

# THE BOOK AND BEYOND

An educator’s guide for exploring children’s and YA literature



Title: Charlie Tangaroa and the Creature from the Sea

Author(s): Tania Roxborough

Illustrator(s): Phoebe Morris

The aim of The Book and Beyond is to inspire an interest and passion for books and reading. This section is for your thoughts, questions and notes about different aspects of the book and to consider how you might frame discussion with students.

## The book

### Physical object

- Standard paperback novel. Cover has a soft, velvet, matte texture. Gloss highlights the yellow text.
- A nice size to hold and just over 1cm thick so a good length to read but not too daunting for young readers.
- Page stock is vanilla/yellow and font is clear and spaced, which might appeal to reluctant or younger readers.
- Do you notice that novels from this publisher, Huia, have a distinctive, cover finishing, feel and style? Compare the book to a non-NZ novel. Are these sensory qualities important? How do they attract readers?

### Design & cover

- The cover shows Charlie in the centre with sea creatures swimming framing a circle around him. He is reaching out to others; drowning or waving?
- The image reflects the adventure and the idea of protection — protected within the circle and the natural world of the ocean.
- The dark hole draws the eye as an optical illusion. There’s a sense of unease, drama, foreboding, with the whirlpool — an undercurrent of darkness.
- Title text curved, as if seen underwater.
- Font is fine, open and easy to read.
- The back cover blurb text is questions rather than what the book is about.
- Map and appendix at the end — information about the gods and a list of Māori words.

### Illustration

- Occasional line drawings at the beginning of chapters. Usually, a simple item connected with the story.
- There is a super map at the end of the book. Don’t miss it.
- Illustrator [Phoebe Morris](#) is known for her NZ non-fiction — Kiwi heroes series.
- Illustrator is credited on the cover as well as the author (not always done on a novel).

## The inquiry

### Rich question(s)

This section is for creating and exploring questions that might guide an overall inquiry for a particular book. These questions might be inspired by ideas in the book section and/or personal responses and/or the NZ Curriculum and/or available resources.

Why is the health and well-being of the environment important?	What are our responsibilities for the health of the environment?
What can we learn from different generations?	What is our impact on the natural world? What personal contributions and changes can we make to reduce this impact?
What would be important enough for you to want to save?	How can we ensure our world is preserved for future generations?

### Characters

- Charlie (13) — Has only one leg but doesn’t hold him back. Singing talent. Mature. Responsibility for brother. Kind, thoughtful, cheeky. Awareness of the annoyingness of his younger brother, but accepts it anyway.
- Grandad — Caring, wise, knowledgeable about te ao Māori.
- Robbie (11) (Charlie’s half-brother).
- Jenny — American tourist, father building port. Helps Charlie and family when trouble strikes. Grounded and resilient. Takes everything in her stride.
- Charlie’s mum — Runs local store. Money problems.
- Mike (Robbie’s Dad).
- Pō-nuia — ponaturi/mermaid — slowly reveals things about herself. We discover more about her alongside Charlie.

### Plot

- Main problem — they found a mermaid and don’t know what to do with her.
- Environmental issues, starting with tourists littering to drive the story.
- Brothers, relationships important to plot.
- Natural disaster vs gods fighting.
- Turning point for Charlie — theme of loss (significant characters).
- Absences throughout the plot (absence of fathers, Jenny’s family, mum is around but absent for most of the plot).
- Grandfather is always there — a constant but not a typical adult character.
- Action, fast paced.

### Setting

- East Coast of NZ/Gisborne/Tolaga Bay as a setting to connect.
- Port being built there. Conflict as it will bring work/make area thrive but also bring pollution/foot traffic that ties in with underlying environmental issues.
- Small town NZ — slower way of life and the speed of the plot is surprising.
- Thorough and detailed description of the setting.
- The bush — the characters are knowledgeable about the area.
- Setting and theme tie-in — the characters are very connected to their environment.

### Theme & message

- The environment and impact of pollution.
- The importance of traditional stories/oral histories and storytelling.
- What it means to be brave/courageous.
- Overcoming hurdles (physical + emotional). Challenge of disability. Resilience.
- The importance of family, local community and citizenship connections.
- Tradition vs progress.
- Brotherhood/brotherly relationships.

### Language

- Te reo Māori is naturally woven through the text, in dialogue and description which is powerful (and maybe unusual) for readers to build understanding of kupu/words and explore concepts.
- Told in first person by Charlie. Reveals his cheekiness. Brings immediacy.
- Fast-paced dialogue and lots of it! Great for reading aloud.
- Contemporary vocabulary in the teen characters — makes the characters relatable.
- Visual writing style with musical/rhythmic language in revealing the landscape and high points of action.

### Mood & feeling

- We loved the hopeful, optimistic mood where characters didn’t always show their fear towards some of the challenging events.
- An underlying sense of foreboding and tension — which makes you keep reading.
- Cliffhangers at the end of chapters — keep the reader or listener involved.

### Genre & format

- Middle years (age 8—12) NZ action/adventure.
- Short, snappy chapters, recognisable characters, mystery + challenge unravel in distinctly NZ, natural environment with cliffhangers in line with this genre.
- Builds in te ao Māori view with pūrakau/legend.

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## Make connections

The aim of The Book and Beyond is to inspire an interest and passion for books and reading. This section is designed to help students use the book as inspiration to share, wonder, question, and explore ideas, possibilities, connections, feelings, experiences and other viewpoints — either alone or together.

### Personal

Create + draw

- Pick your favourite character and write a story around them.
- Re-design the front cover.
- Write an alternative ending.
- Create a comic strip for your favourite scene in the book.

Explore

- The Sapling* article: [The Reckoning: Teaching stories from this land and beyond](#) from writer and teacher Tania Roxborough. She considers the use of Māori in classrooms and stories from here in Aotearoa and beyond – and she discusses her new book *Charlie Tangaroa and the Creature From the Sea*.
- Creative Rights = Creative Reads* [article about Tania Roxborough](#) and the process of writing her Charlie Tangaroa novel.
- 2021 NZ Book Awards for Children + Young Adults [Margaret Mahy Book of the Year award poster](#) and [Judges’ comments on all finalists and winners](#).
- [Poetry Box review and poetry challenge](#):
- Illustrator Phoebe Morris’ [website](#).

Match with digital resources

- National Library Topic Explorer — [Pūrākau \(Māori Myths + Legends\)](#)
- National Library Topic Explorer — [Disasters New Zealand](#)
- National Library Topic Explorer — [Ocean conservation](#)
- These are quality, reliable digital resources. [www.natlib.govt.nz/schools/topics](http://www.natlib.govt.nz/schools/topics)

### Read more

Read the next in the series

- The author is currently writing a sequel, look out for it in the future.
- A Māori language edition *Tiare Tangaroa me te Taipō Moana* is available in February 2022.

Read another book by the same author

- Roxborough won the Esther Glen Award for Junior Fiction for her novel
- [My New Zealand Story: Bastion Point: 507 days on Takaparawha, 1977-78](#) (Scholastic). Race relations in the 1970s through the eyes and heart of a young Māori girl.

Read another book with the same idea/topic/genre

- [My New Zealand Story: Canterbury Quake: Christchurch, 2010-11](#) by Desna Wallace (Scholastic)

Listen to an audio version of the book

### Social (Share your experience)

Join

Find and join/follow an organisation that is linked to the theme of sustainability and conservation:

- [Young Ocean Explorers — Love Our Ocean](#)
- [Kiwi Kids Conservation Club](#) (Great *Wild Things* magazines each quarter for schools/classrooms).
- Here’s an extract: [Charlie Tangaroa and the Creature from the Sea — chapter 1](#) from the Huia website to use with a book group or class to take turns, read together or act out.

What connections can you make to yourself, other texts, the world?

### Text to self

Connecting reading to our past and present experience. Students could connect to the text through thinking about:

- Who are the important people in your life?
- Are there family stories about you in the past that you know?
- Can you retell one e.g. a baby story?

### Text to text

- Have a look at the [Huia website](#) (publishers) to find other texts to make connections.

### Text to world

- Ask students about ‘home’ stories/legends.
- What is your favourite NZ pūraku/legend?
- Is there a story from your culture that explains something in the natural world?

## NZ Curriculum

This section is intended as a prompt for thinking about how the book might relate to the NZ Curriculum. For example, is it a story about *cultural diversity*? What *language, symbols and text* tell the story?

Learning areas		Principles		Values		Key Competencies	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> English	<input type="radio"/> Maths & Statistics	<input type="radio"/> High expectations	<input type="radio"/> Future focus	<input type="radio"/> Excellence	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Community & participation	<input type="radio"/> Thinking	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Relating to others
<input checked="" type="radio"/> The Arts	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Science	<input type="radio"/> Treaty of Waitangi	<input type="radio"/> Learning to learn	<input type="radio"/> Innovation, inquiry, curiosity	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Ecological sustainability	<input type="radio"/> Using language, symbols & text	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Participating & contributing
<input type="radio"/> Health & PE	<input type="radio"/> Social Sciences	<input type="radio"/> Cultural diversity	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Community engagement	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Diversity	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Integrity	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Managing self	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Languages	<input type="radio"/> Technology	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Inclusion		<input checked="" type="radio"/> Equity			