA BENELLA, TRANSLATED BY KANAPU RANGITAUIRA
PUBLISHED BY ORATIA BOOKS

Reading can be difficult. But some books are more difficult than others! Tim Tipene's pukapuka understands and empathises with its audience – tamariki who struggle with reading and attention – without condescending or judging. The kōrero is just challenging enough with its reo to encourage exploration of language and an enduring love of kupu.



TE RĀ KURA KI AOTEAROA

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY DONOVAN BIXLEY, TRANSLATED BY DARRYN JOSEPH
PUBLISHED BY UPSTART PRESS

Join a young boy on his first day at school in this warm and welcoming pukapuka for tamariki who are about to start that journey themselves. The illustrations are bright and attractive and there are plenty of fun, immersive details to support the reo, which is at an appropriate level for a young reader.

ILLUSTRATION RUSSELL CLARK AWARD

A GLITTERY EXPLOSION,
IMAGINATION AND IDENTITY,
THE LONG SHADOW OF WAR,
ABSURD EXPERIMENTS, AND
BROKEN DREAMS

BEST FIRST BOOK NZSA AWARD

AFTER THE FLOOD,
INTENSITY OF CHILDHOOD,
BEING YOUR TRUE SELF,
BULLY BEHAVIOUR,
AND WILD IDEAS

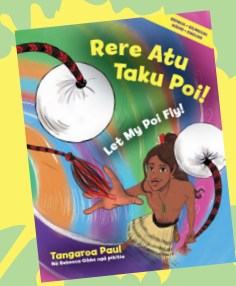


NEW DAWNING
BY A M DIXON
PUBLISHED BY ONE TREE HOUSE

Many years after catastrophic climate change caused flooding and mass extinction, survivors live a controlled and colourless existence in the shadows of massive sky shields that protect them from the sun. There is nowhere else to go – this is the way it has to be, isn't it? Convincing worldbuilding and a compelling narrative drive make for a riveting read.

PAKU MANU ARIKI WHAKATAKAPŌKAI
BY MICHAELA KEEBLE, ILLUSTRATED BY TOKERAU BROWN
PUBLISHED BY GECKO PRESS

A stunningly original picture book from the perspective of a young Māori boy who is overflowing with ideas and questions about identity, culture and belonging. Fearlessly playing with composition, colour, scale and perspective, illustrator Tokerau Brown channels the intensity of childhood and creates images that burst with energy and movement.

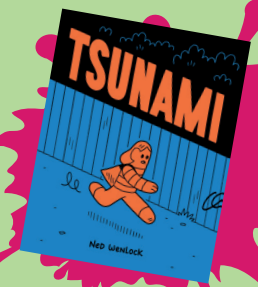


RERE ATU TAKU POI! LET MY POI FLY!
BY TANGAROA PAUL, ILLUSTRATED BY REBECCA GIBBS
PUBLISHED BY ORATIA BOOKS

Rangi enjoys doing kapa haka but he *loves* performing poi. Teased by other children, he practises poi at his Nana's house. Will Rangi ever have the opportunity to express his true self? This delightful bilingual pukapuka tells a heartwarming story of inclusiveness, acceptance and being true to yourself, and is a celebration of takatāpuitanga.

TSUNAMI
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY NED WENLOCK
PUBLISHED BY EARTH'S END PUBLISHING

Peter's rigid insistence on telling the truth makes him a target for bullies, including his neighbour Gus. Both boys are drawn to new girl Charlie, and their encounters have increasingly dire consequences. This graphic novel for older readers is skilfully crafted, with the contrast between the simple drawing style and serious themes adding to the unease.



ULTRAWILD: AN AUDACIOUS PLAN TO REWILD EVERY CITY ON EARTH
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY STEVE MUSHIN
PUBLISHED BY ALLEN & UNWIN

Over 100 scientifically plausible, funny and fantastic inventions for transforming cities into ecosystems are presented in this big book packed full of big ideas. Outrageously bold and immensely detailed, *Ultrawild* aims to inspire serious change in approaches to tackling the climate crisis, and to empower and energise the next generation of creative thinkers.

MEET OUR FINALISTS AT BOOKS ALIVE!

BOOKS ALIVE is one of the highlights of the annual awards programme. The large-scale events in different centres across Aotearoa bring hundreds of kids up close with their favourite authors and illustrators in the immediate lead up to the **NEW ZEALAND BOOK AWARDS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS** ceremony.

This year, tamariki and rangatahi in Invercargill, Christchurch and Wellington will get the chance to engage directly with our 2024 finalists in sessions programmed especially for them by literature experts.

This is all thanks to funding from the Mātātuhi Foundation and support from our regional partners, **WORD** Christchurch, Wellington City Libraries and the National Library, plus the generous organisations whose logos are also featured below.

School groups can register for Books Alive events in central city locations on the following dates:

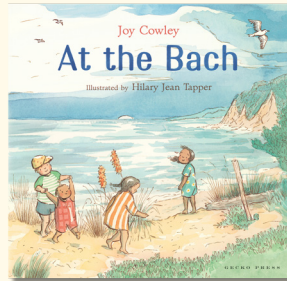
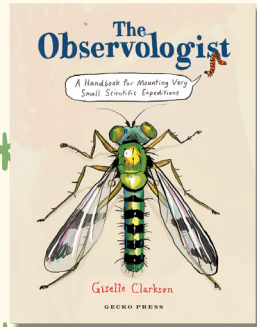
- INVERCARGILL: WEDNESDAY 7 AUGUST**
- CHRISTCHURCH: FRIDAY 9 AUGUST**
- WELLINGTON: WEDNESDAY 14 AUGUST**

To find out more, email booksalive@nzbookawards.org.nz.

Each school child attending in 2024 will receive a copy of our fantastic **NZCYA ACTIVITY BOOKLET!**



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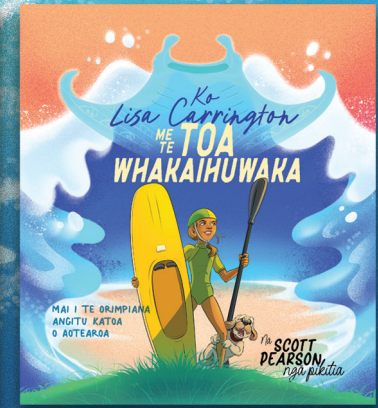


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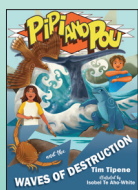
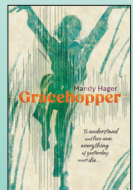
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One Tree House congratulates NZCYA 2024 Finalist A. M. Dixon

"This is a gripping novel with a skilfully constructed plot, a convincing premise and engaging characters." — Magpies



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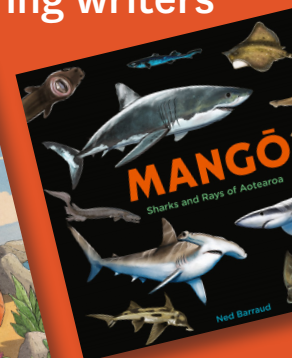
Congratulations

DONOVAN BIXLEY & DARRYN JOSEPH

You're shortlisted again!



For young readers By inspiring writers

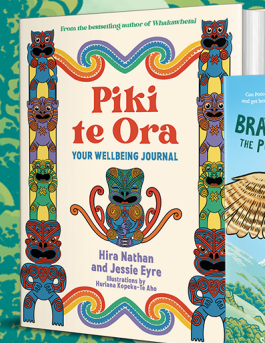


From our national museum



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NGĀ MIHI NUNUI KI A KOUTOU!



TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THESE AWARDS GO TO WWW.NZBOOKAWARDS.NZ AND FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK: NEWZEALANDCYABOOKAWARDS INSTAGRAM/TIKTOK: NZCYA_AWARDS X: NZCYA #NZCYA #BOOKSALIVE

Kia ora Kids!

the **Hell** Reading Challenge

NEW ZEALAND
BOOK AWARDS

FOR CHILDREN &
YOUNG ADULTS



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