



Judges' Report - Finalists

Spoilt for choice! As judges, we've had an amazing range of material to choose from, and we could easily have selected far more than five books in every category. We were especially impressed with the material created by first-time authors and illustrators, and this is reflected in the titles nominated. Smaller, niche publishers also submitted high quality publications, matching the well-established publishing companies in terms of presentation and quality production values.

Picture books this year demonstrated a strong flavour of uniquely New Zealand content, with 60 entries that we pored over, enjoying the interplay between text and illustration.

Elsie Locke would have been thrilled with the calibre of material in the Non-Fiction category this year, and there were so many submissions that we wanted to short-list, leading to robust discussion and debate. This category continues to grow, with 19 entries this year, providing readers with high quality information that is often not readily available or accessible online.

The 25 Esther Glen Junior Fiction entries showed us that these readers, who range in age from 8-12 years and are stretching their wings, are well provided for by the skillful authors who have created such rich works.

Young adult readers vicariously experience a wide range of situations and emotions via the books they read, and the texts in this category will certainly provide that. We ran the gamut of emotions as we read the 17 books submitted – fear, love, hope, despair, lust, joy, anger, exhilaration – and know that those who read these books will experience emotional roller coasters, just as we did.

Young Adult Fiction Award Finalists

Young Adult Fiction provides a glimpse into a world or situation that the reader may never experience, and these titles will take teenagers places they have never been before. From a strict religious community which enforces rigid roles for all, to the thrill of mountain bike racing and first love, to the terror of a lethal new weapon used in battle, the heartbreak of your twin possibly being brain dead and you having to make a decision about his future, or the impact of mental illness on a family and the consequences of date rape – these books will engage, enlighten and excite.

The five finalists are:

Battlesaurus: Rampage at Waterloo

By Brian Falkner

Pan Macmillan Australia (Farrar Strauss Giroux)

Napoleon Bonaparte will do anything to defeat the British and Prussian forces at Waterloo, unleashing a devastating weapon – dinosaurs! Willem Verheyen can predict dinosaurs' movements and defeat them, but will he get this knowledge to the British in time? This deftly woven alternative history will have readers breathless for more.

Being Magdalene

By Fleur Beale

Penguin Random House (Random House New Zealand)

As a member of the Children of Faith, Magdalene is expected to obey the Elders and her parents without question. This has become increasingly difficult, especially as her strong-willed younger sister Zillah keeps drawing attention. Magdalene desperately wants them to be safe, but where does that safety lie?

Hucking Cody

By Aaron Topp

Mary Egan Ltd

Cody's life isn't much fun – blamed for a burglary at his bike shop job, no girlfriend, and an older brother causing concern. The only thing he looks forward to is mountain biking hard, doing stunts and hucking the bush tracks. Fast-paced and adrenaline-filled, Cody's risk-taking will engross teens.

Lullaby

By Bernard Beckett

Text Publishing

Rene's twin brother Theo is in hospital with a life-threatening brain injury. There is a chance that an experimental procedure could save him, but is Rene truly capable of making such a decision? What will he risk to save Theo, knowing it could cost him everything?

Sylvie the Second

By Kaeli Baker

Mākarō Press

Sylvie's family is in turmoil, with her older sister Cate being re-admitted into a psychiatric ward. With her parents focussed on Cate, Sylvie is left to look after – and re-invent herself – with disastrous consequences. This realistic novel, aimed at mature teen readers, shows the pain resulting from date rape.

Esther Glen Award Finalists (Junior Fiction)

Each of these finalist novels delivers even more than their appearances promise. With prose that perfectly suits the mood of each story, with fresh and intriguing characters, and yet also with the comfort in the familiar too, these books are by turn thrilling, funny, moving and satisfying. Whether in the grip of a wild horse race, investigating a mystery, or facing down one kind of enemy or another, these books serve their young readers well.

The five finalists are:

Enemy Camp

By David Hill

Penguin Random House (Puffin)

In this novel about the Featherston prisoner of war camp during World War 2, David Hill skilfully depicts the mood of small town New Zealand, painting a realistic picture of wartime life and the cultural divide between local Kiwis and their Japanese prisoners, as the story marches inexorably to an explosive conclusion.

From the Cutting Room of Barney Kettle

By Kate De Goldi

Penguin Random House (Longacre)

Helped by his patient sister, Ren, young filmmaker Barney interviews the local community while trying to figure out who is sending them cryptic secret messages. Kate De Goldi's poignant examination of the ties that bind a community together in the face of tragedy packs a powerful punch.

Lily Max: Satin, Scissors, Frock

By Jane Bloomfield

Luncheon Sausage Books

Young fashionista Lily Max has an original outlook on life. As Lily works to make her fashion ambitions a reality, her creativity, spunk and can-do attitude make her a shining example of girl power. With conspiratorial asides and plenty of humour, new author Jane Bloomfield is a fresh voice.

The Bold Ship Phenomenal

By Sarah Johnson

Flat Bed Press

Malachi wishes for an exciting life but gets more than he bargained for. With an unexpected twist of magic, a bottle discovered on the beach provides him with intrigue, portents and parallels to his stowaway journey on a truck. Johnson's fresh approach to Malachi's familiar dilemmas proves a satisfying read.

The Girl Who Rode the Wind

By Stacy Gregg

Harper Collins

Threads of history, war, tradition, love and family are deftly woven through this thrilling, action-packed story about young horse rider, Lola, who risks everything to ride in the most dangerous horse race in the world – the Palio. Richly detailed, Stacy Gregg's narrative explores multiple themes while building to a satisfying ending.

Elsie Locke Award Finalists (Non-Fiction)

Non-Fiction texts continue to be vitally important for supporting learners and readers at all levels, and the short-listed titles represent a wide range of topics and cater to readers of all ages and interests. All demonstrate careful thought and attention to what makes non-fiction appealing – they have well-chosen topics, and are visually engaging, clearly laid out, and strongly relevant to young New Zealanders.

The five finalists are:

ANZAC Heroes

By Maria Gill, illustrated by Marco Ivancic
Scholastic New Zealand

Collaboration between writer and illustrator at its best. From nurse and pilot to soldier and spy, this book offers a beautifully arranged cast of ANZAC heroes from WWI and WWII, and includes life-like illustrations with maps, a medal room, fact boxes, index and a glossary. Each hero has a personal story and timeline. Impossible to put down.

Changing Times: The story of a New Zealand town and its newspaper

By Bob Kerr
Potton & Burton

Produced in inimitable Bob Kerr style, this is a hugely engaging story of the *New Zealand Times*. Young and old will enjoy learning about the events and social history of the times through snapshots of newspaper headlines and illustrations. Looking for Mary's tartan shawl is an added bit of fun.

See what I can see

By Gregory O'Brien
Auckland University Press

A comprehensive introduction to photography which explains how the camera works, from the early models to the cell phone. The huge range of examples from New Zealand photographers, capturing technique, creativity, the quirky, the social history of New Zealand, and how through the lens, "The ho hum becomes great photography".

The Beginner's Guide to Adventure Sport in New Zealand

By Steve Gurney
Penguin Random House (Random House New Zealand)

A really useful guide for beginners of all ages, covering a wide variety of adventure sports and with an easy-to-follow layout with on-point photographs to illustrate. There's great advice on planning, safety, first aid, start-up gear, tips and events. Links to video clips are an added feature.

Whose Beak is This?

By Gillian Candler, illustrated by Fraser Williamson
Potton & Burton

Young readers will enjoy guessing who the beak belongs to. Beautifully illustrated New Zealand birds, named in te reo Māori and with well-chosen text, make this a really great junior non-fiction resource. The illustrated index is a simple but brilliant idea. The inclusion of a webpage address for additional notes is useful.

Picture Book Award Finalists

Picture books provide a window to the world, bringing the reader into the story via the skillful marriage of text and illustration. The short-listed titles give us a look at life across New Zealand, from every day much loved toys, rural farm equipment, Halloween and Matariki celebrations and the origins of the haka, and readers will experience emotions ranging from fear to urgency, from relief to joy, with a satisfying resolution for each story.

The five finalists are:

Allis the little tractor

By Sophie Siers, illustrated by Helen Kerridge
Millwood-Heritage Productions

Allis has been replaced by the strong John Deere, and left under the macrocarpa tree, rusty and thirsty for oil and water. Can Toby and Uncle Jack fulfil Allis's dream of being useful again? The lovely voice and gentle spirit of this story are complemented by the warmth of the illustrations.

Finding Monkey Moon

By Elizabeth Pulford, illustrated by Kate Wilkinson
Walker Books Australia

It's bedtime and Michael's beloved Monkey Moon is missing. Michael and his Dad take the reader along on a chilly night-time search. "Their breath fluttered like moths in the cold air". Thankfully all is well in the blink of a shiny Monkey Moon eye. A delightful familiar story.

Haka

By Patricia Grace, illustrated by Andrew Burdan
Huia Publishers

As Te Rauparaha hides from his ever-so-close enemies he whispers to himself, "Will I die? Will I live?" Fearing for his life, Te Rauparaha prays the wisdom and mana of his allies will keep him safe. When danger passes he praises his protectors. Although simply told, *Haka* effectively captures and honours the cultural framework of the origins of what is now considered a traditional war dance or challenge.

The House on the Hill

By Kyle Mewburn, illustrated by Sarah Davis
Scholastic New Zealand

Scary enough to have the reader on the edge of their seat, but not the stuff of nightmares. The poetic and suspenseful text combined with the dark and eerie illustrations make for a truly spooky read, with a great little twist and sigh of relief at the end.

The Little Kiwi's Matariki

By Nikki Slade Robinson
David Ling Publishing (Duck Creek Press)

English and te reo Māori are seamlessly woven together as Little Kiwi wakes her forest friends for Matariki. The night is black against the glow of the moon, and the urgency is evident as the creatures follow. Aue! Suddenly Little Kiwi's first Matariki makes a wonderful, glittering show for all.

Russell Clark Award Finalists (Illustration)

While the styles and media used vary, these illustrators succeed in not only capturing the story, but also the underlying emotional landscape of these books. They reveal the layers in the narratives and their moods with wit and imagination, building creatively on the words to result in a richer experience for the reader.

The five finalists are:

Changing Times: The story of a New Zealand town and its newspaper

Illustrated by Bob Kerr
Potton & Burton

Using a comic-book panel format to trace the birth and death of a small-town New Zealand newspaper, Bob Kerr skilfully tells the story mostly through his thoughtful watercolour illustrations. Well-wrought details and recurring motifs make this a book to be enjoyed again and again.

Finding Monkey Moon

Illustrated by Kate Wilkinson
Walker Books Australia

A story that takes place at night adds a degree of difficulty that debut illustrator Kate Wilkinson handles well, as she captures the emotion of Michael's search for a beloved toy left behind at the park. The pictures effectively conjure the mystery of the night-time park and the loving father and son bond.

Hush, a Kiwi lullaby

Illustrated by Andrew Burdan
Scholastic New Zealand

Andrew Burdan captures the strength and depth of maternal love in this New Zealand reworking of a traditional lullaby. The dreamy quality and muted tonings are a perfect match for the narrative mood. The local setting is effectively realised with familiar motifs cleverly repeated in the te reo Māori section of the book.

Much Ado About Shakespeare

Illustrated by Donovan Bixley

Upstart Press

Each picture tells its own story in this clever biopic of William Shakespeare, with fine detail, expert use of colour, abundant humour and sly commentary on the person and the era. There is much here to reward returning readers, and Donovan Bixley shows much love for his art and his subject.

The House on the Hill

Illustrated by Sarah Davis

Scholastic New Zealand

Sepia tones capture the autumnal, twilight setting, with Sarah Davis expertly generating an appropriately spooky mood to accompany the narrative while providing clues to the archly satisfying denouement. The grand swirl of the staircase, the grinning jack o'lanterns, and the fluttering night-time creatures all contribute dramatically to this Poe-esque tale.

Concluding Remarks

The judges were heartened by the number of first time authors and illustrators evident this year, and the high quality of work produced. All the judges wish that we were able to recognise more of the talents and effort made by new authors and illustrators, as it has been an incredibly hard decision to choose the single winner. Our message to first timers - keep at it! You are producing great books that we want to see more of. We are also impressed with the high standards of publication from smaller or niche publishers, who are creating material that rivals the well-established publishing companies.

It truly has been a challenge this year, to pare down the wide range of excellent submissions to just five in each category, and it is no exaggeration to say that we could have easily short-listed eight or nine books per category. It's a very curious position to be in, to have such a wealth of material to choose from, but making your job very hard!

On behalf of the judges, I'd like to say that being able to read, appreciate and enjoy the best literature in New Zealand for children and young adults is an amazing privilege, and that we hope you enjoy these books as much as we have.

Fiona Mackie
Judges Convenor
8 June 2016

Te Kura Pounamu Award

This award is for a book that is written entirely in (or translated entirely into) te reo Māori. The award is given to the author of a book that is considered to be a distinguished contribution to Māori language literature for children or young people. Excellence in te reo Māori is the main focus, along with literary composition, relevance and quality of illustration, format and physical makeup.

The four entries for this year's Te Kura Pounamu Award include a wealth of well-produced books, touching on themes of friendship, overcoming challenges, native flora and fauna, haka, and personal identity. These stories uplift and enrich Māori literature for young people and are a demonstration of excellence in written te reo Māori. Consequently, there is a need for more Māori language books and resources due to the low number of entries received this year.

Four books were submitted in the Māori language award category this year, with three selected as finalists. Te Kura Pounamu judges agreed that each of the entries uplifts and enriches te reo Māori literature. The three finalists stood out for their inspiring and relevant content, stunning illustrations, and excellence in the quality of Māori language translations.

The three finalists are:

Whiti te rā

By Patricia Grace, translated by Kawata Teepa, illustrated by Andrew Burdan
Huia Publishers

This book is a riveting read that will capture hearts and minds as it shares the history of the famous *Ka Mate* Haka. The language is simple with a clear message, allowing the story to flow easily and the stunning illustrations support the story brilliantly.

Tamanui te Kōkako Mōrehu o Taranaki

By Rebecca Beyer and Linley Wellington, translated by Kawata Teepa, illustrated by Andrew Burdan
Huia Publishers

A well-written in-depth tale about the journey of the kōkako, with simple and meaningful language and beautiful supporting artwork. *Tamanui te Kōkako Mōrehu o Taranaki* is a great read suitable for young children and is particularly special given that there are not many books written for children about kōkako.

Te Hua Tuatahi a Kuwi

By Kat Merewether, translated by Pānia Papa
Illustrated Publishing

This is a refreshing, fun story about Kuwi who has a problem and goes through various scenarios to solve it. The pictures are bright, friendly and suited to a younger audience. The language is descriptive and flows over each page, bringing the story to life. A great read for young children.

Concluding Remarks

Each Te Kura Pounamu entry showcased excellence in Māori language literature, with well-written descriptive text and beautiful supporting artwork, selecting finalists was not an easy task for the judges.

As the number of New Zealanders who are learning to speak Māori continues to grow it is important to have literature to support them. With only four entries received this year, it is hoped in subsequent years more entries for Te Kura Pounamu will be submitted. Each of the four entries has made a notable contribution to Māori language literature for children or young people.

Te Kura Pounamu Award Judges Convenor

Riki-Lee Saa

8 June 2016