

**CANDIDATE FOR THE
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN
AWARD FOR ILLUSTRATORS 2024**



Gavin Bishop

**Nominated by the
New Zealand National
Section, IBBY**

**Dossier prepared by the
New Zealand National
Section, IBBY**

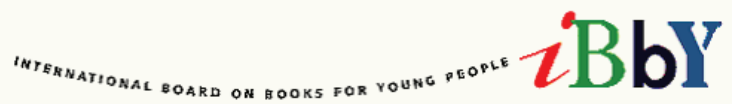
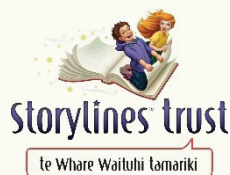
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Charitable Trust of New Zealand te
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PENGUIN BOOKS



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Foreword



Gavin Bishop (Tainui, Ngāti Awa) is a highly acclaimed New Zealand children's book author and illustrator of more than 70 books, whose work ranges from original stories to retellings of Māori myths, European fairy stories, and nursery rhymes.

Born in Invercargill, he spent his childhood in the remote railway settlement of Kingston on the shores of Lake Wakatipu. Studying under Russell Clark and Rudi Gopas, Gavin graduated from the Canterbury University School of Fine Arts with an honours degree in painting. He taught art at Linwood High School and at Christ's College in Christchurch.

Among the numerous fellowships and national book prizes he has been awarded throughout his career, highlights are the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement - Non-fiction in 2019; the Te Waka Toi Ngā Tohu ā Tā Kingi Ihaka/ Sir Kingi Ihaka Award in 2018, recognising lifetime contribution to strengthening Māori art and culture through his children's books; The Arts Foundation's Mallinson Rendel Illustrators Award in 2013; and the 2000 Storylines Margaret Mahy Medal for lifetime achievement and his distinguished contribution to children's literature in New Zealand. Gavin was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2013,

'His track record in writing and illustration is unparalleled. He has won New Zealand's supreme children's and YA book award, the Margaret Mahy Book of the Year Award, a record five times – most recently in 2022 with *Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes*, which also won the Elsie Locke Award for Non-fiction and the Russell Clark Award for Illustration.'

and President of Honour of the NZ Society of Authors.

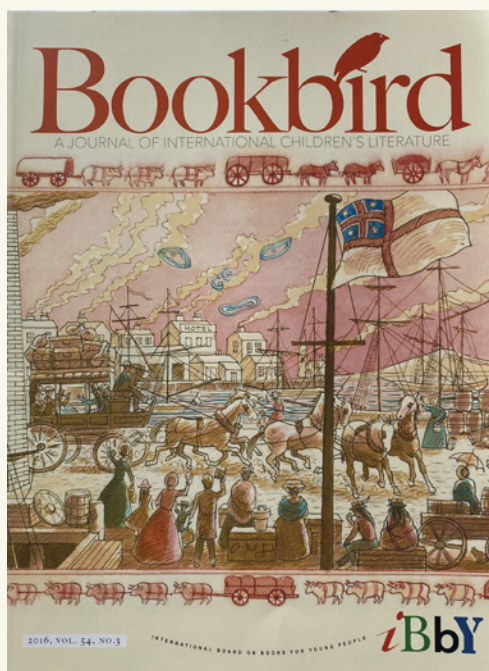
In 2009, Storylines launched the Storylines Gavin Bishop Award for Picture Book Illustration, in honour of Gavin as one of New Zealand's most celebrated children's illustrators. The award is for previously unpublished illustrators, and was established to encourage emergent illustrators, and to acknowledge Gavin's contribution

to the writing and illustrating of children's picture books. Storylines is delighted that Gavin is actively involved in mentoring the winner to publication standard when an award is made.

Gavin is currently a board member of Read NZ Te Pou Muramura (NZ Book Council) and was on the board of Painted Stories Te Tai Tamariki, an organisation that celebrated and exhibited New Zealand children's book Illustration.

After the devastating 4th September 2010 earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand, Gavin worked on the illustrations of a book titled *Quaky Cat*, with author Diana Noonan. Wanting to help the people of Christchurch, both Gavin and Diana donated their services to this project. 50% of publisher Scholastic New Zealand's proceeds from the sale of this book, as well as the author's and illustrator's royalties, were donated to the people in the affected regions via a number of charities established to assist people left homeless or in desperate straits by the earthquake, as well as to Te Tai Tamariki, which was funded by the royalties from *Quaky Cat* until it went into recess in 2021.

His track record in writing and illustration is unparalleled. He has won New Zealand's supreme children's and YA book award, the



Margaret Mahy Book of the Year Award, a record five times – most recently in 2022 with *Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes*, which also won the Elsie Locke Award for Non-fiction and the Russell Clark Award for Illustration. It was described as “an instant classic, a ‘must have’ for every Kiwi household and library” and “much more than a list of gods and legendary heroes – it’s a family tree, presented with power and simplicity. The text is never overstated, with the glory of the illustrations as the primary mode of storytelling, rewarding the reader who closely examines them.”

In 2018, his pictorial history through maps, *Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story*, won the Margaret Mahy Book of the Year Award and the Elsie Locke Award for Non-fiction at the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults. The judges praised it as being “masterful in its execution – a work of art that bears repeated and thoughtful viewing and reading of its vibrant and informative illustrations. It is also a book of enduring significance in the canon of New Zealand children’s literature – a landmark title which will stand the test of time.” That same year, *Aotearoa* won a Storylines Notable Non-Fiction Award and Best Children’s Book at the PANZ Design Awards.

A companion volume, *Wildlife of Aotearoa*, was published in 2019. It

won New Zealand Booklovers Best Children’s Book Award and a Storylines Notable Non-fiction Award in 2020 and in 2022 was made an IBBY Honour Book for the quality of its illustrations.

In 2008 *Snake and Lizard* won both the Book of the Year Award and the Junior Fiction Award. It was written by Joy Cowley and with the series of books that followed, was one of Gavin’s most successful author-illustrator partnerships.

In 2003, *Weaving Earth and Sky*, a collaboration with writer Robert Sullivan, won the Book of the Year as well as the Best Non-fiction awards and was shortlisted for the LIANZA Elsie Locke Medal.

Gavin received the internationally acclaimed Noma Concours 1982 Children’s Picture Book Runner Up Award for *Bidibidi* and the 1984 Grand Prix Winner for *Mr Fox*.

Gavin’s works have also been listed as Storylines Notable Books, most recently *Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes* in 2022, *Wildlife of Aotearoa* in 2020; *Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story* in 2018; also *Tom Thumb* (2002); *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* (2004); *Taming the Sun: Four Maori Myths* (2005); *Kiwi Moon* (2006); *The Waka* (2006); *Te Waka* (2006); *Riding the Waves: Four Maori Myths* (2007); *Snake & Lizard* (2008); *Rats!* (2008); *Piano Rock: A 1950s Childhood* (2009); *There Was a Crooked Man* (2010); *Cowshed Christmas* (2010); *Friends: Snake & Lizard* (2010); *Counting the Stars: Four*

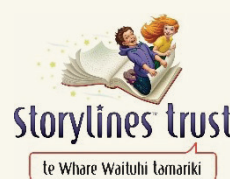
Māori Myths (2010); and *Teddy One Eye: The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear* (2015).

Gavin’s artwork has featured in exhibitions internationally, including Japan and Czechoslovakia. He has written and designed two ballets for the Royal New Zealand Ballet Company: *Terrible Tom* and *Te Maia and the Sea Devil*.

Gavin lives and works in Christchurch, New Zealand. See more about him and his work at www.gavinbishop.com.

Storylines strongly believes that Gavin Bishop would be an outstanding recipient of the 2023 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing.

Christine Young
Chair, Storylines Children’s Literature
Charitable Trust of New Zealand



Biography

Freshness, flair and an imaginative fling

In the opening pages of *Piano Rock*, Gavin Bishop's memoir about his early life, a white-on-black scraper illustration depicts a scene from the 1940s – a steam-powered Ab locomotive pulling freight wagons, a passenger carriage and a guard's van. The van's luggage doors are wide open and inside it a couple sit comfortably on their living-room furniture watching the passing high-country scenery. Standing between them, their small son looks out the door enthralled. For the rest of his life this small boy will tell stories – in pictures and words – about the landscapes, people, buildings and creatures passing before his eyes.

Early influences

Gavin Bishop was born on 13th February 1946 in New Zealand's southernmost city, Invercargill. From the age of three to eight, however, he was raised in Kingston, an isolated settlement at the southern tip of Otago's Lake Wakatipu, with a few houses, no electricity and just one telephone. It

For the rest of his life this small boy will tell stories – in pictures and words – about the landscapes, people, buildings and creatures passing before his eyes.

was a world of coal ranges, kerosene lamps, coppers, vegetable gardens, school concerts, bonfires and jam-making. Gavin was one of 12 pupils at Kingston school, a mile from his home, which he reached by walking or by horse, riding sandwiched between two other children.

It was in this rural setting that

young Gavin Bishop was inspired to a career which would make him New Zealand's foremost pictorial storyteller.

Piano Rock describes how Gavin's early enthusiasm for creating pictures was encouraged by a visit from the district art advisor, Miss Dyak, 'who taught us art for the whole day. I drew all the time and everywhere. I drew forts and houses on my printing books and dogs and cars on my arithmetic books ... I loved drawing and I knew I wanted to be an artist when I grew up. Everyone said I was good at it. It was easier than arithmetic. And I wanted to do it more than anything else in the world.'¹

He watched in awe as a visiting sign-writer painted a mural of Lake Wakatipu behind the bar at Kingston's hotel. 'His picture seemed to flow out of the end of his brush as if it had been secretly hidden there by a magician,' recalled Gavin.² His future career as an artist was set forever when the sign-writer took time off to paint a Mickey Mouse on Gavin's gumboots.

Looking back on his childhood, Gavin told children's reading advocate Barbara Murison that his family





supported his wish to pursue a career in art. 'I knew that I wanted to be an artist from a very early age, and luckily I was encouraged by my parents and teachers to hold onto this idea. Books have always been a part of my life and I was read and sung to by my mother and grandmother when I was little.'³

It was also from his family that Gavin gained his appreciation of the telling (and retelling) of stories. 'When I was a kid in Invercargill in the 1950s, Sunday night was the time for family stories. Auntie Kate and Pups, Mum's oldest sister and her husband, would come for tea. The food – cold mutton, salad and freshly made girdle scones – was the same week after week and so were the stories. Most of the tales were about family members and the funny or terrible things they had done or said.'⁴

A gift of *Cole's Funny Picture Book*, a 19th-century Australian anthology series containing pictures, jokes, rhymes and stories, provided further inspiration. 'You could dip into them. Any one page had so many things to look at: picture puzzles, funny rhymes, riddles, a story in very, very small type.'⁵

Other early influential reading experiences included *The Hobbit*, which first 'introduced itself to me' in a *School Journal* extract when he was nine. Gavin later wrote 'I couldn't believe a story could be so exciting.'⁶

Planting kauri trees

By the age of 18, Gavin had completed high school (where he took art as a main subject)

and left Invercargill for Christchurch, to study painting at the Ilam School of Fine Art at the University of Canterbury.

'I knew that I wanted to be an artist from a very early age, and luckily I was encouraged by my parents and teachers to hold onto this idea'

In 1967 Gavin gained his Diploma of Fine Arts with Honours about which he commented, 'These days, it's a Degree of Fine Arts, but back then I did a diploma with honours, which is the equivalent of a Master of Arts. It's like they couldn't bring themselves to give a practical subject, like art, an academic qualification.'⁷ (The University of Canterbury rectified this perceived slight by awarding Gavin a honorary doctorate in 2016.)

Gavin Bishop credits one of his teachers at Ilam, the influential painter Rudi Gopas (1913–1983) with giving his pictures their 'freshness, flair and an imaginative fling.' Gopas was strongly influenced by the Bauhaus movement and Paul Klee. He encouraged Gavin and his fellow students to look at the

way paint could be applied. Gavin recalls that Gopas, 'encouraged you to throw it around. He'd also make you aware of colour travelling around in a picture, He'd talk about "the expressive line" and the way you could "make marks". ... He would grab things from you, get a pencil and tell you to make a mark "like that" instead of the feeble things we were doing.'⁸

Another of his teachers at Ilam was Russell Clark (1905–1966), a painter and sculptor, who also drew masterly illustrations for the *New Zealand School Journal*. 'He was a brilliant draughtsman. I think he's one of the most underrated people in New Zealand.'⁹ It was Russell Clark who encouraged Gavin's interest in children's books and their illustration. (Years later Gavin would win the Russell Clark Medal for excellence in children's book illustration.)

1968 was a busy year for Gavin. He spent the year at Christchurch Teachers' College training as a high school teacher. He had married Vivien Edwards (1945–), a fellow artist, in 1966 and during 1968 the couple bought their home in Christchurch's hillside suburb, Cashmere Hills, where a kauri tree they planted in their garden is now 55 years old, and where their three adult daughters Cressida, Charlotte and Alexandra were raised.

Writer Bill Nagelkerke interviewed Gavin in 1998 and discovered that he found being married to another artist was helping with his books. 'Gavin values Vivien's comments and opinions, not only as a reader but also as a practitioner. I'm prompted to ask if the practitioner's view is one which is sometimes missing in reviews of



THE BRILLIANT WATERCOLOUR SKY AND RECOGNISABLY NEW ZEALAND SCENERY OF MR FOX (1982).

picture books. Gavin agrees, saying that because reviewers don't always have a technical knowledge of art they can praise a work without realising that the art isn't terribly good.¹⁰

The apprenticeship

Gavin's first venture into picture books came in 1978 when he was travelling in Southland as a Secondary Schools' Art Adviser for the Southern Region. A teacher casually commented to him that Oxford University Press was seeking New Zealand titles to publish locally. Gavin recalled the moment of inspiration which followed. 'I was down in Lumsden, sitting in a hotel room having just had a meal of roast mutton and vegetables, and I started to write a story about a sheep that was fed up with her life and wanted to do something about it. I wrote on and on and on.¹¹

Gavin got a friend to type up his story because he didn't have a typewriter. He is modestly dismissive about his first attempt at illustrating a picture book. 'When I got back home, I did a few pictures. In those days I didn't understand anything about preparing artwork for a book – I did them all different sizes and all over the place. In the end I just bundled the whole lot up.¹²

Gavin has since described the careful revision of the ink-and-watercolour pictures and the 'paring down' of his text which followed, as his apprenticeship in the craft of the

picture book. 'We really hammered this book into shape.'

Bidibidi (1982) tells the story of a sheep's quest for happiness in the form of the secret of the rainbow. *Bidibidi* introduced many of the features associated with Gavin's work: the South Island hill country landscape, carefully observed wildlife,

'*Bidibidi* introduced many of the features associated with Gavin's work: the South Island hill country landscape, carefully observed wildlife, exuberant humour and touches of both the sinister and the spiritual.'

exuberant humour and touches of both the sinister and the spiritual. His hallmark of fine lines and exuberant cross-hatching was to be seen in every picture. The high country scene of massive foothills and riverbed dominating the first double-page in *Bidibidi* is almost entirely composed of fine parallel ink lines.

Over three decades later Gavin reflected on his love affair with the pen. 'The evolution of my style is characterised by the thickness of

my line. In the 1980s, when working on my first books, I was in my early 30s and my eyesight was wonderful. I delighted to use Rotring drafting pens to draw with and I loved cross-hatching. Now I'm in my 70s, my eyesight is not as good and Rotring pens are too much of a hassle to use. It is much easier to draw with fine felt-tips.¹³

It was 1982 before *Bidibidi* was published and it remains in print. *Bidibidi* even became a 26-part TV puppet series. (It seemed appropriate that *Bidibidi*'s latest re-issue came just as Gavin Bishop was named an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to children's literature in the 2014 New Year's Honours List.)

Branching out

While Gavin was waiting for *Bidibidi* to release, he completed another picture book.

Mrs McGinty and the Bizarre Plant (1981) appeared in 1981, thus becoming Gavin's first published work. Its distinctive setting was a recognisable Christchurch. The many familiar features included a building close to Linwood High School where Gavin was then teaching art. The Edmond's Baking Powder factory with its 'Sure to Rise' slogan on the roof provided a hint of the future of the eponymous plant. Before the personal transformation created by the giant plant's fame, Mrs McGinty's home and furnishings accurately reflected her loneliness. The only

warm touch in her bungalow was her calendar with Bidibidi's picture on it.

The effort Gavin put into these early publications established the pattern for his subsequent picture books which all contain brilliant colours, recognisably New Zealand homes, gardens and interiors, humorous touches, carefully planned details and rich watercolour skies.

Mrs McGinty and the Bizarre Plant won the Russell Clark Award in 1982, while *Mr Fox* (1982), with its splendidly detailed interior and exterior settings, was Picture Book of the Year and won the Grand Prix at UNESCO's Noma Concours awards. International success continued with his versions of *Chicken Licken* (1984), *Mother Hubbard* (1986) and *A Apple Pie* (1987). Gavin's retelling of *The Three Little Pigs* (1989) was particularly well received. Translated into Māori, Spanish and French, it has sold what Gavin describes as 'hundreds of thousands of copies.'¹⁴

Gavin's ink and watercolour illustrations for *The Three Little Pigs* can only be described as cool-kiwi, with the wolf sporting sharp shades and a monogrammed windbreaker. The setting is clearly the South Island foothills and, as usual, the pictures are rich in amusing details. The pig's brick house has a turnip motif throughout, while the house made of sticks is a historic V-hut as used by Canterbury's 1850 settlers. Best of all, the sharpness and clarity of Gavin's prose is a perfect match for his illustrations.

'One of the most valuable aspects of these fine picture books is the depth and spaciousness of the illustrations,' wrote Tom Fitzgibbon, a children's book expert, in 1990, referring to Gavin's works. 'The action takes place in beautifully observed New Zealand backgrounds . . . Mr Fox makes a scheming trip from an art deco house to a suburban bungalow and an old cottage with a lean-to near the biscuit factory, while in Hickory Bay the typical caravan is seen opposite a surrealistic monster.'¹⁵

'These pictures are for reading,' wrote reviewer Marcus Crouch,

delighted by *Mother Hubbard's* intricate detail.¹⁶

As both author and illustrator, Gavin quickly realised which element came first. 'You have to get the story right. The book is the story. If the story isn't working, illustration can't save it. Once that's right, you can expand the story with the pictures.'¹⁷

Raymond Huber, a fellow writer, was intrigued to learn from Gavin that the text of a story can also determine the composition of a picture. Huber wrote, 'Bishop must always bear in mind how many lines of text are on the page; where the block of text will appear to best effect; how the picture fits around it; and even the font size. It's not surprising then that the "intertwined rhythms of pictures and words" are such a feature of Bishop's books.'¹⁸

Intertwined rhythms were the basis of Gavin's illustrations for *Little Red Rocking Hood* (1992). Described as a rock 'n' roll opera, the *Red Riding Hood* story is told in song lyrics and set in Granny's soda shop. Gavin's illustrations are a triumph of lively movement and colours, as well as imaginative detail. Wolf O'Malley disguises himself as the Big Bopper but his shadow reveals he is a wolf. When he serves Red, he hides his face behind an ice-cream sundae, but its arrangement of fruit reveals his true face. Gavin conjured up a 1950s setting where everything rocks, from Granny's soda-shop to the lamp-posts, winning a publishers' award for book design.

'It's the BEST feedback I've ever had,' said Gavin in 1990, after reading aloud *The Horror of Hickory Bay* (1984) to a class of new entrants. His fifth picture book had delighted children and alarmed parents, with its superb illustrations of a Christmas beach picnic being interrupted by a Banks Peninsula headland coming to life and consuming cars. Gavin has found that while parents usually dislike *The Horror of Hickory Bay*, children find it enthralling 'because it's a wee bit scary and thrilling.'¹⁹

Gavin also had to face the economic reality that it is adults who

buy picture books. Or, in the case of *The Horror of Hickory Bay*, don't buy them. 'It was a commercial disaster though, but kids seem to really like it. Adults didn't – they found it rather threatening and scary.'²⁰

A 'strong New Zealand flavour'

With his books being published overseas as well as in New Zealand, Gavin was finding constraints on his choice of subject. Most New Zealand picture books then had a first print run of 3000 copies, while *Stay Awake Bear!* (2000) was published in the United States with a print run of 25,000. Of course, overseas editors require their books to have words and pictures appropriate for their market, so Gavin had to do some six months of 'fine tuning' to *Stay Awake Bear!* before publication.²¹ Also Gavin's enthusiasm for art deco architecture was not appreciated by one American editor and he had to redraw several pages of *Stay Awake Bear!* with plainer backgrounds. Later, the old woman in *Rats!* (2007) was deemed 'too ugly for the American market.'²²

There is a rueful note in Gavin's 1991 comment on the amount of freedom book illustrators need to express their own style. 'Illustrators must let their own little idiosyncrasies, their own mistakes, and their own funny little ways of drawing, come through. These may be quite crude sometimes, but they've got to show, to give a picture flavour and character.'²³

Learning from his trans-Pacific correspondence with publishers, Gavin was also able to write some thirty readers for New Zealand publishers and forty readers for an American educational publisher. These included the exquisite *Spider* (1995) which has only seven words, and the popular spy story *The Secret Lives of Mr and Mrs Smith* (1997). Gavin usually left the illustration of these books to others.



Gavin told Doreen Darnell that having some of his books published in the United States was an important element of his career. 'From a financial point of view, it can make being a writer and illustrator possible, because the print runs are much bigger and the potential income from those books is much greater.'²⁴

Gavin has said that he is 'happy to be guided by a publisher who is genuinely interested in his ideas.'²⁵ Nevertheless, he also had his own agenda, a New Zealand one: 'There was pressure too, when I first started writing, to produce books that would 'travel' and sell overseas. Books with a "strong New Zealand flavour" would never be considered for publication in the USA or other countries. In my own small way, I fought this.'²⁶

Two picture books related to Gavin's bicultural heritage suggest what he had in mind: *Katarina* (1990) and *Hinepau* (1994). In his biographical notes, Gavin wrote, 'My father's family were from Dunedin of English/Irish descent and my mother's family were mainly from the North Island from a Scots/Māori background. My tribal affiliations are Ngāti Mahuta (Tainui) and Ngāti Pūkeko (Ngāti Awa).'

Reaching out to contact his relatives in the Waikato gave Gavin a whole new perspective on his family and his Māori heritage. 'My brother and I decided it was time to see what we could find out about our family "up North". So we took a trip. It only lasted a week but it changed our lives.'²⁷

Katarina (1990) retold part of his family history, with its account of a

young Māori woman who marries a Scottish settler and travels from the Waikato to a remote Southland settlement to be with him. Katarina was Gavin's great-aunt, and the research for the book brought him into closer contact with his Māori roots, especially when he found that the facial moko (tattoo) he had drawn for Katarina's mother was identical to her real moko. His brother Russell tracked down a photo of Katarina's mother, Irihapete Hahau. 'After the book was published, Russell rang me in great excitement to say that the photo showed a moko (facial tattoo) the same as the one I'd given Katarina's mother in the book. I'd never seen it. I didn't choose any particular pattern, just a simple double set of spirals ... That incident sums up the whole book – a dichotomy of things that had spiritual meaning to some people, and just a pragmatic meaning to others.'²⁸

It is highly significant that when a bronze plaque for Gavin Bishop was added to the Christchurch Writers' Walkway in 2002, the quotation on it came from *Katarina*.

Hinepau (1993) is an original story about a weaver who uses her special powers to save her tribe, told as though it was a Māori traditional story. Gavin gives Hinepau the power of myth by his simple storytelling and dramatic use of symbols. Hinepau, Gavin had discovered, was an ancestral name passed down in his Ngāti Awa whakapapa (family tree or cultural identity) so he gave his fictional heroine this treasured name. In 2006 a stage version of *Hinepau*

was performed in Wellington and at the Sydney Opera House.

Gavin says, 'My Māoritanga (Māoriness, Māori culture) is intrinsically entwined with my whakapapa (genealogy). Family stories handed down from my mother and her siblings were enough to convince me to share this part of who I am with the children of Aotearoa. Thousands of New Zealanders have similar stories.'²⁹

Another turning point came with the American publication of *Māui and the Sun: A Māori Tale* (1996), with its publisher's note declaring 'The Māori people of New Zealand tell this version of the Polynesian folktale in which a trickster uses magical powers to slow the movement of the sun.' The combination of Gavin's imaginative illustrations and the fresh language of his retelling made it a publishing success, and showed he could convey Māori legends to an international audience. It was soon followed by *Māui and the Goddess of Fire* (1997), the story of the cheeky demigod's theft of fire.

His retellings reflected Gavin's awareness of the importance of Māori myths and legends to the younger generation. 'I want my books to introduce children to their heritage – for children to know the strong tradition of storytelling in New Zealand. We have a mythology that is as rich as Greek or Roman mythology.'³⁰

Gavin, who has made hundreds of visits to schools, was particularly impressed by the response to stories like these by Māori youngsters.



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‘These children have ownership of the stories . . . they are not just fairy tales to them, but part of their whakapapa’ (family tree).³¹

It is no accident that Gavin’s memoir of childhood, *Piano Rock*, contains a story every person who visits Lake Wakatipu hears. The legend tells of the lake’s formation when a monstrous giant was killed in his sleep and his corpse burned. The book has a tranquil double-page watercolour showing his childhood home beside Lake Wakatipu but it is circled by this brief retelling of the legend – in Gavin’s own handwriting, ‘Kingston sat where the feet of Matua the giant once were. After the great fire, water filled the hole where Matua slept. Today the surface of the lake rises and falls every five minutes as his ghost sleeps on.’³²

Eyes of the atua

In 1998, Gavin was awarded a Creative New Zealand grant which enabled him to work for eight months on an illustrated version of *The House that Jack Built*. This book would be published in 1999 and win NZ Children’s Book of the Year in 2000. It would also change Gavin’s life. Until now he had created his books mainly in the school holidays. Now he

was ready to leave teaching and try life as a fulltime writer and illustrator.

‘That [CNZ grant] gave me the confidence to go fulltime. So I took my superannuation early, and that gave us enough to pay the bills, but we’ve been living more or less off my income since that grant.’³³

The House that Jack Built (1999) is framed around the traditional nursery rhyme, but it also encompasses a crucial period of Aotearoa New Zealand’s history, as its full title shows: ‘The House that Jack Built: Being the Account of Jack Bull, Esq. Who Sailed from These Shores to a Land Far Away to Live There and Trade with the Natives of That Said Land, 12th Day of September, 1798’. Jack sails away from a Hogarthian London to set up as a trader. Along with his trade goods, he takes his red door with him and it forms a continuing symbol throughout the events which follow. Gavin’s magnificent illustrations give a rich metaphorical account of the developing relations between the Māori inhabitants and the European settlers (symbolised by Jack) through settlement, trade, intermarriage, conflict and war.

In introducing the book, Gavin



affirmed his belief that nursery rhymes present contemporary children's book illustrators with 'strong, gutsy stories that don't beat about the bush.'

Gavin skilfully incorporated a wide range of artistic styles, from Hogarth to Māori carving, and from Cook's navigation sketches to folk art. He showed the marginalisation of the Māori people, with the style of his pictures reflecting the interaction of the two societies, Pākehā (non-Māori) and Māori. On the simplest level the pictures show the familiar characters of the rhyme: Jack's cat, dog and 'cow with the crumpled horn' all make their appearance. A Māori milk-maiden 'all forlorn' is married to Jack by a priest 'all shaven and shorn' who resembles Bishop Samuel Marsden. Readers can follow Jack's progress from bush hut to handsome two-storeyed public house by spotting his familiar red door.

Jack's prosperity and the growth of the Pākehā (non-Māori) settlement, shown in small border drawings, is matched by a decline in the mana (prestige/power/authority) of the Māori. This is represented symbolically by the presence of the eyes of the atua (Māori gods, supernatural beings and spirits of powerful ancestors) watching over proceedings. Gavin has drawn them in traditional Māori style. Their presence in the pictures gradually dwindles as the Māori cease to control affairs.

'His art also presents the Māori understanding of history, where events from the past can intermingle with events closer to the present, rather than following a strict Western chronological sequencing of events of one date after another.'

Gavin's illustrative style deliberately changes as Jack's story develops. Gavin explains, 'At the beginning the landscape is seen through the eyes of the Māori, where nothing was taken at face value, everything had a symbolic message. Everything had some kind of deity, if you like, standing behind it, adding a kind of spiritual force to that object or natural phenomenon.' Thus in the opening pages, the land, sea and sky are populated by atua. 'By the time you get to the end of the book

that interpretation of nature has become much more naturalistic, so we've got a naturalistic sky or naturalistic hills.'³⁴

Gavin also depicted the Māori attitudes of the period: 'The thing I tried to keep in mind all the time was that the Māori embraced the European culture, and they were very enthusiastic about it. But by doing that they innocently undermined their own cultures and values.'³⁵

Jack's successful rise as a trader is matched by a decline of the position of the Māori. Land changes hands. The balance of power changes. New ideas and attitudes drive out the old. For example, the page showing 'the cock that crowed in the morn' is faced by a page showing native birds such as the kiwi and tui fleeing before invading creatures suggested by the sparrows.

Deffyd Williams, a teacher and curriculum consultant, notes that in Gavin's illustrations for *The House that Jack Built* he shows a different perspective, a Māori way of looking at the past. 'His art also presents the Māori understanding of history, where events from the past can intermingle with events closer to the present, rather than following a strict Western chronological sequencing of events of one date after another. The past is always present in different shapes and forms. *The House that Jack Built* . . . provides an essential overview of our 19th-century histories.'³⁶

Younger readers will simply enjoy the rhymes, but older readers will find food for thought in the closing pages where colonial conflict becomes open warfare and Jack's home is part of the destruction brought by war. The final illustrations, drawn from Māori folk art, blend Pākehā and Māori art forms, representing Gavin's quest 'for understanding and harmony'.

The House that Jack Built is a rich reflection on the nation's history and attitudes. It also represents Gavin's conviction that an increased awareness of things Māori makes for a richer and more stimulating society.³⁷

Refreshing and rebuilding

The new century saw Gavin making full use of his imaginative and artistic powers. *Tom Thumb* (2001) presented traditional and original stories of the tiny hero within the distancing framework of an 18th-century theatre performance. When Tom perishes after his fatal duel with a black spider, cherubs carry him off to Heaven, the stage curtains are drawn and the stage manager snuffs the candles.

More significantly for New Zealand readers, Gavin illustrated Robert Sullivan's *Weaving Earth and Sky: Myths and Legends of Aotearoa* (2002) which included stories of Māui, Tāwhaki and Kupe. (This book was one of the first to be awarded the Toi Iho Māori Made certification as an authentic work created by Māori.)

Gavin had already done two retellings of Māui legends and now

he was inspired to try retelling and illustrating some more Māori myths and legends for young readers.

These eventually appeared as three collections: *Taming the Sun* (2004), *Riding the Waves* (2006) and *Counting the Stars* (2009). Each book contains four traditional Māori legends retold for younger readers in Gavin's bright, fresh prose style.

At the same time, he adopted an entirely new way of illustrating these stories, using the monoprint method on sheets of glass. 'I love it because it's such an expansive technique . . . and there's an almost infinite variety of effects that can be created from mono-prints.' Raymond Huber described Gavin's method in a feature for *Magpies* magazine: 'In mono-printing, he paints straight onto the glass with oil-based inks, then prints the image onto a piece of paper. Next he adds background colours to the paper with water-based dyes – sometimes on wet paper to achieve a more dilute or runny effect. Sometimes the picture will be created as a collage with separate prints cut out and arranged together. It can be a long process, as the inks may take a week to dry between stages.'³⁸

The resulting illustrations have an explosive impact with their strong colours and powerful shapes. A massive whale stretches over five pages in *Counting the Stars* and the battle of the birds takes place against an ominous red sky.

Kiwi Moon (2012), arguably Gavin's best original story, also used the mono-print technique but combined it with his traditional ink and watercolour technique to weave several story strands together. Little Kiwi, an

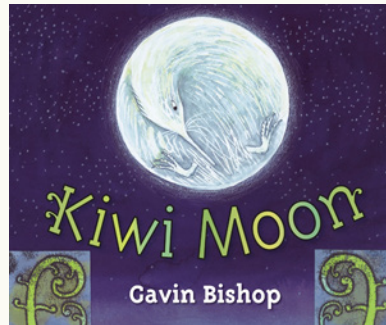
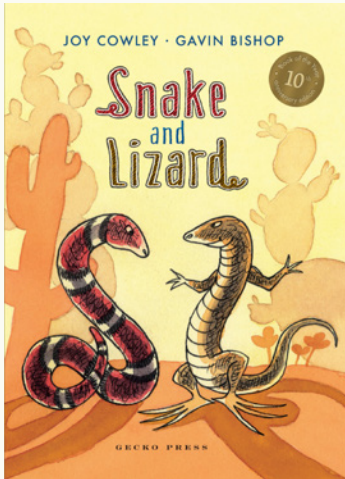
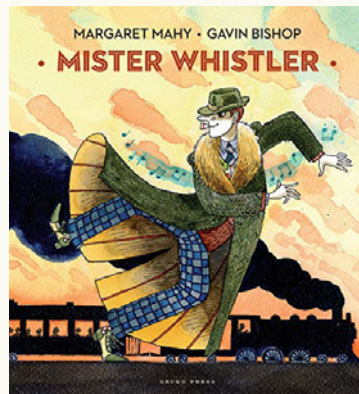
albino bird, has difficulty surviving in the forest, but is encouraged by Te Marama, the moon. He escapes a hunter's kurī (dog) by his 'glowing bright' appearance. (Gavin achieved the dazzling white effect of the moon and Little Kiwi by using latex rubber overlays on white paper, then peeling them off after applying coloured dyes.³⁹) Later Little Kiwi leads a settler's child to safety then escapes a bush fire by leaping up to Te Marama, where he becomes her immortal helper, the Kiwi Moon.

A closer scrutiny of the illustrations shows that the insects and plants which sustain Little Kiwi appear in small mono-prints. Even closer scrutiny reveals a second series of small pictures telling the story of the people, Māori and Pākehā, whose activities affect (and eventually destroy) Little Kiwi's forest home. While this is a sometimes-poignant story, it has a positive ending, with Little Kiwi watching down as fern fronds spring up and two little girls, Māori and Pākehā, skip together and sing, 'I can see you, Kiwi Moon. Will you make my wish come true?'

In many ways *Kiwi Moon* is a simpler version of *The House that Jack Built*, with the same theme of sacrifice as Hinepau. *Kiwi Moon's* skilful blending of words and pictures make it a book to be treasured and enjoyed on many levels; a classic of the future.

Like the other citizens of Christchurch, Gavin had to endure the shocks and after-shocks of the city's disastrous earthquakes of 2010–11. He also performed the remarkable feat of illustrating a





picture book about the quake in six weeks. *Quaky Cat* (2010), a moving story written by Diana Noonan and published by Scholastic, was published within three months of the first shock. Tiger, a disoriented and frightened cat, is seen moving through the wreckage of his once familiar places (shown in cold blues and blacks). We follow his search for his family and security (represented by the warm yellows and oranges of a refugee centre). A striking feature of each picture is that the viewpoint is always at a cat's-eye level.

The sequel, *Quaky Cat Helps Out* (2015) saw Tiger, with his owners' home restored, offering shelter and friendship to homeless cats still struggling to overcome their anxieties. Gavin's superbly-drawn cats move out from unfriendly shades of brown and icy blue to the inviting oranges and yellows of Emma's living room. Even the youngest Canterbury reader would realise that these are not really stories about cats. All proceeds and royalties went to Christchurch charities.

Earthquakes and school visits aside, Gavin was still busy illustrating his own stories, such as the charming *Little Rabbit and the*

Sea (1997), *Stay Awake Bear!* (2000), *Big Bear's Socks* (2003) and *Rats!* (2007). Gavin's sense of humour was still at play; Little Rabbit's bathtub has metal rabbit's feet instead of the usual claws, while the grandfather rat in *Rats!* is quietly reading a tiny copy of *Kiwi Moon* to his ratling.

Cowshed Springtime (2010) is a counting book celebrating births on a farm. Its double-page colour pictures are notable for confident black lines delineating each animal's form and for impact of the bold shapes of animals and balloons against the simple backgrounds of clear blue sky, daisy-spangled grass and the green cowshed.

For his youngest readers, Gavin created *Bruiser* (2011), a picture book about a Christchurch bulldozer with a heart of gold, as well as a sequel, *Bruiser and the Big Snow* (2013). Both books were dedicated to the rebuilders of Christchurch with the motto: 'Look to the future boldly. Remember the past gently.'

Illustrated nursery rhymes included such classics as *There Was an Old Woman* (2008) and *There Was a Crooked Man* (2009), while *Three Billy-goats Gruff* (2003) completed Gavin's retelling of classic stories.

Remarkable collaborations

By now Gavin's books were widely distributed overseas and had been translated into 12 languages. Much more important, from his point of view, was that many of his titles now had Māori language editions, so *Chicken Licken* was also *Pīpī Paopao* (1999) and *The Three Little Pigs* now appeared as *Ngā Poakee e Toru* (2001).

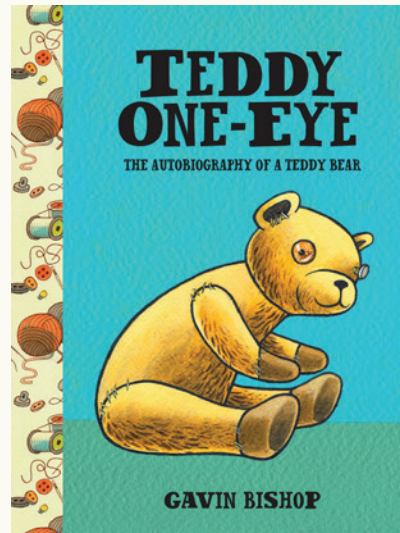
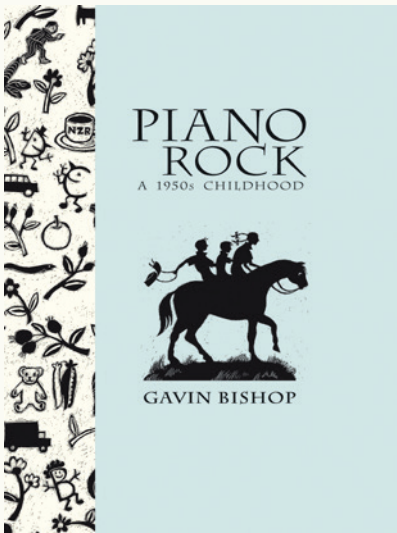
A constant feature of Gavin's work has been the illustrations he supplied for other writers' books. His friend Joy Cowley wrote several such picture books including the delightful *The Video-Shop Sparrow* (1999) in which Gavin drew the main characters as Māori. Other Joy Cowley titles he illustrated include *Pip the Penguin* (2001), *The Little Tractor* (2004), *Cowshed Christmas* (2009) and *The Road to Ratenburg* (2016). Gavin also provided the pictures for Joy's short story collection, *Just One More* (2011).

Perhaps the most remarkable of their collaborations was the series of witty stories about two reptiles providing psychological counselling to their fellow residents of the Arizona desert. *Snake and Lizard* (2007) and *Friends: Snake and Lizard* (2009). Gavin contributed elegant pen and watercolour illustrations of desert creatures, cacti, birds, insects and arid landscapes. He also managed to give Snake and Lizard marvellously expressive faces.

Both Joy and Gavin were surprised to meet hundreds of Chinese fans of Snake and Lizard at the Taipei International Book Expo in 2015, which led directly to Joy beginning a third volume, *Helper and Helper* (2017).

Gavin illustrated two picture books for another famous writer friend, Margaret Mahy (1936–2012). He was able to show Margaret the proofs of *Mister Whistler* (2012) a few weeks before she died, but *Footsteps Through the Fog* (2012) was published after her death.

Footsteps is about a blind girl helping her sighted siblings through



a sudden sea-fog and Gavin's soft watercolours capture a suitably autumnal mood. Lorraine Orman was impressed by Gavin's use of 'washes of retro watercolour tints (yellow, orange, brown, pink and turquoise.) The overall effect is one of warmth and reassurance.⁴⁰

Mister Whistler is Margaret's story of an absent-minded young man who enjoys dancing. When he loses his train ticket, he dances and whistles while he removes all his clothes – on the railway station platform. (Typically, Gavin has also immortalised every aspect of a 1950s railway station's wooden architecture.) *Mister Whistler's* sinuous movements as he takes off and puts on his garments echo the musical notes that twine their way through the pictures. His upturned hat is soon filled with money because people admire his performance.

Rediscovering the past

The publication of his richly atmospheric *Piano Rock: A 1950s Childhood* (2008) shows how deeply Gavin was influenced by the five years of his childhood spent in Kingston. He acknowledged that it was a book which had a long gestation, 'Piano Rock was the result of twenty years of note-making and sketching.⁴¹

The rediscovery of his childhood teddy-bear led him to tell its story in *Teddy One-Eye: the Autobiography of a Teddy Bear* (2014). This also allowed

Gavin to laugh at himself. Teddy is a quiet observer who proves very critical of Gavin's attempts at recalling his youth. 'This wasn't going well. He was getting it all wrong', complains Teddy, 'His memory was letting him down.'⁴²

The 250th anniversary of Lieutenant James Cook's first visit may have produced mixed feelings in New Zealand but Gavin's picture book about the voyage of the *Endeavour* gained universal acclaim. That's because *Cook's Cook: the Cook who Cooked for Captain Cook* (2018) was a meticulously researched but light-hearted account, supposedly written by the ship's one-handed cook, John Thompson. Children's literature can now boast not one but two roguishly endearing sea-cooks.

'How'd I lose my hand? None of your bleedin' business.' Thompson is a gruff but adaptable old sea-dog, who brightens the routine of pease porridge, salt beef and salt pork with alternatives caught on the long journey. Recipes are provided for serving sharks, albatrosses, geese, stingrays, turtles and kangaroos.



When Thompson prepares his Tahitian specialty, Dog and Breadfruit Stew, Gavin even provides a butcher's diagram of a dog.

The illustrations for *Cook's Cook* are splendid water colours, full of the rich 18th Century detail which Bishop lavished on his edition of *Tom Thumb*. Each double-page spread has its own unifying theme, but is also full of tiny details, like Thompson's ever-present wooden spoon. The plan of the *Endeavour* shows that each of the gentlemen's cabins contains a chamber pot.

The features, which we have come to relish in Bishop's earlier picture books, return in unexpected places in *Cook's Cook*. The turnip from *The Three Pigs* has a place of honour on the cover. The rats from *Rats!* seem to be everywhere on the ship. Thompson never sees the legendary big-footed Patagonians but the cliff formation that Banks and Solander encounter is actually a gigantic monster's foot straight from *The Horror of Hickory Bay*. While Cook is in New Zealand waters, the eyes of the Māori ancestral gods and spirits observe proceedings, just as they do in *The House that Jack Built*.

Every page of *Cook's Cook* displays the quality of Gavin's research. The poignant story of the purchase of a bag of sugar has been passed down orally for generations within a local Māori family. Its first appearance in print in *Cook's Cook* shows the degree of trust Gavin has earned among his readers. With *Cook's Cook*, Gavin has brought a whole new perspective to the voyage, yet his carefully absorbed historical knowledge also enlivens and illuminates every page.

Towering kauri trees

At 70, Gavin was at an age when many would have retired. Instead a surprising phone call from his publisher triggered the creation of four show-stopper

volumes which would crown his career: *Aotearoa* (2017), *Wildlife of Aotearoa* (2019), *Atua* (2021) and *Patu*, his account of the New Zealand Wars, to be published in late 2023. The publisher’s question was simple but daunting. They asked if Gavin was keen to do a large-format picture book that took the form of maps and was ‘a history of New Zealand for the last 64 million years?’

Gavin laughed. ‘How the hell can you squeeze that into 64 pages?’⁴³

A brief panic ensued, followed by a busy year’s work. After his research, Gavin spent nearly eight months completing the illustrations.⁴⁴ He succeeded in squeezing 85 million years into 64 pages, between the front endpapers (where pterodactyls fly in) and the back endpapers (where birds fly out).

I was lucky enough to hear Gavin talk about the creation of *Aotearoa: the New Zealand Story* (2017) and to see his original illustrations, outline pages and concept sketches. The underlying design motif is based on the Māori pantheon, so that the symbolic curved forms of Ranginui (the sky father) and Papatūānuku (the sky mother) flow through many illustrations.

Across this subtle framework and a range of symbolic maps, Gavin has sketched in a broad personal overview of some of our shared experiences as New Zealanders. Here are the first settlers and the latest refugees. Here are the homes we made, from raupō hut to corrugated iron bach. These are the names we gave to the land. This is where we worked. These are the conflicts we fought, the settlements we built, the crops we grew, the schools we went to, the suffering we shared, the monuments we erected, the games we played and the stories we told.

In Gavin’s talk, he frequently mentioned the pressure on space: ‘The challenge of this book was to know what to leave out,’ he explained. Given this, it is amazing how much he has managed to include without overloading his pages. His aim was to include ‘lots of pithy little pieces of information.’⁴⁵

Then there are the colours. Many pages have a light blue background, often reflecting sea or sky. ‘I wanted to use a lot of blue, so I mixed up a large quantity to keep the same shade throughout.’ He also described his technique of sprinkling salt on the watercolours while they are still

wet. When the pictures had dried, he brushed the salt off. ‘You get the most beautiful effect.’ More sombre topics such as the New Zealand Wars and the Long Depression have grimmer reds and greys in their backgrounds.

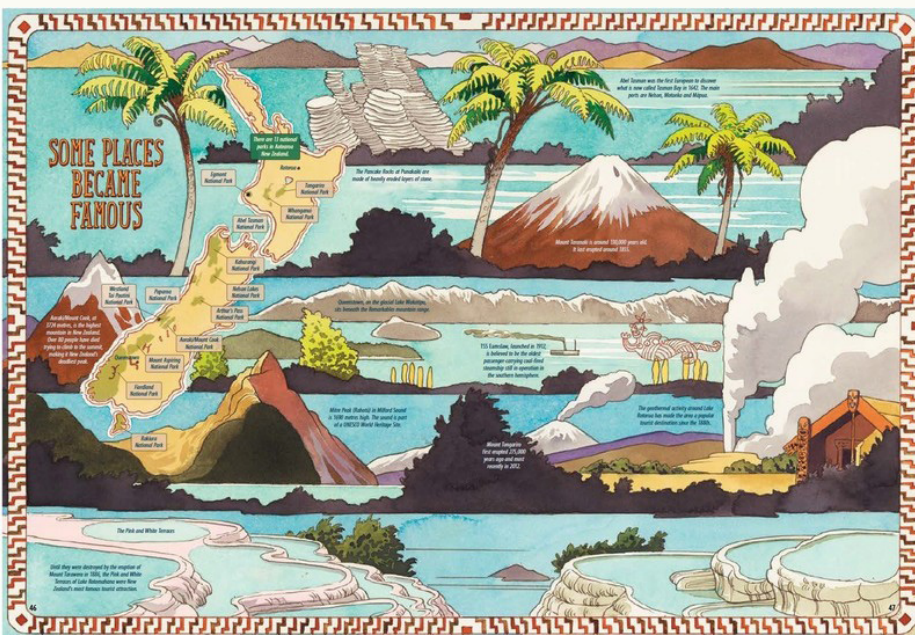
Nestled in among the historical figures are ordinary people – such as a small boy mowing the lawn, and a land girl working on a wartime farm. Charmingly, some of the people depicted are real members of the author’s family. His father is seen at El Alamein and his great-grandmother, Irihapeti Hahau, appears as a supporter of Kīngitanga. (‘My great-grandmother. Why not?’ asked Gavin.) The spirit of Gavin’s tribal ancestral figure, Hinepau, can be found on every page. We can also find his wife, grandmother, grandfather, cousin, brother and honeymooning parents among the models in the *Clothes* section. There is even a tiny (and unflattering) illustration of Gavin himself among a group of storytellers. (Margaret Mahy and Joy Cowley are there too.) This family thread in the weaving is a marvellous idea, because it gives every reader the impetus to fit their own lives and their own family story into the events shown.

The result is a delight: a personal vision of the history of our country in word and picture, a triumph of good design and a celebration of all those who have contributed to our national identity. *Aotearoa* was the book of the year, and perhaps even the book of the decade.

Aotearoa attracted readers like a magnet, so it was no surprise that a sister volume *Wildlife of Aotearoa* (2019) soon followed. What came as a surprise was that Gavin based this book on the life cycle of five eels!

The final colour pictures in Gavin’s autobiographical *Piano Rock* show a sight that amazed him as a boy, a thousand young eels flowing over the stony beach and throwing themselves into Lake Wakatipu.⁴⁶ It was an important stage in the life-journey of the eels.

Wildlife of Aotearoa begins where





that life-journey starts. The first breath-taking illustration is the front endpaper, showing a giant squid (ngū-nui) in an intricate tangle of pink tentacles against the inky depths of the Pacific. It's such a striking picture that it's only later that you spot five tiny eel larvae in the corner. They are the first of thousands, all making their way south towards their tūrangawaewae (home, place to stand) in Aotearoa. Their names are, of course, Tahi, Rua Toru, Whā and Rima. [1,2,3,4,5].

Turn to the back endpaper and – an eel's lifetime later – you see a mass of eel larvae, the offspring of Rua and Tahi, beginning the same journey. In between these two events, the five eels (and the readers) are given a complete overview of New Zealand's original animal occupants, the impact of successive arrivals of humans, and their associated creatures from the kiore to the koi carp. Changes to the habitats of coast, forest, wetland and hill country are all sketched in, complete with expected outcomes and unexpected consequences. Special pages follow themes, such as *Te Mau Huna a Tāne: Life in the Bush After Dark* (pp 31-32), where the kiwi is surrounded by other night-loving creatures, from bat to bat-fly, pūriri moth to morepork, each with its own informative note. In a nice graphic touch, the moon, far above, is actually Kiwi Moon.

Wildlife of Aotearoa is rich with grace notes from other titles by Gavin, such as the symbolic figures of the Māori gods on p 28, with the

tears of Ranginui and Papatūānuku forming the rain and streams which sustain the forests.

There are plenty of challenges facing our wildlife and Gavin handles these well. The fate of three of the longfin eels (an endangered species) is starkly symbolic. Wha is trapped as food for a local hapu, Rima is killed for dog-tucker and Toru becomes the 'wholesome wild protein' in a tin of pet food sold in the U.S.A. Conservation and pest-reduction efforts are also well-handled, making this a challenging and positive book, full of insights; one to return to, again and again.

'Aotearoa was the book of the year, and perhaps even the book of the decade.'

Each time a page is turned a new discovery is made. For me, it was Gavin's dedication, which is to the seabirds of Aotearoa: 'Their massive decline tells us all is not well with Tangaroa. Their future is ours.'⁴⁷

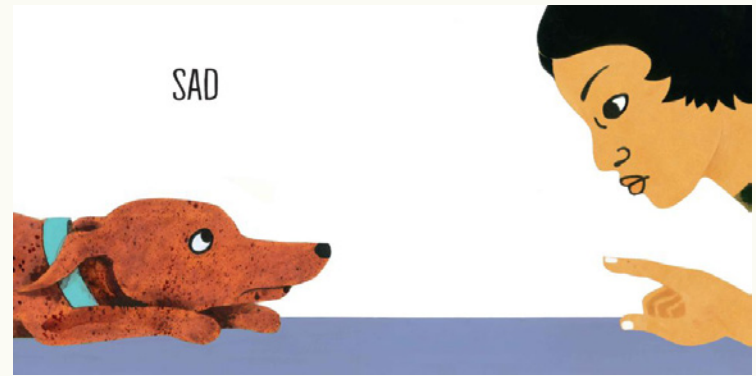
In *Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes* (2021), Gavin has woven a fascinating tapestry of Māori mythology and

legends, then carefully inserted tufts of information into his smoothly-linked patterns. The result is a splendid cloak of knowledge, to be worn proudly by any New Zealander. Opening a page in *Atua* is to learn something you didn't know and to have it firmly lodged into your memory by a well-chosen word or picture. Or both.⁴⁸

The book begins in the darkness of nothingness, followed by light and the creation of the sky-father Rangī e tū nei and earth-mother Papatūānuku. Gavin starts with his mihi [greeting, introduction] and then begins his story. Rangī and Papa have over seventy children, 'all boys, all gods, all immortal.' Two awe-inspiring double-page fold-outs provide a panorama of these gods, with seven of the most significant ones dominating the scene and the story.

These illustrations are created in a range of traditional styles echoing tribal carvings and paintings. All the pictures show the firmness of line and deft colouring that we have come to expect. Every page has an impact of its own.

A good example is the spread for Kupe's discovery of Aotearoa, a dramatic picture of the explorer's double canoe in hot pursuit of a giant octopus. Over the blue of the sea and the white slash of the canoe's wake, a flock of black frigate birds dominate the illustration. As well as the narrative of Kupe's achievements, small sections explain the importance of tūrangawaewae, whakapapa, canoe building methods and the behaviour of sea birds.



Closer examination shows the people on the canoe carrying on their routine activities, such as fishing and preparing food, while others crowd the bows with spears threatening the fleeing octopus. A symbolic circle of karakia (prayers) protects the voyagers. And there are still another 62 pages to enjoy.

The dialogue in *Atua* is fresh and enjoyable, as when mischievous Maui drops a berry on his parent's head. 'Hey! Cut that out,' shouts his father. *Atua* is notable not only for user-friendly prose but also for its highly imaginative illustrations. In the tale of Tāwhaki's revenge against the evil ponaturi, sea-spirits who killed his father, Gavin depicts their home with an articulated whale skeleton for its roof beams. The effect is delightfully creepy.⁴⁹

Atua is a magnificent retelling of some of the Māori myths of creation and the epic exploits of their gods, demi-gods and human heroes. Myth is not a synonym for false. These are tales that the first Polynesian settlers of Aotearoa brought with them and, as Gavin gracefully puts it, found them 'recoloured' by their new environment. They formed the basis for the rules and customs, religious beliefs, manners and daily behaviour of Māori tribal society. As such, they still have relevance for us today, a point Bishop acknowledges frequently. Each tribe also developed its own distinctive canoe legends and hero stories, and Bishop has drawn widely from them as well. He shows an awareness of the wealth and variety of the stories and their regional variations.

Atua is a grand compilation; an eye-opening series of thoughtfully created illustrations, and a lively retelling which is rich in its love of

knowledge. It is truly a taonga, a treasure, for future generations.

The 2022 Children's Book Awards proved a triumph for *Atua* and Gavin. *Atua* won three of the six categories, achieving winner of the Elsie Locke Award for Non-Fiction, winner of the Russell Clark Award for Illustration and winner of the supreme prize, the Margaret Mahy Book of the Year Award. Gavin made a separate speech on receiving each award and, typically, ensured that everyone involved in the book's creation was thanked.

Catherine Woulfe, Books Editor of *The Spinoff*, declared, 'Tonight belongs to Gavin Bishop ... It's the fifth time he's won book of the year (more, even, than the award's namesake Margaret Mahy), the third time he's won the non-fiction category, and the fifth time he's won for illustration. There's all sorts of ways to crunch the numbers, plus a bunch of other awards and accolades not mentioned here, but at this point let's just say he's The Man.'⁵⁰

Gavin Bishop has been shortlisted for New Zealand book awards more times than any other author or artist. His achievements have also been recognised with many awards, including being made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit. There are two awards he is proudest of. One is the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement (2019), of which he said, 'For a children's author to be selected for that is pretty major.'⁵¹ The other is the Te Waka Toi Nga Tohu a Ta Kingi Ihaka: the Sir Kingi Ihaka Award for services to Māori art and culture (2018). 'It has inspired me to try even harder in the coming years to produce work of significance for not only Māori but all New Zealanders,' said Gavin.⁵²

Planting story seeds

Despite all the honours and glamour, Gavin would probably be proudest to know that in pre-schools, kindergartens and homes throughout New Zealand, young children are enjoying several small Māori board-books. They are *Mihi* (2020), *Koro* (2021) and *E Hoa* (2022).

The mihi or pepeha is now a recognised feature of New Zealand life. It is an introduction or a greeting, which tells who you are and where you come from. It gives you your place in the world. This might seem difficult but Gavin's words and pictures in *Mihi* make it so breathtakingly simple that a baby could understand it. Canoe, mountain, river, tribe and whānau are identified. The illustration of the whānau is a cluster of relatives, with only the top half of a small person's head visible. A small blue rabbit is firmly held up. Turn the page.

'Tōku māmā.' (My mother)

'Tōku pāpā.' (My father)

Finally we reach the individual: when we come to the final picture we see the serious face of the small child, with the blue rabbit still near at hand:

'Ko ahau tēnei.' (This is me)

Mihi is the perfect book for parent and child to read together, to insert details and put names to the people.

In *E Hoa* (2022) the child from *Mihi* introduces their friend, a dog. The pictures which follow use the dog to illustrate a range of emotions and feelings, from anger to shame. Each picture is a spring board for discussions about how the dog is feeling and why. 'Taku hoa pūmau,' (My faithful friend) says the child.

A grandparent's special role is the theme of *Koro* (2021) which is

Endnotes

also published in English as *Pops*. Gavin's pictures are again bold, simple and charming, with the figures (or parts of them) shown against large blocks of colour. (Koro's face is darker and more textured by Gavin's trademark sprinkling of salt on damp watercolour). Every picture shows the contrast between the old man and his fresh-faced grandchild. The child spends a day with their Koro, gathering ingredients from the garden to make the sandwiches they enjoy for lunch.

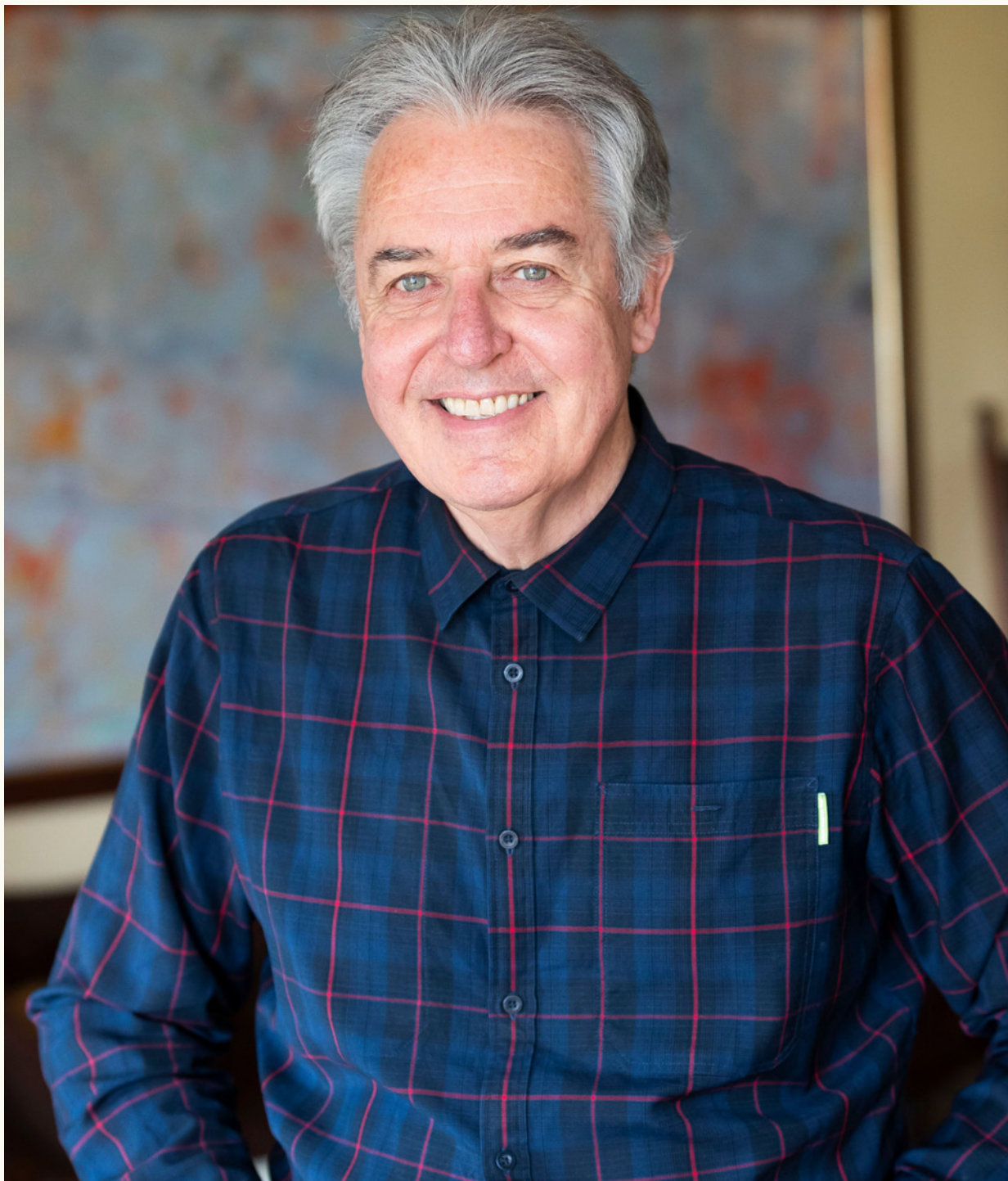
This little board book will inspire not only reading but storytelling in a family. 'He *kōrero*' (We tell stories), says the child.

He *kōrero*. That is Gavin Bishop's life and achievements summed up in two words.

Trevor Agnew QSM
Christchurch, New Zealand
6 Jan 2022

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- 2 *Piano Rock: A 1950s Childhood*, Gavin Bishop, Random House, 2008, pp. 10-11
- 3 GB in 'An E-mail Interview with Gavin Bishop' by Barbara Murison, 20 May 2003, on Gavin Bishop's website www.gavinbishop.com
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- 6 GB [Gavin Bishop] in *Picture Book Magic*, Chris Gaskin, Reed, 1996, p.32
- 7 'My Place' by Gavin Bishop, *Kia Ora Magazine* (Air NZ) January 2023
- 8 GB in 'Fresh Flair' by Celia Dunlop in *NZ Listener*, 4 Feb 1991, p. 80
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- 14 GB in 'Author Inspired by 64-year-old Teddy' by Beck Eleven, *Press* (Christchurch), 2 Nov 2014
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- 48 Review of *Atua*, Agnew Reading Blog (<http://agnewreading.blogspot.com/>) 31 Aug 2021
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- 50 'He's the man: Gavin Bishop cleans up at the children's book awards' by Catherine Woulfe, *The Spinoff*, 10 Aug 2022
- 51 'My Place: Christchurch' by Gavin Bishop, *Kia Ora Magazine* (Air NZ) January 2023
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2.
Photograph



3.

Contribution to Literature for Young People



GAVIN READING *BRUISER* TO SCHOOL CHILDREN IN 2012

Gavin Bishop is the most distinguished illustrator for children in Aotearoa New Zealand. His extensive oeuvre shows a breadth of style, content, theme appropriate for a wide age range of readers. Gavin has frequently said that he creates books ‘that our children can read and be part of’, ‘books that reflect our beliefs, our environment, our histories, our stories’.

His books range from his recent board books to share with our youngest children, picture books that engage children and develop an ongoing love of reading of both text and illustration, junior fiction that tells stories relating to children across the world, and especially in Aotearoa New Zealand. Many can be considered as ‘family books’ which have been enjoyed by, and enriched the knowledge of, young people and their families of their own country. These include titles such as *Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes*, *Wildlife of Aotearoa*; and *Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story*.

Gavin has made a significant contribution to strengthening Māori art and culture through his children’s books. Readers of all ages across the country are benefitting from his Māori mythology books with stories told in a relatable manner using traditional graphics. In many families they are shared sources of a deeper understanding of indigenous Māori culture.

Other books tell stories of the country’s beginnings: including Aotearoa New Zealand in pre-European time, colonisation, and growing up in New Zealand. They enable young people to learn of our history in an enjoyable way. Likewise, his books on flora and fauna, with their exquisite illustrations, encourage children to look closely at the world around them.

Gavin Bishop’s books are used extensively in schools. Not only are his stories used to encourage early and ongoing engagement in reading and visual literacy, but they are relevant to our country’s curriculum focus: they emphasise learning in an enjoyable way. Many of his books are

pure fun and make great read-alouds for young people at school and home, enhancing the reading experience.

Gavin’s contribution to children in New Zealand has also been through his willingness to visit schools, for example on the Storylines Story Tours as well as presenting at workshops and literary festivals. His engagement with young people is inspirational.

The beautiful production of his books, which maximise the extraordinary quality of his illustrations, his signature use of line and colour, encourage children’s aesthetic appreciation of books as a source of information, inspiration and enjoyment.

Gavin Bishop has been quoted . . . ‘A good children’s book is one that not only speaks with an understanding of children but throws light onto some of the mysteries of life, waiting to be explored by young readers’. Gavin’s books most certainly do that.

Essays, Interviews, Articles

Meet Gavin Bishop

Interviewed by Zak Waipara

Magpies: Talking About Books for Children

New Zealand Section, vol. 34, no. 1, p. 1, March 2019.

Gavin Bishop has had a long and distinguished career writing and illustrating award-winning children's picture books, from original stories to retellings of Māori myths, European fairy tales and nursery rhymes. He talks with Zak Waipara about his creative process.

What do you see as the strengths of children's books?

A book for children is a deceptively simple thing. It can often look as if it was whipped up in no time at all. In fact, if it looks as if it was hard to do the creator has lost the game. A good children's book is one that not only speaks with an understanding of children, but throws light onto some of the great mysteries of life, waiting to be explored by young readers.

The picture book, where pictures and words tell a story 'hand in hand', is my passion. It offers so many artistic and literary challenges that I could never exhaust them all in a single lifetime.

Many publishers, mostly in the USA, have said to me that picture-books are quite simply for children who can't read yet. I can't think of anything further from the truth. There are lots of examples of picture books that work at many levels and can be re-read, with discoveries in the pictures and the text to be made almost endlessly. I think my version of *The House That Jack Built*, that looks at the colonisation of New Zealand, is a picture book that appeals to older

children, who can certainly read. Many New Zealand schools use this book to talk about the history of this country.

You've talked about the differences between digital and hand-made work, and have revived traditional methods, such as mono-printing. Where do you see the future of illustration?

I studied painting at the Canterbury University School of Fine Arts, in the 1960's. My approach to picture making and use of materials is embedded in the knowledge I received there from people like William Sutton, Rudi Gopas and Russell Clark, the famous illustrator. It is not something I can easily shrug off.

I really like making a picture book with my hands on a piece of paper and experiencing all the little accidents and unexpected events that take place when you draw a line, apply paint or perhaps make a mono-print. You never completely know what is going to happen, how dark a colour will dry or how thickly a brush might make a line. You have to trust your instincts, because it is often hard to modify an image once it has been made. With a digital image it seems you can endlessly adjust it. I also suspect that it is easier to disguise poor or weak drawing with a computer.

Some people don't think this matters in a children's book, but of course I strongly object. Only the best will do when it comes to producing books for children.

In the future, I think there will be a return to manually made art. But not entirely. There are already a lot of illustrators who combine both digital and hand-made approaches.

I would like to continue producing hand-made pictures and adjusting my technique to suit the story and/or the age of the readers. I am an artist who solves problems with my hands and

my gut reaction.

A computer for me is too clinical and I dislike the act that a computer-made image is trapped in the machine until it is printed onto a page.

Do you have a daily working routine?

When I am totally involved in a book, with a deadline looming, I start most mornings around 9am and work through to about 5pm. Hundreds of hours in my studio flick by and I see no-one. However, there are also days when I do very little. I might go out for a cup of coffee, meet some friends or go to the library. A grandchild or two might come for a holiday or my wife and I might go overseas. It is an interesting and demanding life. I enjoy it enormously.

A book generally takes me about a year, and in the case of a book like *Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story*, seven or eight months of that time would have been spent making the illustrations. There was a huge amount of research involved in that book. Other books might take only a couple of months. *Quaky Cat*, written by Diana Noonan, was illustrated in six weeks. It was important to publish this book whole the first Christchurch earthquake was still fresh in everyone's minds.

How much creative freedom are you given in expressing your ideas? Has this changed through your career?

I can do pretty much what I like as far as the illustrations go. This is a great vote of confidence in my abilities but it can be a burden because it is left up to me entirely to come up with the goods. In recent years, many of my recent projects, which once would have been instigated by me, are the result of ideas that have come from my editors or the marketing team.



Some of my recent books, *Aotearoa* and *Cook's Cook*, for example, were my publishers' ideas and have been very successful. I have had the freedom to interpret the themes of these books in my own way.

Working closely with a designer has changed the way I work too. My recent books have been quite complex because of the large amount of text scattered over most of the pages. Putting that text in place is something that only a very good designer could do. I certainly couldn't.

You have illustrated several versions of Māui. How do you keep them unique and yet familiar?

Illustrating Māui is a challenge. He is a wonderful character, quite funny but really sinister too. I like the fact that he was the 'runt of the litter'. The smallest in his family, the last born, Māui Pōtiki. And yet, even though he was puny, he was the smartest of them all. I've illustrated stories about Māui several times and have usually presented him in this way. When the movie *Moana* was released, I was contacted by the *New York Times* to ask what I thought about the interpretation of Māui. Obviously someone at that newspaper thought like I did, and did not think that the

best way to portray Māui was as an overweight hulk.

How have you engaged with Māoritanga through your work?

My Māoritanga is intrinsically entwined with my whakapapa. Family stories handed down from my mother and her siblings were enough to convince me to share this part of who I am with the children of Aotearoa. Thousands of New Zealanders have similar stories and when I was young no-one talked about them. They were certainly not thought important enough to be put into a book. There was pressure too, when I first started writing, to produce books that would 'travel' and sell overseas. Books with a 'strong New Zealand' flavour would never be considered for publication in the USA or other countries. In my own small way, I fought this. In the early 1980s I wrote about my great-aunt, Katarina, a Māori woman from the Waikato, and then a little later I invented a legend of my own and named the main character after a Ngāti Awa ancestor, Hinepau.

In recent years, after a childhood in Southland isolated from Māori whānau in the North Island, I have made contact with many of my iwi up North. This has given me confidence

to continue telling our stories to our children as well as to the rest of the world ... It is about an awareness of whakapapa as well as a knowledge of tikanga and kawa, but it can take many guises ... Personally, I would refer to myself as a New Zealand artist of Māori and Māori descent. I feel comfortable with that. I am not a Māori artist in the traditional sense because my writing and illustrating is a solitary occupation and not something that can be done in a group, as many traditional Māori art practices such as raranga and whakairo can be.

There are references to past artists in your work, such as Te Mana o Turanga carvings in *The House That Jack Built*, and a Wilhelm Dittmer lithograph in *Weaving Earth & Sky*. Are these just for yourself, or do you hope people will recognise and investigate these works?

It is interesting you have found these references, most people haven't. The Te Mana o Turanga carvings in the East Coast whareniui were some of the first examples kin major art works from the South Pacific of the direct influence of Greek and Roman art which came via the Italian Renaissance and Victorian England.



I openly used them in the final illustrations of *The House That Jack Built* to suggest that even though there is on-going conflict between Māori and Pākehā, the two peoples are joining to make a new Pacific culture in Aotearoa.

The Dittmer lithograph is a well-known interpretation of the Māui fishing legend that lots of people my age were familiar with through books we had at school in the 1950s. Again it shows the influence of classical European imagery as well as the domination of a colonial culture over an indigenous one – something New Zealanders have taken for granted in art and literature, and all aspects of life.

I enjoy embedding images and references to other people's work in my pictures. Some readers will find them there and be delighted, but others won't bother to look. *Cook's Cook* is another example of information embedded in the illustrations – pictures to be read, instead of just the text.

Are there dream projects you would love to tackle?

I have surprisingly few pet projects in the bottom drawer that have never

got off the ground. Most of my books take a long time to do and usually before I start them, I think about them a lot. (*Piano Rock* was the result of 20 years of note-making and sketching. The elimination of ideas for projects takes place fairly early on. Keeping things interesting for myself is not a problem. I am obsessed. A large part of my brain is working on a current project or on one coming up most of the time, night and day. This can be a problem when I'm trying to get to sleep, for that is when the best ideas come along. A notebook by the bed is an invaluable tool.

What influences have shaped the evolution of your style?

I have crazes on all sorts of things, from mending antique china to growling old roses and succulents. All of these things find their way into my books and can easily be found if you like to look. The evolution of my style is characterised by thickness of my line. In the 1980s, when working on my first books, I was in my early 30s and my eyesight was wonderful. I delighted in using Rotring draughting pens to draw with and I loved cross-hatching. Now I'm in my 70s, my eyesight is not as good and Rotring

pens are too much of a hassle to use. It is much easier to draw with fine felt-tips.

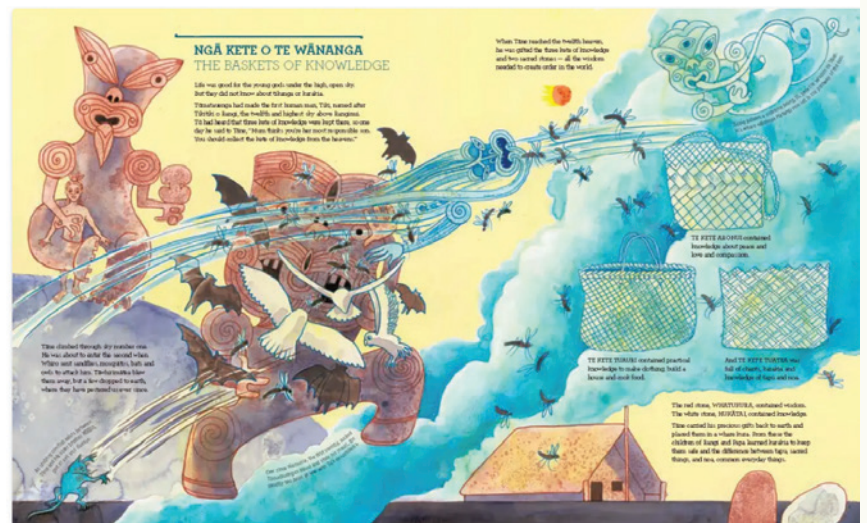
Is there one award of the many you have received, that holds a special meaning for you?

The 2018 Ta Kingi Ihaka Award for my contribution to Māori art and culture is one of the most humbling and important recognitions of my work. It has inspired me to try even harder in the coming years to produce work of significance for not only Māori but all New Zealanders.

It's been a real privilege to be able to share these insightful and illuminating comments from Gavin's work and career! He mihi mahana ki a Gavin, te tohunga ra, mo tona whakaaro hohonu!



WRITER AND ILLUSTRATOR GAVIN BISHOP IN HIS CHRISTCHURCH STUDIO. ALDEN WILLIAMS/STUFF



National Portrait: Gavin Bishop, telling New Zealand's Stories

Written by Philip Matthews

Stuff News, August 20 2022.

He was once, twice, three times a winner. Whenever Gavin Bishop sat down he had to get up again and accept another award. And he delivered a new speech each time. You can be sure no-one went unthanked.

That was at the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults in Wellington in early August. Bishop's beautiful, large-format book *Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes* won the illustration award, the non-fiction award and finally the big prize, the Margaret Mahy Book of the Year.

"It was overwhelming, nerve-racking," Bishop says a few days later in his studio at the back of his large, Victorian-era wooden house on the slopes of the Port Hills overlooking Christchurch.

But it is not completely unfamiliar territory for him. *Atua* gave Bishop his fifth Book of the Year prize since 2000 – three for his own books and two more as an illustrator of books by

others. That makes Bishop, 76, who is Ngāti Pukeko, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Mahuta and Tainui, our most lauded picture book illustrator and author.

You could say he has a knack for balancing whimsical subjects and hefty topics. It is the latter that have won the big prizes – colonialism in *The House That Jack Built*, New Zealand history in *Aotearoa*, and Māori mythology in *Atua*.

The ambition of these books can sometimes seem daunting. He remembers when his publisher rang to ask if he was keen to do a large-format picture book that was "a history of New Zealand for the last 64 million years".

He laughs: "How the hell can you squeeze that into 64 pages?"

After a brief panic, he made lists of topics, drawing on history along with more idiosyncratic things.

"I looked at disasters, because kids love disasters. I looked at quirky things like the carrot at Ohakune, the

giant fish down at Rakaia. I put some of my family into it."

That was *Aotearoa*, and it was a big success. It has spawned sequels, including the *Wildlife of Aotearoa Colouring Book*, out in November.

"Colouring books have been maligned for a long time," he claims.

Atua is dramatic, or cinematic. The book opens in complete blackness: Te Kore, Te Pō, Te Ao. The darkness lifts slowly and then the first gods appear, and then the demigods, unfolding in some kind of cosmic time. It ends with human migrations to Aotearoa.

Bishop went back to old collections of myths and creation stories and consulted a cousin in Whakatāne who is steeped in mātauranga Māori and offered esoteric slants.

Of all the gods and demigods, Bishop has a special fondness for Māui, the trickster and shapeshifter whose exploits he has illustrated before.

"He's a really interesting character,

THERE IS STILL A HIERARCHY IN PUBLISHING, GAVIN BISHOP SAYS, AND WRITING FOR KIDS IS AT THE BOTTOM. ALDEN WILLIAMS/STUFF



he's lovely. People don't really understand that. Even in New Zealand, people have done books about Māui and made him into a superhero."

When the Disney movie *Moana* came out, Bishop was approached by the New York Times for his opinion on the depiction of Māui as a goofy strongman. It's clear he didn't really approve.

He sees Māui as a smart kid with ADHD. "I think that sums him up. Impulsive, clever and full of action."

The picture book about colonialism, *The House That Jack Built*, appeared more than 20 years ago and was probably ahead of its time. It seems right that it is having a revival and will be used in schools in the new history syllabus.

The book was important in other ways. Until then, he had been a high school art teacher, and it is easy to imagine his calm but wry manner in

the classroom. But after *The House That Jack Built*, he took the plunge, quit his day job and went full-time as an author and illustrator.

His wife, Vivien, is also an artist, and they have shared this house for 52 years. They have three daughters and three grandchildren.

He has worked on more than 70 books. He won the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in 2019, in the non-fiction category. Despite these and other successes, he is conscious, as writers for children often seem to be, of a pecking order.

"There is a hierarchy in the world of literature," he says. "Probably at the top is poetry and then fiction, then non-fiction, and you keep going and finally end up with stuff written for children."

In other places, such as Japan and some Scandinavian countries,

children's literature has equal footing, he says. He believes the hierarchy is an English thing.

It is reflected in the prize money. You take home \$60,000 if you win the fiction prize at the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards, compared to \$7500 for the Margaret Mahy award.

But the growing maturity and depth of children's publishing over four decades is impressive, and he singles out New Zealand's book designers for special praise.

So where to, after *Aotearoa and Atua*? The research for Bishop's next big topic is on display. There is a stack of books on the New Zealand Wars by Vincent O'Malley, and he's also been reading historian James Belich and dipping into the accounts of the wars written by James Cowan back in the 1920s.

"They are fantastic," he says, of the Cowan books. "God, they're good.



GAVIN BISHOP IN 2003 WITH A SPREAD FROM *THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT*. DISCOVERING HIS FAMILY HISTORY GAVE HIM MORE CONFIDENCE TO TACKLE SUBJECTS SUCH AS COLONIALISM.

DAVID ALEXANDER/STUFF

There's so much material."

His large-format picture book about the New Zealand Wars should be out next year. There are painted boards of war scenes stacked in the studio, and sketches of a pā on a desk. He still works by hand.

He spent 18 months on the text, which has been checked by O'Malley. He has visited the Tawhiti Museum in Taranaki, with its "breathtaking" war dioramas made by Nigel Ogle.

He also has a personal link. His Tainui grandfather, Benjamin McKay, was a 16-year-old boy in Waikato during the wars.

"It's a hell of a long time ago, a whole different world," he says. "He was dead 10 years before I was born. I find it intriguing to think of the life he must have known."

These are big stretches of time. Bishop's mother was born when the old man was 68 and had moved from Waikato to the bottom of the South Island.

The past was largely mysterious until the late 1980s when Bishop and his brother Russell, who has had a distinguished career in Māori education, became curious about the Māori side of their family. They had only a couple of names and a place

as a start, but Bishop remembers a "week of amazing discovery" that seemed almost fated.

He tells a remarkable story of two Pākehā-seeming brothers finding previously unknown relatives in Whakatāne and Ngāruawāhia, and coming across handwritten names deep in the Anglican archives in Auckland. Their grandfather's six older siblings were listed as having been baptised by Bishop Selwyn in 1846.

Like a quest in a story, they kept finding the right people who directed them to their next stop.

"It blew our minds. It was almost like a finger coming out of the sky pointing at us, saying, 'You need to know all these things'."

They went to a family reunion at Port Waikato. Their grandfather was one of 15 children, so it was vast, like a cross-section of New Zealand society. Some seemed very Māori and others seemed very Pākehā.

"I have that in the back of my mind all the time," he says. "I keep revisiting those things."

Did this family history change him? Of course. More than anything, it increased his confidence in writing about New Zealand subjects.

"I want our kids to know about what's here."

He plans to return to the scene of the stories in September, for an unveiling of a photo of his great-grandmother, Irihapeti Te Paea. She and her sister helped save the historic St John's church in Te Awamutu from being torched by upset locals in 1864, after the massacre at nearby Rangiaowhia.

He reflects that, in a funny way, his writing career seemed fated too. He was a touring art adviser for the Ministry of Education in the late 1970s when a teacher in Dunedin asked if he had ever thought about kids' books.

How did she know, he wondered. She went on to say that her son worked for Oxford University Press in Wellington and was looking for New Zealand picture books.

So that night, in a hotel room in Lumsden, Southland, he opened a blank exercise book and started writing his first story, *Bidibidi*.

"I had no idea what I was doing."

But everything followed from that meeting, and that leap of faith.

5.

Awards & Other Distinctions



2019 PRIME MINISTER'S AWARD: GAVIN WITH JACINDA ARDERN

New Zealand — Personal Awards

2020 — New Zealand Booklovers' Award for Best Children's Book Award

2019 — New Zealand Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in Non-Fiction

2018 — Te Waka Toi Ngā Tohu ā Tā Kingi Ihaka Award for Lifetime Contribution to Strengthening Māori Art and Culture

2016 — University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Honorary Doctorate of Education

2014 — New Zealand Government ONZM New Zealand Order of Merit for Services to Literature

2013-14 — President of Honour, New Zealand Society of Authors

2013 — The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi Mallinson Rendell Illustrators Award

2012 — Society of Authors, Nelson, New Zealand — Top of the South Writer in Residence

2009 — Storylines Children's Literature Charitable Trust of New Zealand te

Whare Waituhi tamariki o Aotearoa and RandomHouse New Zealand establishment of Gavin Bishop Award for new Illustrators

2004 — University of Auckland, New Zealand Sylvia Ashton Warner Fellowship for Literacy

2003 — Smash Palace Art and Science Collaboration Grant

Produced world's first 3-dimensional animated picture book with the H.I.T. Laboratory, University of Canterbury, New Zealand

2003 — University of Canterbury, New Zealand Ursula Bethell Writer in Residence

2000 — Storylines Children's Literature Charitable Trust of New Zealand Margaret Margaret Mahy Medal and Lecture for lifetime achievement and a distinguished contribution to New Zealand children's literature and literacy

New Zealand — Distinctions

2013-22 — READ NZ Te Pou Muramura (formerly the New Zealand Book Council) —Board member

2006-21 — Painted Stories Charitable Trust for the promotion of New Zealand Children's Literature and picture books in particular — Trust member

2021 — Southland Museum, Invercargill — Governance Board member

2021 — New Zealand Society of Authors — Janet Frame Memorial Lecture

2008 — Dan Davin Trust Young Writers' Competition — Judge and Workshop Facilitator

2002 — Writers' Walkway, Christchurch — Gavin Bishop Plaque added

2002- — Toi IHO Māori made Labels for Art Works — Associate member

2000-2005 — *The Press* Christchurch Writers' Festival — Trust member

1999-2001 — University of Canterbury — Lecturer, School of Art and Design

1986, 1994, 2002 — New Zealand Society of Authors' Mentor Programme — Workshop Facilitator

1988- — Creative New Zealand, Arts Council of New Zealand — External Peer Assessor Literature Funding Applications



GAVIN (BACK ROW, THIRD FROM RIGHT) RECEIVING THE TĀ KINGI IHAKA AWARD IN 2018



GAVIN WITH NEW ZEALAND GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR JERRY MATAPARAE RECEIVING AN ONZM IN 2014

1986 — Royal New Zealand Ballet Company — commission to write a libretto and create designs for an original touring ballet for children: *Te Maia and the Sea Devil*

1985 — Royal New Zealand Ballet Company — Commission to write a libretto and create designs for an original touring ballet for children: *Terrible Tom*

1984– — TE HA Contemporary Māori Writers — Member

International Honours and Distinctions

2022 — IBBY Honour List, Illustrator — *Wildlife of Aotearoa*

2018 — Bookaroo Festival of Children's Literature, New Delhi, India — Featured Speaker

2016 — 35th IBBY World Congress, Auckland — Featured Speaker

2011, 2015 — Represented New Zealand at the Taipei International Book Festival

2002 — Noma Concours, Japan — Jury member, UNESCO International Picture Book Illustrators

1996 — Rhode Island School of Design, USA — Lecturer in Illustration and Drawing

1992, 1996, 1997 UNESCO Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO — Guest Lecturer and Workshop Facilitator, China, 1992; USA 1996; Indonesia 1997

1988 — International Junior Art Camp, Tomamu, Japan 1988

1984 — Noma Concours, Japan — Grand Prix Children's Picture Book Illustration

1982 — Noma Concours, Japan Children's Picture Book Illustration Award — Runner Up

BOOK AWARDS

New Zealand Children's Book of the Year/Margaret Mahy Book of the Year — 2000, 2003, 2008, 2018, 2022

New Zealand Children's Picture Book of the Year — 1983, 1994, 2000, 2013

LIANZA Russell Clark Medal for illustration — 1982, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2022

New Zealand Children's Non-Fiction Book of the Year — 2003, 2018, 2022

Publishers Association of New Zealand Design Award for Best Use of Illustration in a New Zealand Book — 2000, 2009, 2018

NEW ZEALAND MYTHS AND LEGENDS

Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Penguin Random House NZ, 2021. 9780143775690 (H/B).

- New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults 2022 Elsie Locke Award for non-fiction
- New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults 2022 Russell Clark Award for illustration
- New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults 2022 Margaret Mahy Book of the Year
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2022 Non-Fiction Book Award
- New Zealand Booklovers Awards: Finalist Best Children's Book Award

Counting the Stars: Four Māori Myths
Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Penguin NZ, 2009. 9781869790721 (H/B).

- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2010 Non-Fiction Book Award

Riding the Waves: Four Māori Myths

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Random House NZ, 2007.

9781869417871 (H/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2007 Shortlist Russell Clark Award for Illustration
- New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards: 2007 Shortlist Picture Book Award
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2007 Picture Book Award

Taming the Sun: Four Māori Myths

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Random House NZ, 2004.

9781869416126 (H/B).

- New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards: 2005 Shortlist Picture Book Award
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2005 Picture Book Award

Weaving Earth and Sky: Myths and Legends of Aotearoa

Written by Robert Sullivan, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.

Random House NZ, 2002.

9781869415167 (H/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young Adult's Book Awards: 2003 Shortlist Elsie Locke Non-Fiction Award
- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2003 Winner Non-Fiction Book Award
- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2003 Winner Book of the Year
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2003 Non-Fiction Book Award

Māui and the Sun: A Māori Tale

Retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. North South Books USA, 1996.

9781558585775 (H/B).

- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 1997 Shortlist Picture Book Award

NON-FICTION

Wildlife of Aotearoa

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Penguin NZ, 2019. 9780143772514

- New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults: 2020 Shortlisted Russell Clark Award for Illustration
- New Zealand Booklovers Award: 2020 Winner NZ Booklovers Best Children's Book
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2020 Non-Fiction Award
- IBBY Honour List 2022

Cook's Cook, The Cook who Cooked for Captain Cook

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Gecko Press, 2018. 9781776572045

(H/B).

- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2019 Non-Fiction Award

Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Penguin NZ, 2017. 9780143770350

(H/B).

- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2018 Non-fiction Award
- New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults: 2018 Elsie Locke Non-fiction Award
- New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults: 2018 Margaret Mahy Book of the Year
- Publishers Association of New Zealand: 2018 Scholastic New Zealand Award for Best Children's Book

Piano Rock: A 1950s Childhood

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Penguin NZ, 2008. 9781869790103

(H/B).

- LIANZA Children's Book Awards for Children and Young Adults: 2009 Shortlist Elsie Locke Award for Non-Fiction
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2009 Non-Fiction Award
- New Zealand Publishers' Design

- Awards: 2009 Winner Scholastic Award for Best Children's Book

The House That Jack Built

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Scholastic NZ, 1999. 9781069434342

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- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2000 Winner Picture Book Award
- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2000 Winner Book of the Year
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2000 Picture Book Award
- Spectrum Print Book Design Awards: 2000 Winner of the Best Use of Illustration
- Scholastic New Zealand Most Significant Book of 40 years Publishing: 2002 Special Edition

Katarina

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Black Cat Books, 1990 1869412028;

Random House NZ, 2008.

9781869790479 (H/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 1991 Shortlist Russell Clark Award for Children and Young Adults

JUNIOR FICTION

Helper and Helper

Written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.

Gecko Press NZ, 2017. 9781776571055

(P/B).

- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2015 Shortlist Esther Glen Junior Fiction Award
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2018 Junior Fiction Award

The Road to Ratenburg

Written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.

Gecko Press, 2016. 9781776570751

(P/B).

- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2017 Junior Fiction Award

Teddy One-Eye: The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Random House NZ, 2014.
9781775537274 (H/B).

- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2015 Junior Fiction Award

Just One More

Stories by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Gecko Press, 2011. 9781877467868 (H/B).

- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2012 Special Mention Junior Books

Friends: Snake and Lizard

Written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Gecko Press NZ, 2010. 9781877467264 (H/B).

- New Zealand Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2010 Shortlist Esther Glen Junior Fiction Award
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2010 Junior Fiction Award

Snake and Lizard

Written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Gecko Press NZ, 2008.
9780958272070 (H/B).

- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2008 Esther Glen Junior Book of the Year
- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2008 Book of the Year
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2008 Junior Fiction Award
- International Youth Library: 2008 White Raven

Year of the Yelvertons

Written by Katherine O'Brien, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Oxford University Press New Zealand, 1981 0195580745 (H/B).

- New Zealand Government Children's Book Awards: 1982 Winner Esther Glen Medal for Junior fiction

BOARD BOOKS***Mihi***

Illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Te reo Māori. Gecko Press NZ, 2020.
9781776573028.

- New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults: 2021 Shortlist Wright Family Foundation Te Kura Pounamu Award for te Reo Māori

There Was a Crooked Man

Illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Gecko Press NZ, 2010.
9781877467240.

- LIANZA Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2010 Russell Clark Award for Illustration
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2010 Picture Book Award

PICTURE BOOKS***Bruiser & the Big Snow***

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Random House NZ, 2012.
9781775534877 (H/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young People's Book Awards: 2014 Shortlist Russell Clark Award for Illustration

Mister Whistler

Written by Margaret Mahy, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Gecko Press, 2012. 9781877467912 (H/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young People's Book Awards: 2013 Shortlist Russell Clark Award for Illustration
- New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards: 2013 Winner Picture Book Award
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2013 Picture Book Award

Bruiser

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Random House NZ, 2011.

9781869794491 (H/B).

- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2012 Picture Book Award

Cowshed Christmas

Written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Random House NZ, 2010.
9781869790738 (P/B).

- New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards: 2010 Shortlist Picture book Award
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2010 Picture Book Award

Quaky Cat

Written by Diana Noonan, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Scholastic NZ, 2010. 9781775430292 (P/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2011 Shortlist Russell Clark Award for Illustration
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2011 Picture Book

Rats!

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Random House NZ, 2008.
9781869419028 (H/B).

- LIANZA Book Awards for Children and Young Adults: 2008 Winner Russell Clark Award for Illustration
- New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards: 2008 Shortlist Picture Book Award
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2008 Picture Book Award

Kiwi Moon

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Random House NZ, 2005.
9781869416744 (H/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2006 Winner Russell Clark Award for Illustration
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2006 Picture Book Award
- Capital E, Wellington New Zealand: 2008 Adapted for stage and as a touring play for children

The Waka

Written by Jean Prior, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Scholastic NZ, 2005. 9781869436735 (H/B).

- New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards: 2006 Shortlist Picture Book Award
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2006 Picture Book Award

Te Waka

Translated by Käterina Te Heikōkō Mataira.
Scholastic NZ, 2005. 9781869436858 (P/B).

- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2006 Picture Book Award

The Three Billy Goats Gruff

Illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Scholastic NZ, 2003. 9781869435875 (P/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2004 Shortlist Russell Clark Award for Illustration

Tom Thumb: The True History of Sir Thomas Thumb

Retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Random House NZ, 2001. 9781869414801 (H/B).

- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adult Book Awards: 2002 Shortlist Picture Book Award
- Storylines Notable Booklists: 2002 Picture Book Award

Stay Awake Bear!

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Orchard, 2000. 9780531332498 (H/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2001 Shortlist Russell Clark Award for Illustration
- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2001 Shortlist Picture Book Award
- Storylines Notable Book lists: 2001 Picture Book Award.

The Video Shop Sparrow

Written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Mallinson Rendel, 1999. 9780908783298 (H/B).

- New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 2000 Shortlist Picture Book Award
- Storylines Notable Book Lists: 2000 Picture Book Award

Little Rabbit and the Sea

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
North South Books, 1997. 9781558588097 (H/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 1998 Shortlist Russell Clark Award for Illustration

Hinepau

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Ashton Scholastic NZ, 1993. 9781869432157 (P/B).

- Aim Children's Book Awards: 1994 Winner Picture Book Award
- Capital E, Wellington New Zealand: 2005 Adapted for the stage as a touring play for children

The Wedding of Mistress Fox

Retold by Philip H. Bailey, illustrations by Gavin Bishop. North South Books, 1994. 1558583351.

- Kinderjury Prize, Holland, 1996

A Apple Pie

Illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Oxford University Press NZ, 1987.

- Premi Catalonia D'LL-Lustracio, Barcelona: 1988 — selected to represent New Zealand

The Horror of Hickory Bay

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Oxford University Press NZ, 1984 0195581180.

- Bratislava Biennale: 1985 selected to represent New Zealand

Chicken Licken

Retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Oxford University Press, 1984 0195581083.

- Premi Catalonia D'LL-Lustracio, Barcelona: 1984
- New Zealand Government Children's Book Awards: 1985 Shortlist for Picture Book of the Year

Mr Fox

Retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Oxford University Press NZ, 1982. 9780195580891 (H/B).

- New Zealand Government Children's Book Awards: 1983 Winner Picture Book of the Year Award
- NOMA CONCOURS Japan: 1984 Grand Prix winner
- Art exhibited in Seibu Department Store, Tokyo Japan and at the Bratislava Biennale, Czechoslovakia

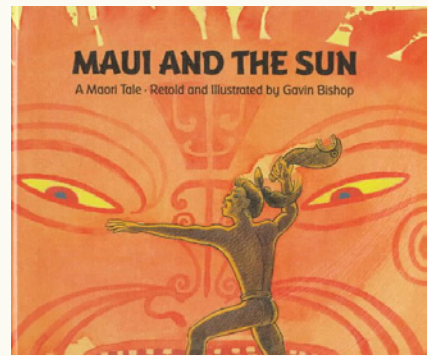
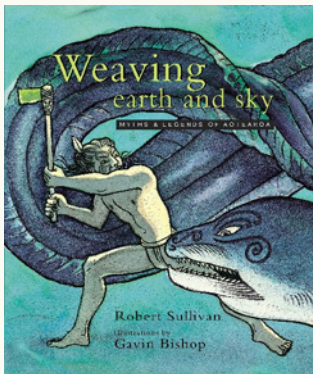
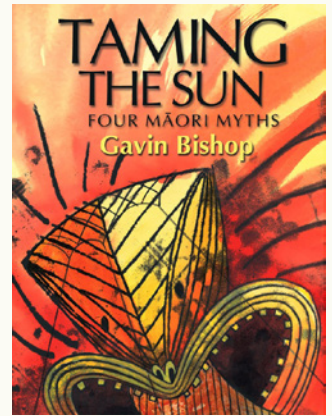
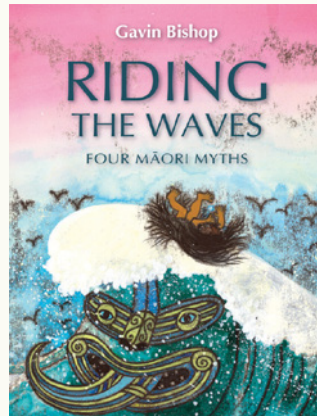
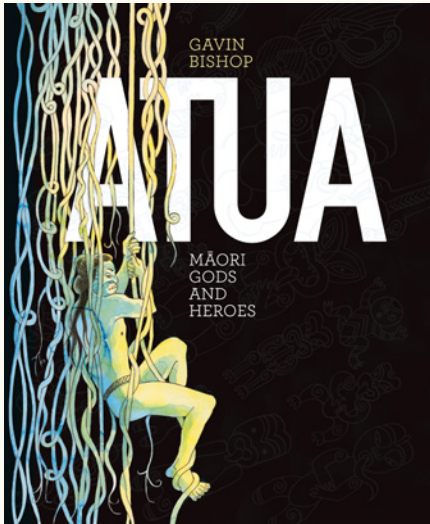
Mrs McGinty and the Bizarre Plant

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Oxford University Press NZ, 1981. 9780195580747 (H/B).

- LIANZA Children's and Young Adults Book Awards: 1982 Winner Russell Clark Award for Illustration
- Court Theatre, Christchurch New Zealand: 2015 Adapted for the stage as a play for children

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Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Penguin Random House NZ, 2021. 9780143775690 (H/B).

Counting the Stars: Four Māori Myths Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Random House NZ, 2009. 9781869790721 (H/B).

Riding the Waves: Four Māori Myths Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Random House NZ, 2006. 9781869417871 (H/B).

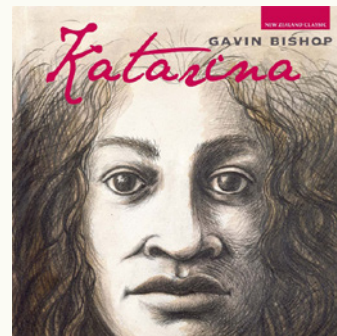
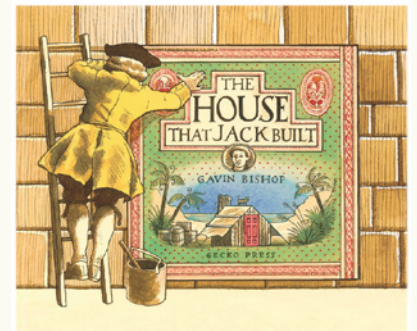
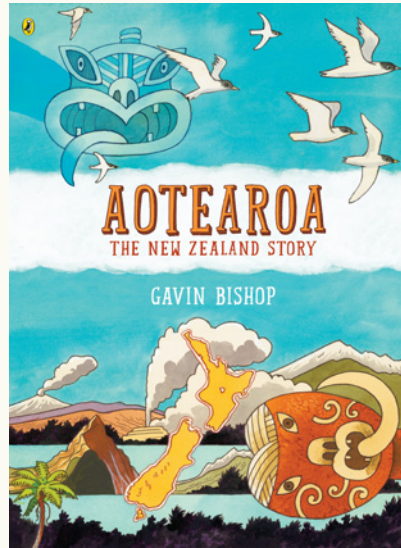
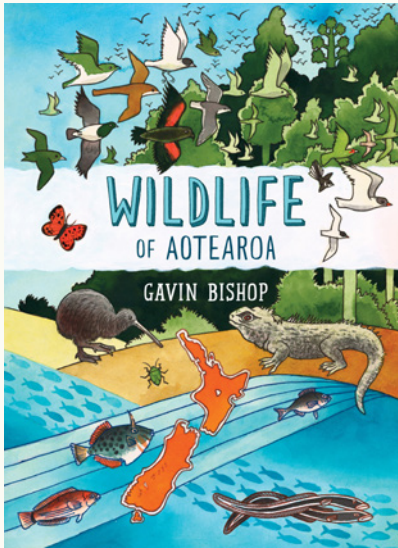
Taming the Sun: Four Māori Myths Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Random House NZ, 2004. 9781869416126 (H/B).

Weaving Earth and Sky: Myths and Legends of Aotearoa Written by Robert Sullivan, illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Random House NZ, 2002. 9781869415167 (H/B).

Maui and the Goddess of Fire: A Māori Tale Retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Scholastic NZ, 1997. 9781869433819 (P/B).

Maui and the Sun: A Māori Tale Retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. North South Books USA, 1996. 9781558585775 (H/B).

Non-fiction



Patu: An Illustrated History of the New Zealand Wars Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Penguin Random House NZ, 2023. 9781761048616 (H/B)

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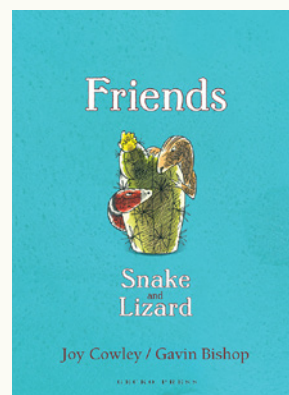
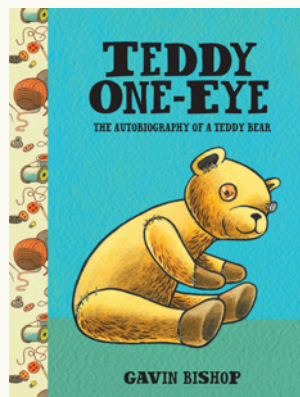
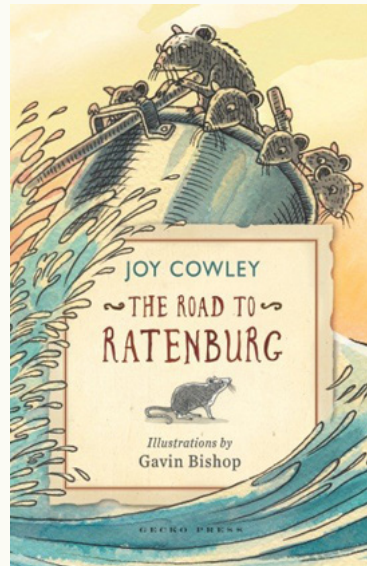
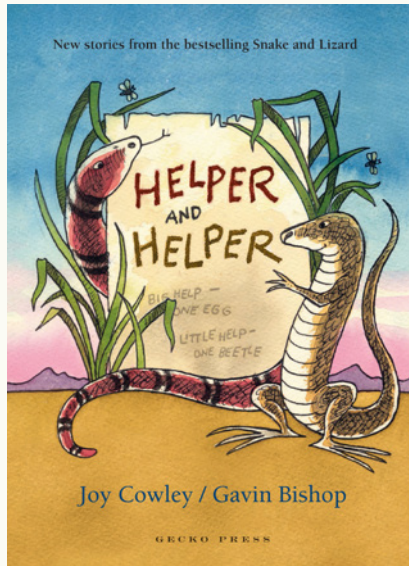
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Katarina Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Black Cat Books, 1990. 1869412028 (H/B); Random House NZ, 2008. 9781869790479 (H/B).

The House That Jack Built Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Scholastic NZ, 1999. 9781069434342 (H/B); Gecko Press, 2012. 9781877467615 (H/B) 9871877467608 (P/B).

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Footsteps Through the Fog Written by Margaret Mahy, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Penguin NZ, 2012. 978143505570 (P/B).

Bruiser & the Big Snow Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
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Cowshed Springtime Written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Random House NZ, 2010. 9781869793661 (P/B).

Quaky Cat Written by Diana Noonan, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Scholastic NZ, 2010. 9781775430292 (P/B).

Quaky Cat Helps Out Written by Diana Noonan, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Scholastic NZ, 2015. 9781775432975 (P/B).

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The Waka Written by Jean Prior, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
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The Little Tractor Written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
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The Three Billy Goats Gruff Illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
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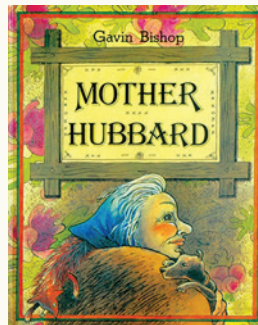
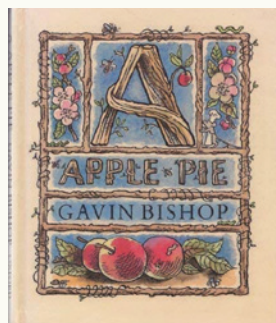
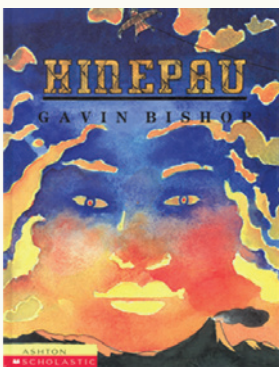
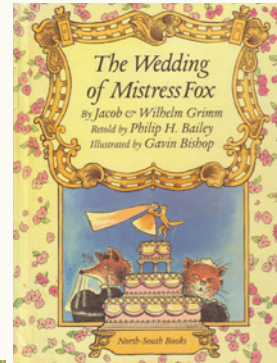
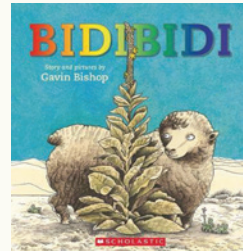
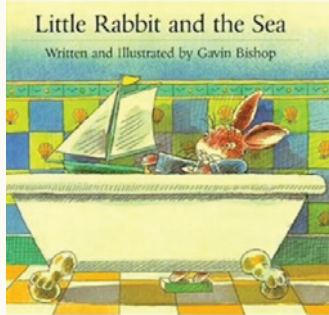
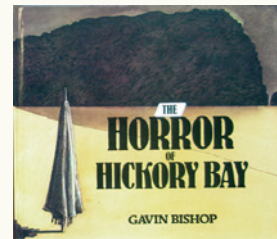
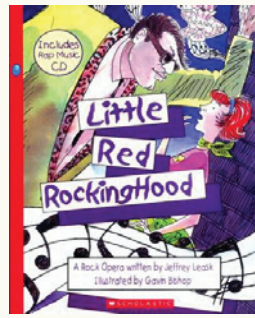
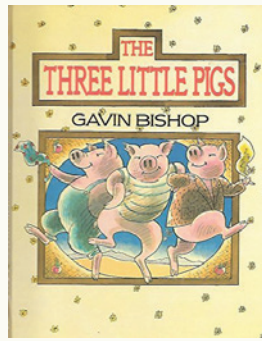
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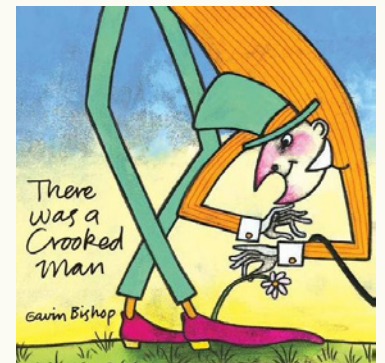
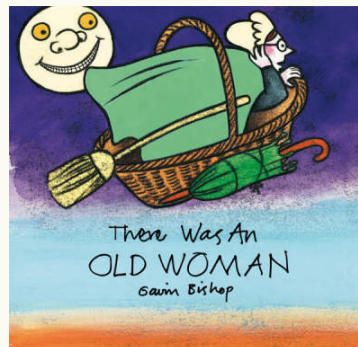
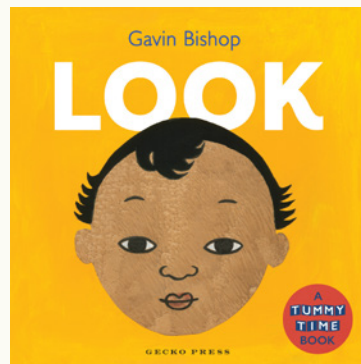
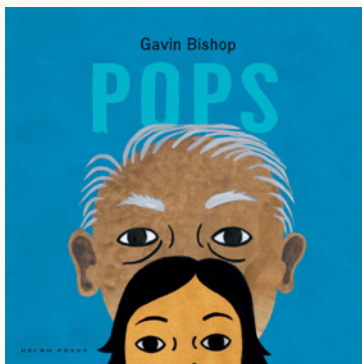
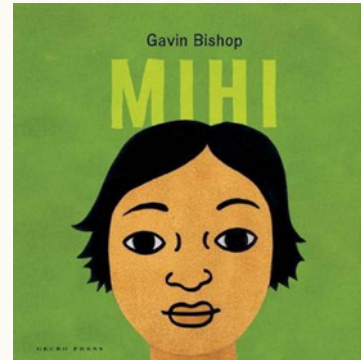
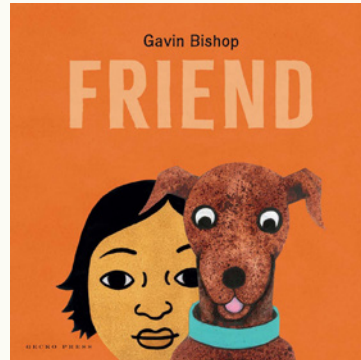
Educational Readers USA

40 Non-fiction stories
Harcourts Educational Publishers, Texas

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30 titles
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Board Books



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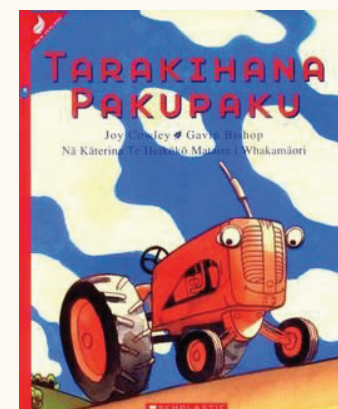
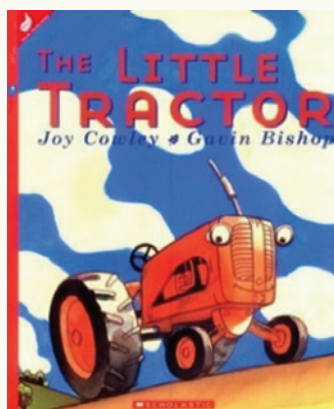
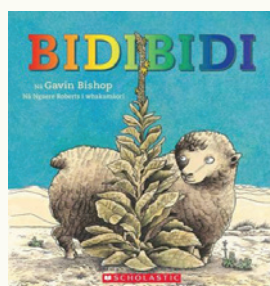
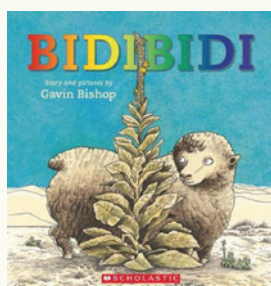
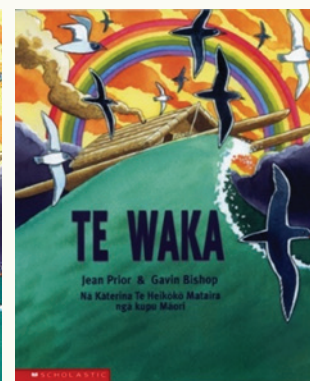
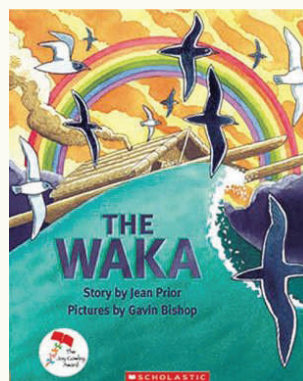
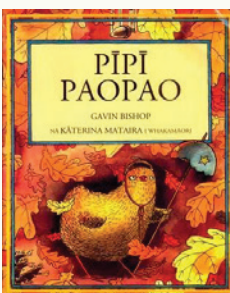
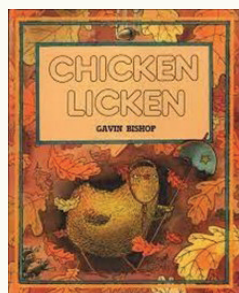
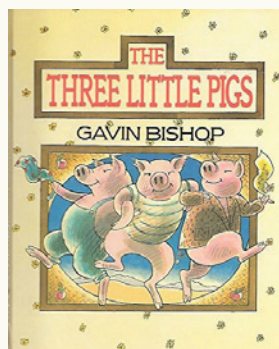
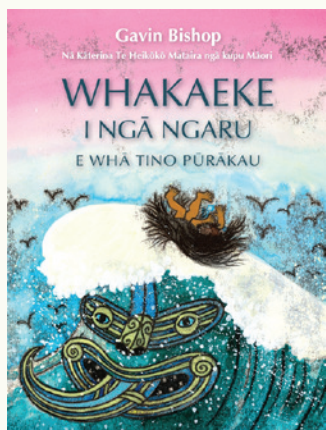
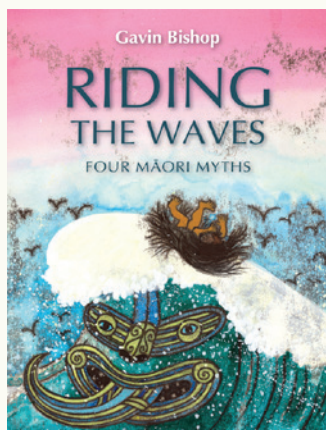
The House that Jack Built, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Scholastic New Zealand, 1999
 — **Koinei te Whare nā Haki i Hanga**, translated by Piripi Walker, Gecko Press New Zealand, 2012

Katarina, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Random House New Zealand, 2008
 — **Katarina**, translated by Kāterina Mataira, Random House New Zealand, 2008

Mr Fox, retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Oxford University Press New Zealand, 1982
 — **Tā Pōkiha**, translated by Kāterina Mataira, Scholastic New Zealand, 2001

Hinepau, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Ashton Scholastic New Zealand, 1993
 — **Hinepau**, translated by Kāterina Mataira, Scholastic New Zealand, 2005

Māui and the Goddess of Fire: A Māori Tale, retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Scholastic New Zealand, 1997
 — **Ko Māui rāua ko te Atua o te Ahi: He Pūrākau Māori**, translated by Kāterina Mataira, Scholastic New Zealand, 2001



Riding the Waves: Four Māori Myths, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Random House New Zealand, 2006

— ***Whakaeke i ngā Ngaru: E Whā Tino Pūrākau***, translated by Kāterina Mataira, Random House New Zealand, 2006

Chicken Licken, retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Oxford University Press New Zealand, 1984

— ***Pipi Paopao***, translated by Kāterina Mataira, Scholastic New Zealand, 2001

Bidibidi, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Oxford University Press New Zealand, 1982

— ***Bidibidi***, translated by Ngaere Roberts, Scholastic New Zealand, 2014

The Three Little Pigs, retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Ashton Scholastic New Zealand, 1982, 2001, 2013,

— ***Ngā Poaka e Toru***, translated by Kāterina Mataira, Scholastic New Zealand, 2001, 2013

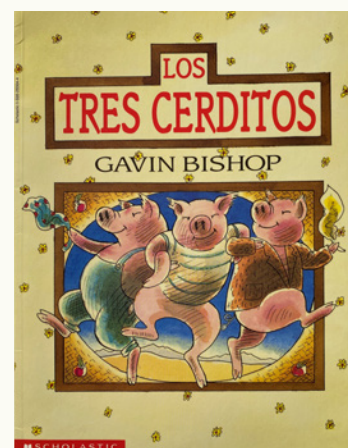
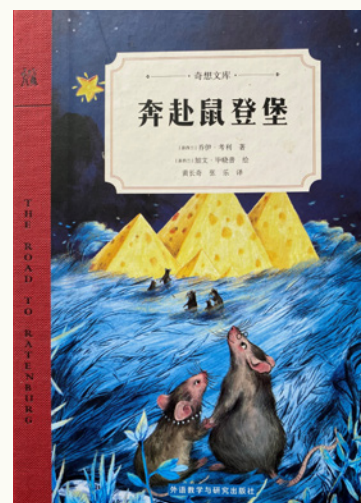
The Little Tractor, by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Scholastic New Zealand, 2004

— ***Tarakihana Pakupaku***, translated by Kāterina Mataira, Scholastic New Zealand, 2004

The Waka, by Jean Prior, illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Scholastic New Zealand, 2005

— ***Te Waka***, translated by Kāterina Mataira, Scholastic New Zealand, 2005

International Translations



Picture Books

A Apple Pie, illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Oxford University Press New Zealand, 1987

— Chinese complex – China Publishing House, Beijing

Bruiser, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Random House New Zealand, 2011

— Chinese complex – Walkers Cultural Enterprise (Little Bear Books), Taiwan
— Chinese simplified – Beijing Normal University Press, Beijing

Korean – Hansol Publishing Co, Seoul

Bruiser and the Big Snow, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Random House New Zealand, 2012
— Chinese, simplified – Beijing Normal University Press, Beijing

Footsteps Through the Fog, written by Margaret Mahy, illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Penguin New Zealand, 2012

— Chinese complex – Linking Publishing Company, Taiwan

Little Rabbit and the Sea, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, North South Books, New York, 1997

— Japanese – Kōdansha, Tokyo
— Spanish – North South Books, New York

Māui and the Goddess of Fire: A Māori Tale, retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Scholastic New Zealand, 1997

— Korean – Daegyo Einstein, Korea

Mister Whistler, written by Margaret Mahy, illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Gecko Press, 2012

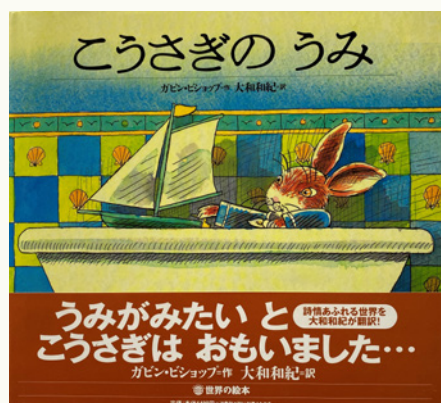
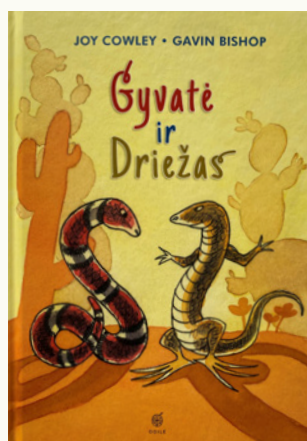
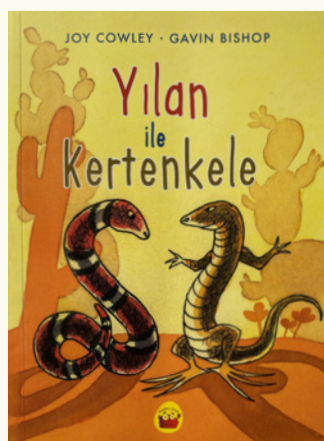
— Chinese complex – Bookman, Taiwan

The Three Little Pigs, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Scholastic New Zealand, 1990

— French – Scholastic Canada
— Spanish – Scholastic New York

The Wedding of Mistress Fox, retold by Philip H. Bailey, illustrated by Gavin Bishop, North South Books, 1984

— Chinese, simplified – Huayi Press, Taiwan
— Dutch – De Vier Windstreken, Netherlands
— French – Editions Nord-Sud, Paris
— Japanese – Kōdansha, Tokyo



Fiction

Friends: Snake and Lizard, written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Gecko Press New Zealand, 2009

- Chinese, complex – CPL Taiwan
- Chinese, simplified – TB Publishing, China
- Korean – Whale Story, South Korea
- Lithuanian – Vsj leidykla Odile, Vilnius
- Norwegian – Cappelen Damm, Oslo
- Turkish – Kuraldisi Yayinlari, Istanbul

Helper and Helper, written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Gecko Press New Zealand, 2017

- Chinese, simplified – TB Publishing
- Turkish – Kuraldisi Yayinlari, Istanbul

Just One More, written by Joy Cowley,

illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Gecko Press New Zealand, 2011
Chinese, complex – CPL, Taiwan.

Snake and Lizard, written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Gecko Press New Zealand, 2007

- Chinese, complex – CPL, Taiwan
- Chinese, simplified – King-in Culture, China
- Dutch – Gottmer, Netherlands
- English – North America – Kane Miller, California
- English – Text, Australia
- German – Jacoby and Stuart, Berlin
- Japanese – Alice-Kan, Tokyo
- Korean – Whale Story, South Korea
- Lithuanian – Vsj leidykla Odile, Vilnius
- Norwegian – Cappelen Damm, Oslo
- Turkish – Kuraldisi Yayinlari, Istanbul

Teddy One-Eye: The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Random House New Zealand, 2014

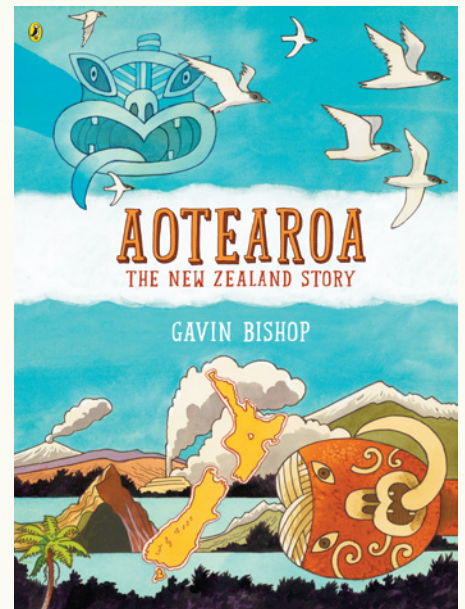
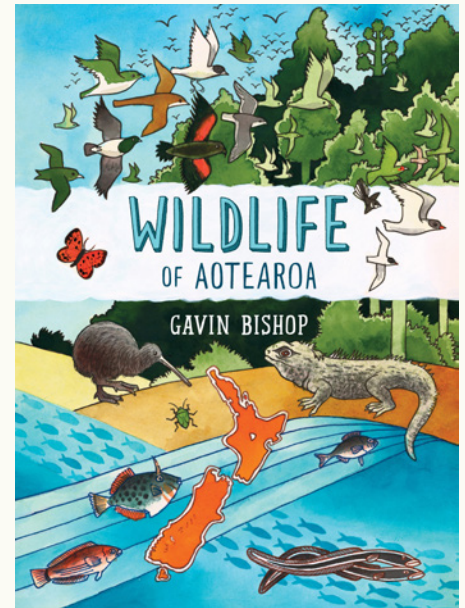
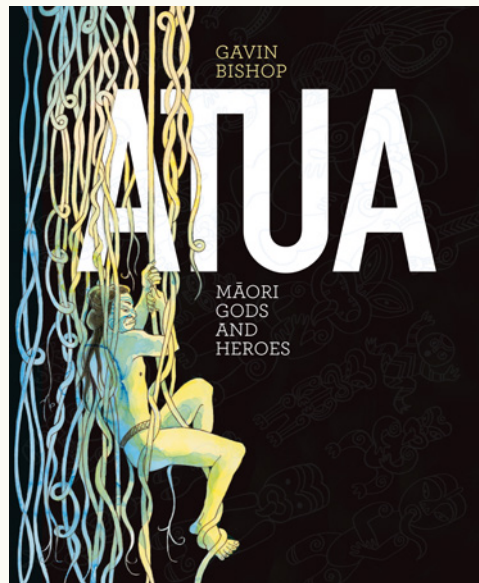
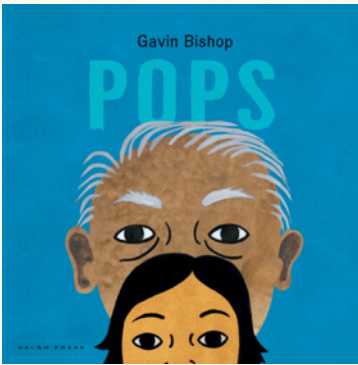
- Chinese, simplified – Beijing Children's Publishing House, Beijing

The Road to Ratenburg, written by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Gecko Press, 2016

- Chinese, simplified – TB Publishing, China
- Turkish – Uyurgezer Yayincilik, Istanbul

8.

Ten Most Important Titles



1. Pops

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop.
Gecko Press New Zealand, 2021
Board Book, 9781776574001

Te Reo Māori edition

Koro, written and illustrated by
Gavin Bishop. Gecko Press New
Zealand, 2017
Board Book, 9781776574018.

2. Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Puffin (Penguin Random House New
Zealand), 2022
Hardback, 9780143775790

3. Wildlife of Aotearoa

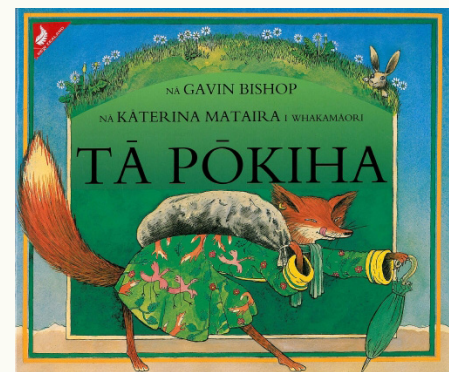
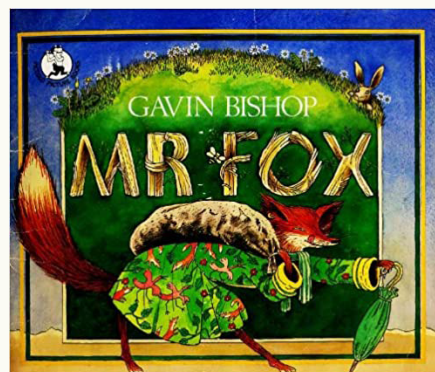
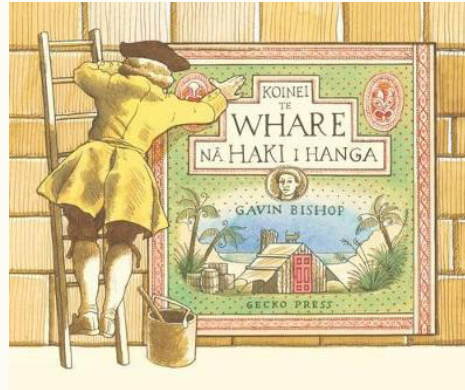
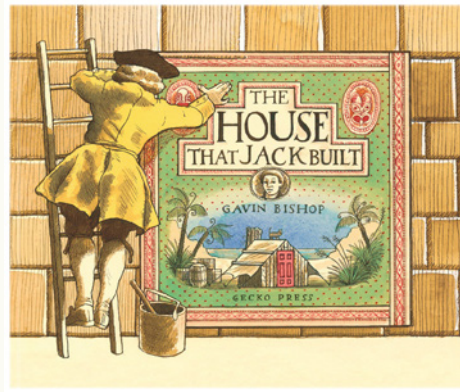
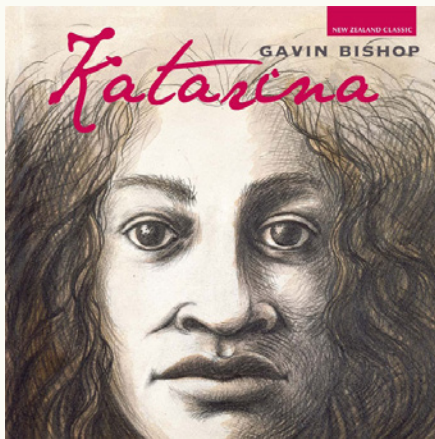
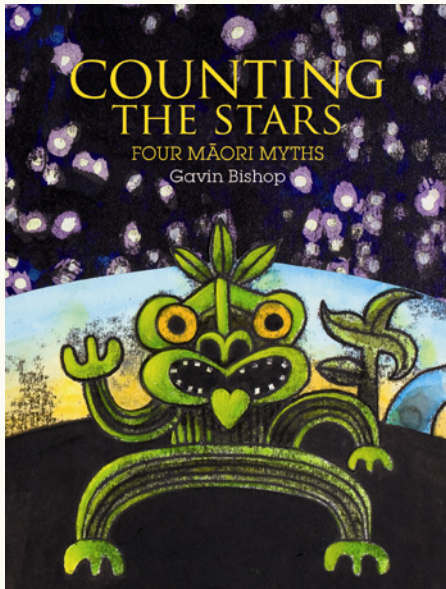
Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Puffin (Penguin Random House New
Zealand, 2019
Hardback, 9780143772515

4. Cook's Cook: The Cook Who Cooked for Captain Cook

Gecko Press New Zealand, 2018
Hardback, 9781776572045
Limited Edition Hardback,
9781776572175

5. Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Puffin (Penguin Random House New
Zealand), 2017
Hardback, 9780143770350



6. Counting the Stars: Four Māori Myths

written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Random House New Zealand, 2009
Hardback, 9781869790721

7. Katarina

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Black Cat Books, Random Century, 1990
Hardback, 1869412028
Random House New Zealand, 2008
Hardback 9781869790479; Softcover 9781869790646

Te Reo Māori

Katarina, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, Random House New Zealand, 2008
Paperback, 9781869790516

8. The House that Jack Built

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Scholastic New Zealand, 1999
Hardback, 9781069434342
Gecko Press, 2012,
Hardback, 9781877467608;
Paperback, 9781877467615

Te Reo Māori

Koinei te Whare nā Haki i Hanga
Paperback, 9781877467790

9. Little Rabbit and the Sea

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
North South Books, 1997
Hardback, 9781558588097

Spanish language

Conejito y el mar
Ediciones Norte-Sud, 2000
9780735813137

Japanese Language

Kousagi no umi
Kōdansha, Tokyo, 1998
9784062619820

10. Mr Fox

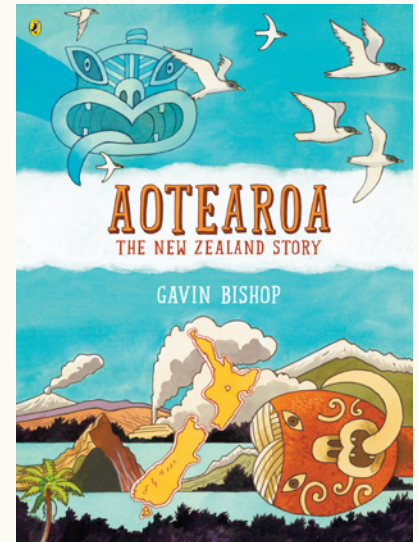
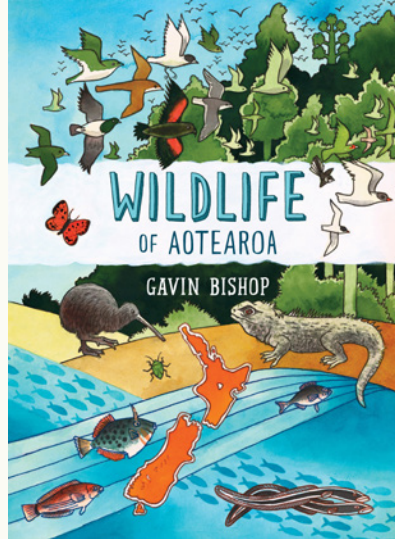
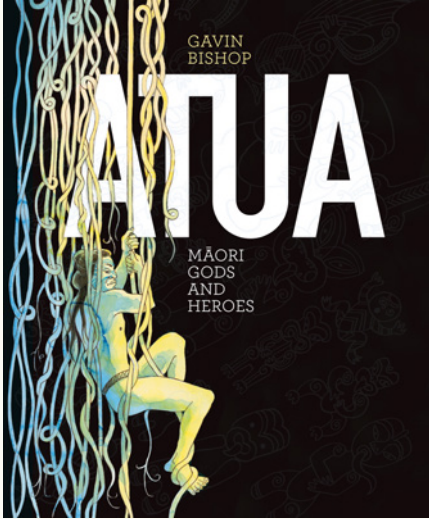
retold and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Oxford University Press, New Zealand, 1982
Hardback, 9780195580891

Te Reo Māori

Tā Pōkiha, written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop, translated by Kāterina Mataira
Scholastic New Zealand, 2001
Paperback, 9781869435127

9.

Five Representative Books Sent to Jurors



1. Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Puffin (Penguin Random House New Zealand), 2022
Hardback, 9780143775790

2. Wildlife of Aotearoa

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Puffin (Penguin Random House New Zealand), 2019
Hardback, 9780143772515

3. Cook's Cook: The Cook Who Cooked for Captain Cook

Gecko Press New Zealand, 2018
Hardback, 9781776572045

4. Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Puffin (Penguin Random House New Zealand), 2017
Hardback, 9780143770350

5. The House that Jack Built

Written and illustrated by Gavin Bishop
Originally published Scholastic New Zealand, 1999
Gecko Press, 2012
Hardback, 9781877467608



Atua: Māori Gods and Heroes

Puffin (Penguin Random House New Zealand), 2021

Trevor Agnew

Agnewreading.blogspot.com

31 August 2021

Gavin Bishop isn't just a great artist, storyteller and speaker; he is also a great teacher. There is no suggestion that *Atua* is a textbook; it's much too enjoyable for that. It's just that Gavin Bishop has woven a fascinating tapestry of Māori mythology and legends, then carefully inserted tufts of knowledge into his smoothly-linked patterns. The result is a splendid cloak of knowledge, to be worn proudly by any New Zealander. Opening a page in *Atua* is to learn something you didn't know and to have it firmly lodged into your memory by a well-chosen word or picture. Or both.

In simple terms, *Atua* is a 64-page large format hardback; a companion picture book to Bishop's earlier *Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story* (2017) and *Wildlife of Aotearoa* (2019). In broader terms the three books can now be seen as a fully developed masterwork.

Atua is a magnificent retelling of some of the Māori myths of Creation and the epic exploits of their gods, demigods and human heroes. Myth is not a synonym for false. These are tales that the first Polynesian settlers of Aotearoa brought with them and, as Bishop gracefully puts it, found them 'recoloured' by their new environment. They formed the basis for the rules and customs, religious beliefs, manners and daily behaviour of Māori tribal society. As such, they still have relevance for us today, a point Bishop acknowledges frequently. Each tribe also developed its own distinctive canoe legends and hero stories, and Bishop has drawn widely from them as well.

The book is an elegant production, skilfully designed by Luke and Vida Kelly. We begin with absolutely black endpapers. The next two pages are just as black. The text is tiny, huddled in a corner.

Before the beginning, there was nothing.

No sound, no air, no colour – nothing.

Te Kore. Nothing.

Out of the darkness comes a sense of waiting, followed by hints of light, and a stirring. Then a massive double-

page illustration presents the great sky father, Ranginui e Tū Nei and the mother earth Papatūānuku.

There they lay, clutching one another tightly, madly in love.

And we still haven't reached the title page!

Gavin Bishop recites his mihi and begins his story. Rangi and Papa have over seventy children: 'all boys, all gods, all immortal.'

Two awe-inspiring double-page foldouts provide a panorama of these gods, with seven of the most significant ones dominating the scene and the story. These illustrations are created in a range of traditional styles echoing tribal carvings and paintings. All the pictures show the Bishop firmness of line and deft colouring that we have come to expect. (I have been lucky enough to see some of the original paintings for this book and, believe me, every page has an aspect of its own.)

Before long Tānemahuta has succeeded in separating his parents. Tāne dresses and decorates his father with sun, stars and moon, then covers his mother with 'a garment of forests'. The world as the Maori knew it begins to be created and stocked with trees, birds, insects, fish, reptiles and people. People such as Maui, Tawhaki and



AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR GAVIN BISHOP, IN HIS WORKROOM IN CHRISTCHURCH, IS THIS YEAR'S RECIPIENT OF A PM'S AWARD FOR LITERARY ACHIEVEMENT FOR NON-FICTION BOOKS. PHOTO / MARTIN HUNTER

Kupe, each of whom gets worthy treatment. That's Tawhaki on the cover, storming heaven.

Each double-page is a story in itself, but the user-friendly prose is only part of the pleasure of *Atua*. The tale of Tāwhaki's revenge against the ponaturi (sea-spirits) who killed his father has three imaginative illustrations. The largest shows the home of the evil ponaturi, with an articulated whale skeleton as its roof beams. The effect is delightfully creepy.

Whether they are deities, demi-gods or mortals, everyone in *Atua* speaks in a fresh, informal way. When Tūmataunga tries to separate his parents, he boasts to his brothers,

*'Get out of my way, weaklings!
Let the god of war do the job.'*

*'Hey, old fella, come and carry
these adzes for us,' says a
woodworker to Tāwhaki, 'we're
too tired.'*

*'Hey! Cut that out,' calls Māui's
father.*

Every section also carries small messages, amplifying and explaining, linking the past to the present. The

page depicting Te Marama (the moon) shows and names all 30 days of the lunar cycle as well as indicating good days for fishing and planting. Neatly tucked in by the picture of the full moon, in a space no bigger than a playing card, is the story and picture of Rona and her ngaio tree. *Atua* is full of tiny gems like this.

The book that began with pages of dark nothingness ends with pages showing a lively mixture of gods and well-laden voyaging canoes.

This is truly a book to treasure.

Crissi Blair *Magpies*

Page eight, New Zealand Section
Volume thirty-six, Number Four,
September 2021

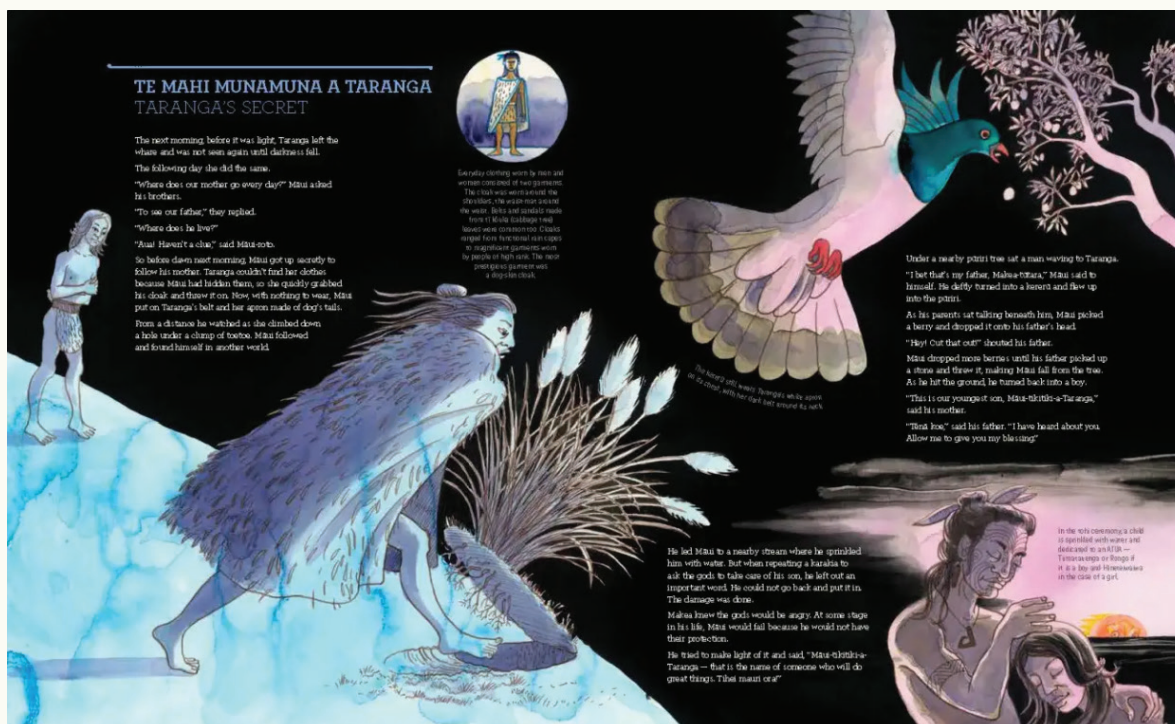
You know that this book is a treasure as soon as you spy its cover. *Atua* in big, bold letters, dense black background with an overglossed pattern. If you know Gavin's other large-scale books about New Zealand – *Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story and Wildlife of Aotearoa*, you will already have an appreciation for his ability to convey a vast amount of information with

brief text and gorgeous illustrations. You might think this completes a set as I did, but in fact the dimensions of *Atua* are a little different – shorter and wider. This volume is perhaps a prequel to *Aotearoa* – spanning from Creation to Migration.

The text, while kept to the minimum, tells each story using interesting language and a lot of humour, making it a good read aloud.

I'm a lover of endpapers, and appreciated the dense blackness we open to – reflecting the time before the beginning – 'Te Kore, Nothing – Before the beginning, there was nothing. No sound, no air, no colour – nothing'. I had to immediately flip to the back to see pages swimming with *atua* and canoes.

There are several pages before we get to the title page – from the darkest beginnings, the appearance of Ranginui e Tu Nei – the sky father, and Papatūānuku, mother earth 'with all her bumps and curves, stretched out and slipped snugly beneath him. There they lay, clutching one another tightly, madly in love'. See what I mean about the language? And the story has barely begun. Then the title page, and the beginning of the gods and heroes – the offspring of Ranginui and Papatūānuku. For extra



impact, this first double-spread is a double gatefold spread of the seven most important gods.

Each spread covers another aspect of the creation story – the sky, covering the earth and populating it with creatures. We then look at tikanga and karakia and the quest for the baskets of knowledge.

The creation of the first woman – Hineahuone – Te Wahine Tuatahi, is a particularly beautiful spread, with the naked woman laid across the whole double-spread page (some may blush at the naked breast). There are of course tales of Māui, perhaps our best known legends, but also many characters and stories I didn't know so well.

The latter part of the book focuses on Kupe and Kuramārōtini's discovery of Aotearoa, then the amazing feats of navigation that brought the great migration of canoes here.

The stories are many, and the illustrations all-absorbing. This is not a book to flip through and having read it quickly for this review, I'd like now to read it slowly – perhaps a double-page spread every day or two, and I can imagine a class or family working their way through the book.

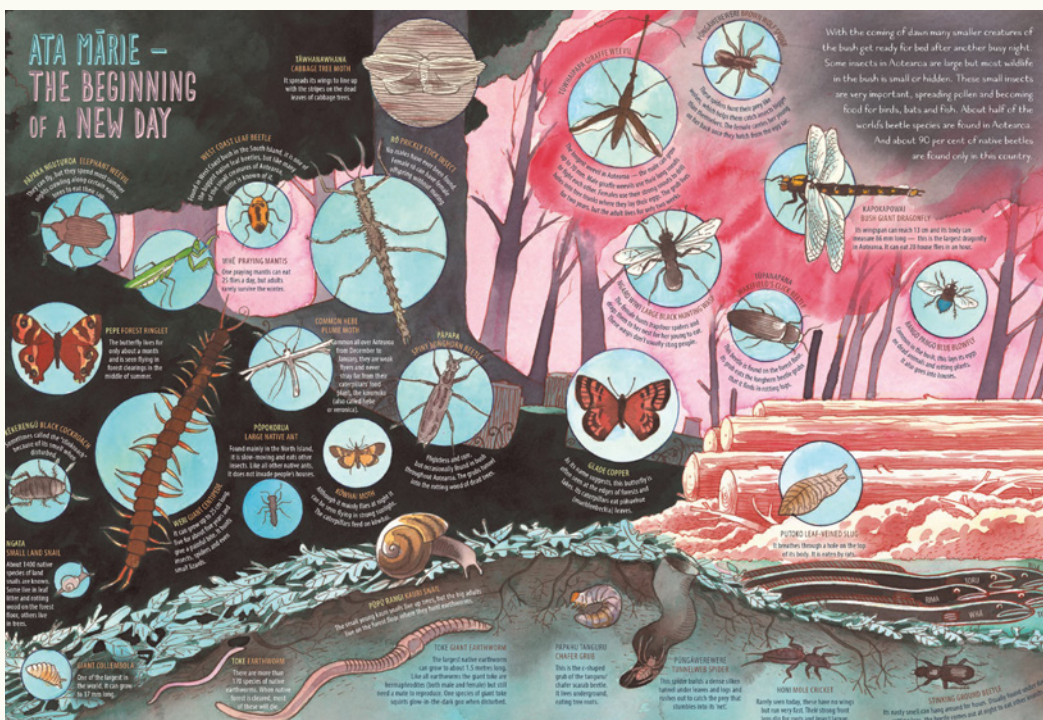
There is a page of ngā kupu – words, at the end of the book, many of which will be great to add to the

‘Each spread covers another aspect of the creation story – the sky, covering the earth and populating it with creatures. We then look at tikanga and karakia and the quest for the baskets of knowledge’.

reader's vocabulary. I would have liked an index, so one could easily find a particular character or event, given that there isn't a contents page. In fact, having either of these might have been tricky as there are no page

numbers in this book. This doesn't affect the reading, but might be a little frustrating for those using the book in the classroom and wanting to reference particular pages.

The illustrations are impeccable, in Gavin's unmistakable style, capturing the personalities of the many gods and heroes and with a fresh look for each section, from the dense matte blackness of the beginning (kudos to the publisher and printer for such quality printing) to the startling blue backgrounds of the migration, with the glorious te ra – the sun, between. I love his textured line and the tonal range of his watercolours, the evidence of an actual brush on the page. I can also see that these images will be a great starting point as inspiration for students to make their own imagery. This book will have pride of place on the table for quite some time and I recommend it highly for school and home, and that special gift for a child who loves story and image, and all those who want to know more about Aotearoa New Zealand and all the stories that have made it.



Wildlife of New Zealand Puffin (Penguin Random House New Zealand), 2019

Dionne Christian
Weekend Herald

12 October 2019

This week, the 2019 recipients of the Prime Minister’s Awards for Literary Achievement were announced: illustrator and children’s writer, Gavin Bishop (Ngāti Pukeko, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Mahuta, Tainui) was honoured for non-fiction work; novelist, essayist and biographer, Elizabeth Knox for fiction and prolific poet of more than 55 years, librettist and translator Fleur Adcock for poetry.

If ever anyone dared doubt why an illustrator and children’s writer is named as the non-fiction winner, they need to get hold of Bishop’s latest book, *Wildlife of Aotearoa*. Now. It is destined to become a classic, a book that should take pride of place in family homes, classrooms and libraries around the country.

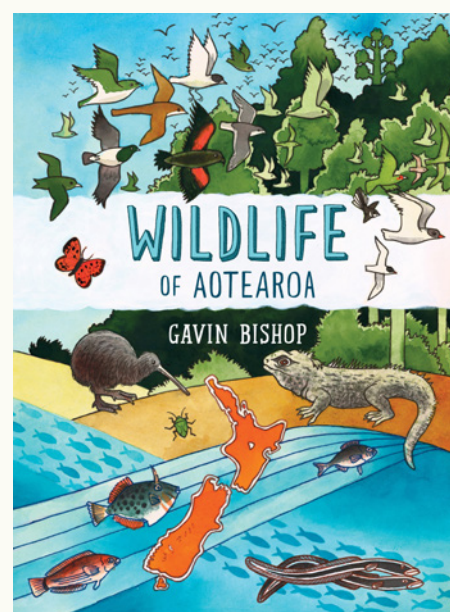
Ostensibly for children, it is for everyone, especially those with an interest in New Zealand wildlife from our seas through to our homes. Bishop guides us into making that all

of us. You can’t read it in one sitting - nor would you want to. It is a treasure box to be delved into, each page read and looked at – and looked at again – with wonder, care and amazement.

Amazement that Aotearoa New Zealand is home to such an array of species; amazement that one person was able to bring all this together in vivid and rich detail. As Bishop himself writes: “I leapt into the unknown when I started this book. I had no idea, for example, that many native freshwater fish spend a good deal of time at sea or male mosquitoes do not bite.”

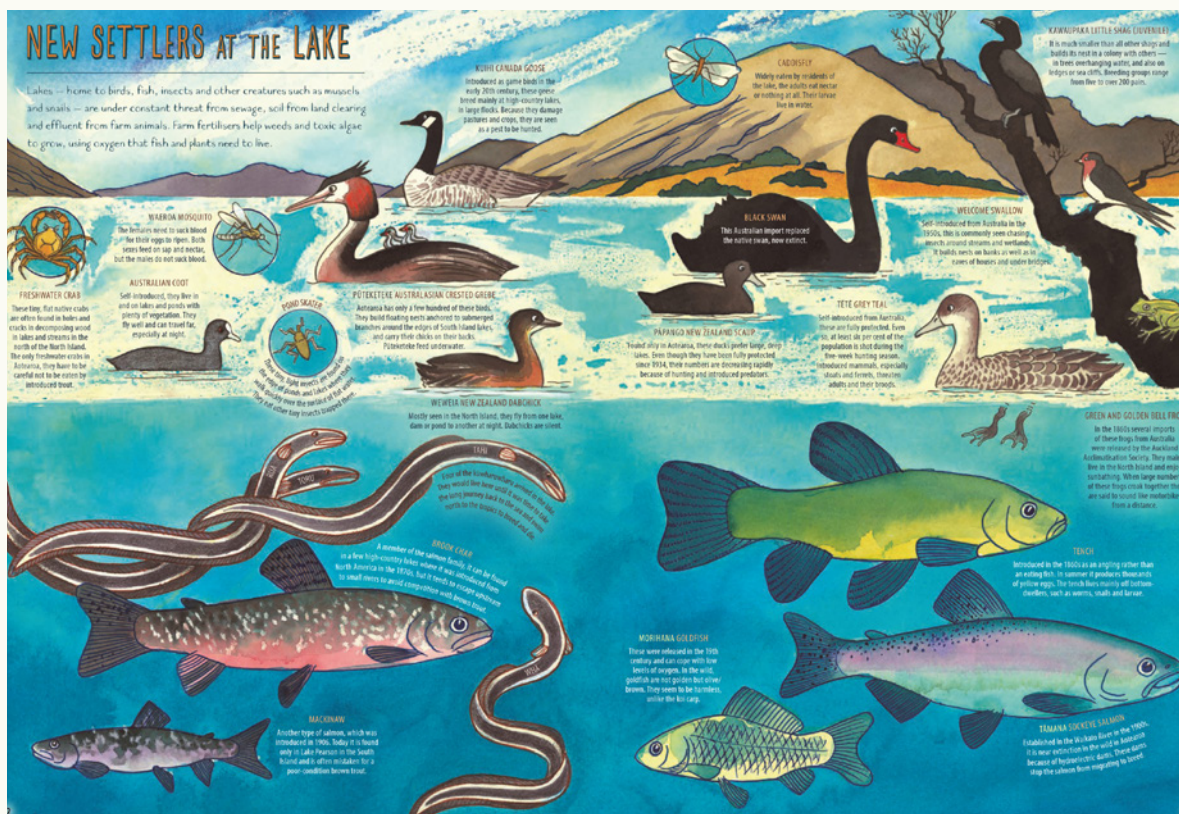
He has brought all these facts together, packed them tight using a plethora of resources and sources, made them readable and relatable. He drew each creature – from pakake nui (blue whales) to many parents’ scourge kutu (head lice) – as well as landscapes and habits. He’s used te reo and English for each one and included a glossary so terms and names like “acclimatisation society” are explained.

What’s more, Bishop subtly weaves stories through each spectacular page. We start in the breeding grounds of the tropical Pacific, where five kūwharuwharu/longfin eel larvae drift toward Aotearoa. Aptly named Tahī, Rua, Toru, Whā and Rima, they weave throughout the pages,



illustrating the length and difficulty of their journey and the human-made hazards that have made it more challenging. There’s also a nod to our leading local palaeontologist, Joan Wiffen, who proved Aotearoa was once home to dinosaurs.

The sections ‘Some animals became well known’ and ‘Some wildlife ended up in museums’ are a trip down memory lane; the one about wildlife in our homes eye-opening. At all times, there’s a gentle but firm commitment to conservation and taking better care of flora and fauna.



I've used too many adjectives here but it really is a stunning achievement. There hasn't been a book like it since his *Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story*.

Crissi Blair

Maggies
Page Eight, New Zealand Books Section

Volume Thirty-Four, Number Five, November 2019

This magnificent work of art is sibling to Gavin Bishop's award-winning *Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story* (2018 Margaret Mahy Book of the Year and Best Non-Fiction Book). I find it incredible that he has produced the wide-ranging book so quickly after *Aotearoa* as there must have been a huge amount of research involved in rounding up and selecting what to include, as it's sure enough that not every critter could be fitted into even this large-scale book.

We visit the many realms where our wildlife is found on the full bleed double-page spreads, from the alpine mountaintops to the depths of the ocean. I was delighted, as I turned the pages to find that not only do we meet the expected critters – the wētā, the

whales, the birds (I especially loved the sumptuous kea and kākāpō) and so on, but also our domesticated farm animals and all those creatures found in the house – from spiders to slaters and mice.

From the title page to the final endpapers the reader can follow the growth and reproduction of five kūwharuwharu (longfin eel) larvae called Tahī, Rua, Toru, Whā and Rima. This is a nice narrative touch that keeps the young reader engaged, though there's bad news on page 54 when one ends up in a tin of cat food.

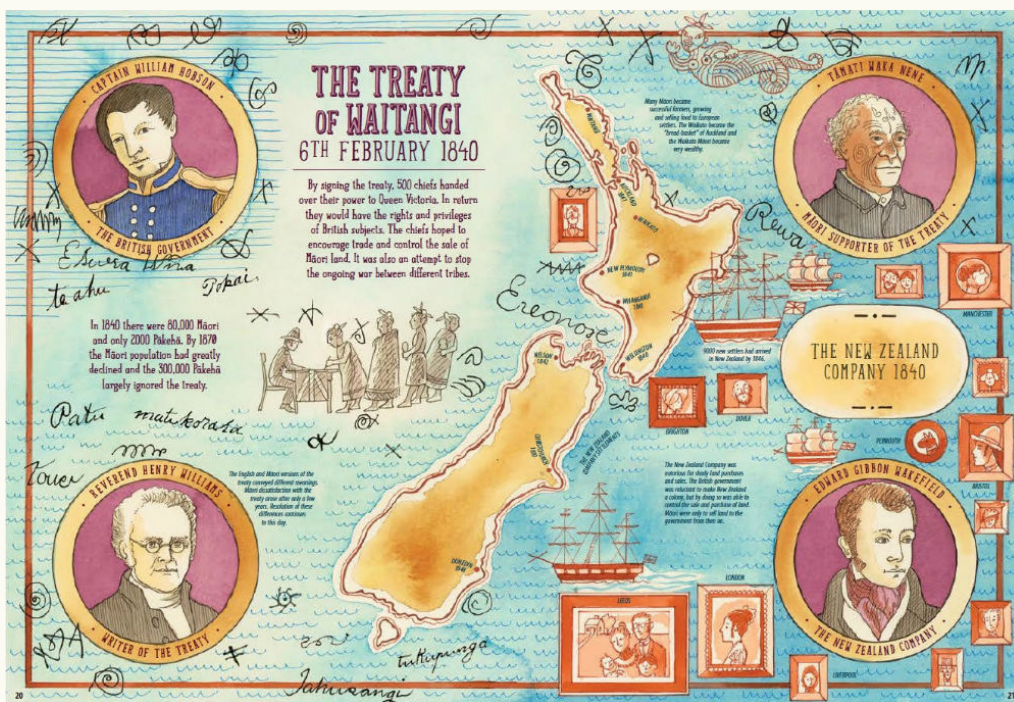
Another nice touch is a spread of well-known characters in the animal world such as Shrek the sheep, Ranger the Kaimanawa stallion and Paddy the Wanderer, each with a mini portrait and description, with Rastus the cat as star of the page, sitting on the front of the motorbike he was famous for riding with his owner.

In the final pages we visit museums, evidence of dinosaurs in New Zealand, and important information about modern farming practices and our polluted waterways including the scary fact that 'Three-quarters of native fish in our waterways are threatened with extinction'. Then on the plus side, information about wildlife sanctuaries

around the country.

One feature I appreciated was the placement of names of the wildlife in te reo Māori before the English name and simple but comprehensive headings for each spread. There is variety in each layout, some using round frames to capture some creatures, or a melding of many in one gorgeous array as seen in the flock of seabirds on pages 12 – 13.

This is a book for every New Zealand home and library, with something new for readers to discover or be reminded of. The illustrations are not to scale, or even very detailed, but they feel real to me – they have character, the whole book is full of personality, and there's enough refinement to recognise each one. It's quite remarkable that so much information is conveyed with so little text. You can spend ages on any spread discovering all the different bits of information. There's a useful glossary (aka 'Words in this book') at the end too and the closing endpaper is shared by the ngu-nui (giant squid) and the offspring of those kūwharuwharu larvae we met at the start.



Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story

Puffin (Penguin Random House
New Zealand), 2017

Sarah Forster
The Reader

Booksellers New Zealand's blog
9 November 9 2017

Gavin Bishop's *Aotearoa* has been atop the Nielsen Bestsellers list virtually since its release. I spotted Gavin at the Storylines Hui the day after it was launch and he said 'It sold 140 copies at the launch! I've never written a bestseller!'

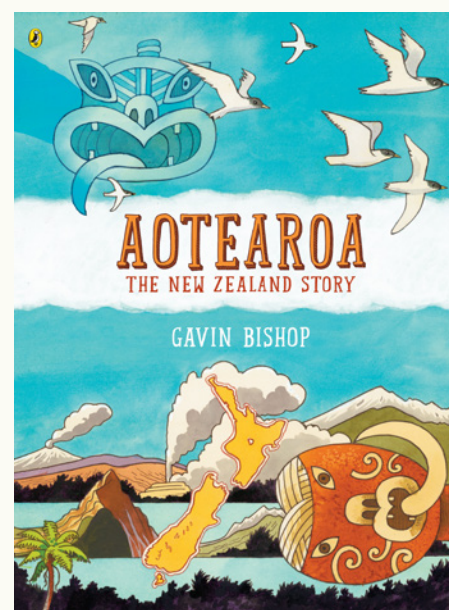
Gavin has been writing and illustrating books for over 40 years. He has gone through many phases of illustration – the illustrations in this book are most similar in style to his *The House that Jack Built*, which was re-published a few years ago by Gecko Press, but also bring in elements (particularly in the people) of the broad style he used in *Mister Whistler*.

Aotearoa tells the story of our nation, from the big bang, via

dinosaurs, through Kupe's discovery of Aotearoa (so named by Kupe's wife Kuramārōtini) and so on. My first favourite page – there are many – is the Voyages to Aotearoa, which depicts each of the waka that we know sailed to settle in New Zealand from Hawaiki. Along with people, came gods, and the stories of our gods are flawlessly woven into the narrative.

As iwi settled the land, each named its sacred mountain, and set about naming the birds, fish and insects of Aotearoa – and the land: Te Waipounamu and Te Ika-a-Māui. On the following spread, came war: the Māori war god Tūmatauenga makes several appearances as our people go to war. While disputes over land led to fighting, the first Pākehā arrived. Gavin takes us inside their minds to show how they drew the coastline of New Zealand, and the illustrations give further information about what was introduced and traded.

Something notable if you have never read a history book that has an integrated worldview of New Zealand: the Treaty of Waitangi isn't signed until page 20 – one-third of the way through the book. There was a lot of history in Aotearoa before Pākehā came and carved it up,



and this book ensures the younger generation doesn't forget it. I will also add, for me the best parts of the book are those which tell about the settlement of New Zealand by all its peoples.

From the late 19th century on, Gavin does break-out 'survey' pages telling about progress in different areas of life and society. Transport, employment, houses, education. Each of these are finely drawn, but as somebody who tends to view things in a linear manner, I couldn't help but



want the images to sit in a more time-oriented manner!

The things he brings out though are wonderful, and there are several juxtapositions that made me smile to myself – in housing, these three things are close together: 1937: State houses were built for those who could not afford their own; 2008: A house in Masterton designed by the Wellington firm Melling Morse Architects; 2015: The number of homeless people who slept on the streets increased.

Gavin has also very cleverly given potted histories of famous architects, significant visionaries, and so on throughout his illustrations. His war illustrations are majestic artworks of the sort that I hope go on tour through Painted Stories.

I will stop myself gushing over every page and think about audience for a second. There is nothing that Gavin has done that hasn't got kids in the centre of his thinking. The lollies page is fantastic; the clothes page – which involves many members of his own family – could inspire a class study of fashions using old

family photos; the sports section is brilliant – and of course the All Blacks are running across the South Island. The disasters section is a starter page for 100s of school projects in the future. He has chosen famous people that children can relate to (Jamie Curry, Annabel Langbein, Witi Ihimaera, Lorde) and singers, writers, actors, dancers and artists as well. I'm pleased to see he has drawn himself in there.

Gavin has not been afraid to put his worldview across. '1840: The Treaty of Waitangi gave Māori the rights of British citizens. But for over 100 years it was ignored and ruled irrelevant to New Zealand law and government'. He has told briefly of land marches, protests, Bastion Point and Moutoa Gardens, hīkoj, and wrongful Anti-terror raids. He has also called out those who are destroying our land: 'Careless use of the environment threatens all life.' Possibly the cutest drawing of the South Island has it turned into a possum . . .

But the book ends with hope. Electric transport is being brought in.

Kāpiti Island is a bird sanctuary, the Southern Ocean is a whale sanctuary. There are good things happening in agriculture. And finally, we have children flying the flag for the future. Just perfect. It doesn't matter what age you are, you will learn something from this book. You will understand how history has formed our land. Gavin has used the academic work of our most important historians to focus his drawings, and he has done a superlative job. Step out of the way, everybody, the award goes to . . .

Bill Nagelkerke

Magpies

Page Eight, New Zealand Books Section

Volume Thirty-two, Number Five, November 2017

In terms of size and conception *Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story* makes an excellent companion to Peter Goes' *Timeline* (Gecko Press, 2015). But while *Timeline* . . . was by and large Eurocentric, Gavin Bishop



focuses solely on Aotearoa and on New Zealand's place in the world. The book as a whole is a masterpiece of design, as the birds on the front cover (itself symbolically banded by a long white cloud) lead readers into the narrative and take them out again at the end of the book, while the colours used in the pen and watercolour drawings reflect changing moods and themes.

Ranginui and Papatūānuku, sky father and earth mother respectively, embrace the story and view the country's history, beginning with its separation from Gondwanaland before moving to the many canoes of the first settlement, to colonisation, to depressions, to wars, to environmental despoliation ('politicians sometimes don't listen'), to hope for the future.

Many double spreads focus on 'big picture' elements, such as disasters, famous people (the book was published just too soon to note the death of Colin Meads), natural attractions, sports, clothes and several others. With his signature style and his practised eye for detail

'With his signature style and his practised eye for detail Gavin Bishop fills each page with information, textual and illustrative, gleaned from many sources and selected for its intrinsic interest and relevance.'

Gavin Bishop fills each page with information, textual and illustrative, gleaned from many sources and selected for its intrinsic interest and relevance. He has included a little of his own personal history as well: not only do several members of his own family appear (on pages 42 and 43) wearing fashions from the 1860s to the 1970s, but Gavin's tutelary ancestor Hinepau appears on page 11 and her wairua or spirit force (in stylised form) on every subsequent page to remind us of the Māori presence in 'yesterday, today and tomorrow'. As this originally began as a book of maps before turning into what we have now, it's appropriate that the map of Aotearoa New Zealand appears frequently, often at an unfamiliar angle and even once conceived of as a deer (North Island) and possum (South Island). The book concludes with a word list, as well as some further explanatory notes. Each rereading offers up new insights.

Aotearoa: The New Zealand Story is a precious gift to both children and adults: a taonga. It deserves a place in every home and school library.



Cook's Cook: The Cook Who Cooked for Captain Cook

Gecko Press (2018)

Bill Nagelkerke

Maggies

Page Eight, New Zealand Books Section

Volume Thirty-three, November 2018

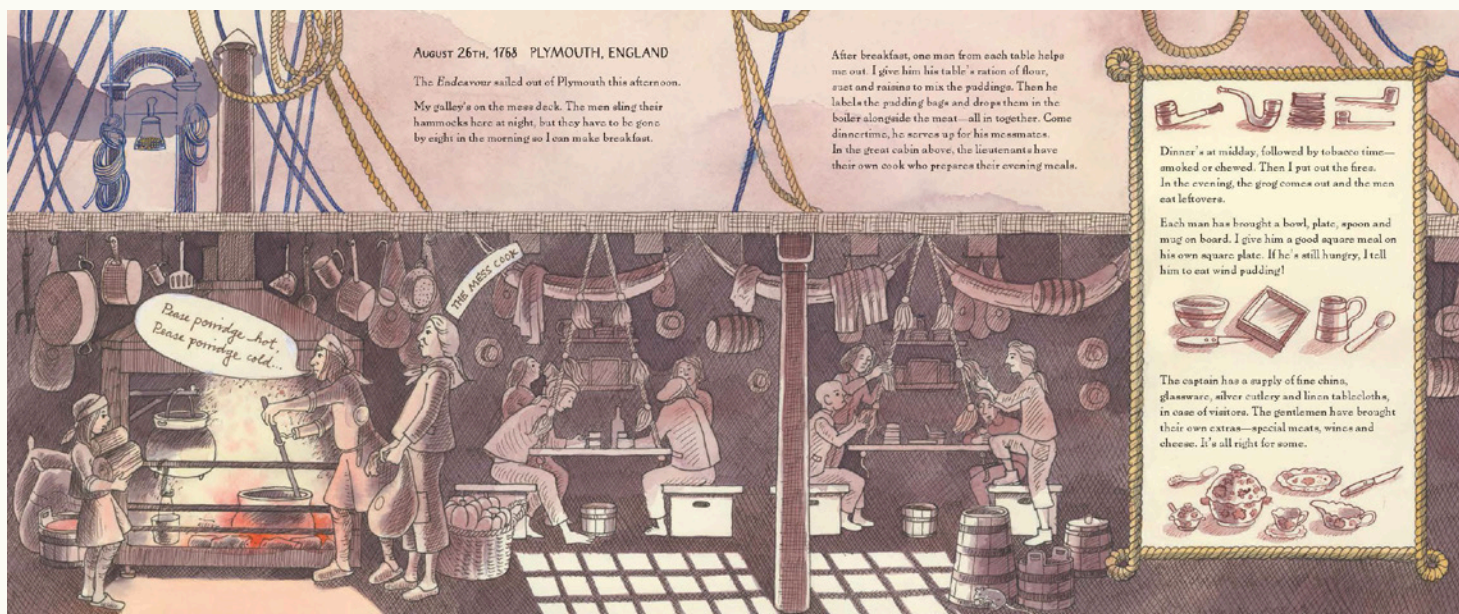
Captain Cook's first voyage is creatively envisioned as a log kept by the ship's one-handed cook, John Thompson. He's quite a character: 'How'd I lose my hand? None of your bleedin' business!' Keen to be commemorated by a landmark named after him, he finally has to settle for being remembered for his ubiquitous pease porridge (the nursery rhyme features strongly in the text). Given the narrative point of view, the story focuses strongly on matters of food and cooking, beginning with the supplies taken on board the *Endeavour*. As the voyage takes its lengthy three-year course, the cook's repertoire is challenged to cope with shortages ('Severe gales have drowned most of the poultry') as

well as the opportunities provided by exotic ingredients, including albatross, dog and stingray: recipes are included. Along the way, the reader is fed many snippets of historical information such as Captain Cook's attempts to prevent scurvy and his observation of the transit of Venus.

Encounters with, and the impact on, indigenous cultures are documented by Thompson: 'It's been hard on the locals, feeding over 80 extra mouths for three months . . .' The New Zealand sojourn takes up three double-page spreads with two of these cleverly split into three layers, allowing for more detailed commentary as well as perhaps also being a metaphor for Aotearoa's many-layered history. We see the rather more insidious results of colonisation, with Cook imposing English names on an already named landscape. The tale takes a poignant turn when the *Endeavour* reaches Batavia. Many on board die of malaria 'I now use a very small pot for pease porridge' – the cook himself succumbing on January 31st, 1771, 'when his soul . . . slipped into the body of a seagull' (this transmigration is explained on the rear endpapers). Death does not prevent John



Thompson from observing the *Endeavour's* progress and its eventual return to England. A unique angle; a generous format and top-quality production standards; salient and high-interest details; succinct text and appealing illustrations (observe how the palette changes as the *Endeavour* moves into the warm Pacific) – all these factors combine to make *Cook's Cook* an essential and highly recommended purchase.



Jamie Pease

Children's Book and Media Review
Harold B Lee Library, Brigham Young University

7 September 2020

Captain James Cook leads the *HMS Endeavour* on a 1768 voyage to search for the mysterious Terra Australis Incognita, and the ship's cook John Thompson chronicles their perilous journey around Cape Horn and deep into the South Pacific. His culinary ability triumphs over each strange ingredient the crew discovers as they pull into new ports. The men feast on delicacies such as Kangaroo Stew and Stingray Soup. When fresh ingredients run short, Thompson gets them through with salt pork and Pease Porridge. The one-handed cook handles anything these unknown lands can give until October 1770, when malaria and dysentery descend upon the entire crew, shifting their focus from discovery to survival.

Gavin Bishop's colorful portrayal of this first voyage offers a subtle nod toward the notorious captain while recognizing the blood, sweat,

'Gavin Bishop's colorful portrayal of this first voyage offers a subtle nod toward the notorious captain while recognizing the blood, sweat, and years given by the lesser-known people who made the journey possible.'

and years given by the lesser-known people who made the journey possible. The journey, portrayed mostly through the form of a ship's log with notes and recipes scrawled

between entries, lends a personal quality to the narrative. While Thompson's observations boast the discovery of lands, plants, and people, it also reveals the grim living conditions aboard the ship and the negative impact the crew's presence has on the natives they encounter. Such details are often left out of historical stories of discovery. The front and back matter include maps, diagrams, and definitions to help readers better understand the length of the journey, the cramped size of the ship, and the jargon of the crew. This additional information can help readers better contextualize the details of the historical voyage without disrupting the pace of the narrative. Stunning ink and watercolor illustrations wash over salty sea ports and sunny island cliffs with the most striking illustration along the back matter, representing the length and cost of the journey that Thompson explains in the end.



The House that Jack Built
Scholastic New Zealand, 1999
Gecko Press, 2012

Koinei te Whare nā Haki i Hanga
Gecko Press, 2012

Jill Holt

'Reading the Pictures'
New Zealand Listener, pp 44-45

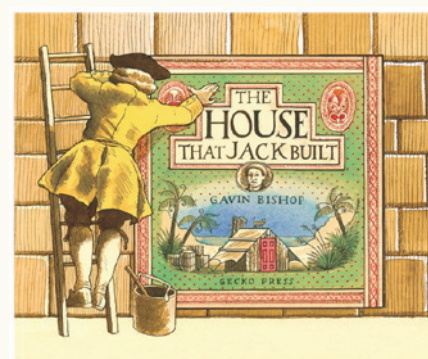
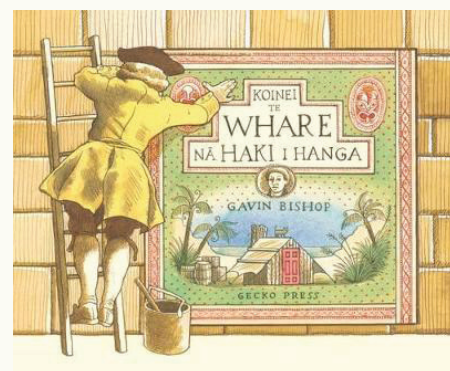
5 February 2000

The *House that Jack Built* represents a new level of scholarship, artistic complexity, and historical knowledge and exploration for New Zealand children's books. It is an imaginative rendition of the traditional rhyme – in paintings showing 'Jack's' departure from London in 1798 and an imagined early European settlement in New Zealand. The historically accurate detail has been drawn from European and Māori sources.

The 'story' simply is Bishop's pictorial account of the period when the first white whalers, sealers, traders and missionaries, arrive – showing some early interaction between Māori

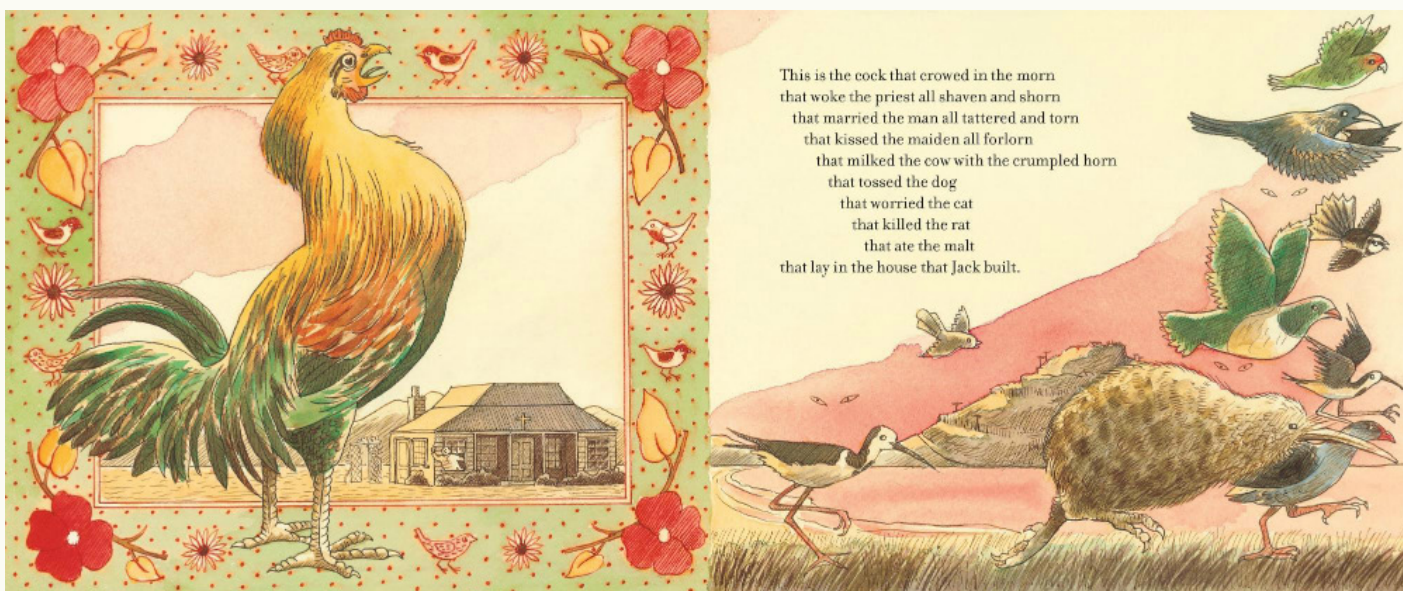
and settler; illustrating the burgeoning numbers of settlers, the destruction of sea mammals and indigenous birds and plants, and ending with a scene close to the burning of Kororāreka. Details and repetition (Jack's red door appears in every second picture), and the frames of little pictures around the main one ensure the book is fascinating for children of primary school age. Many children learn more readily through visual means and this is a book where children as young as six will pore over each page discussing the physical detail of life and 'times long ago'.

It is also a scholar's book. High-school students with some historical or art history expertise will detect the Hogarthian foundation of the frontispiece when Jack leaves London in 1798, or perhaps recognise the origins of the alphabet page forming a background to an early painting – Judith Binney tells us it is from Hongi Hika's exercise book, which he used when the Reverend Kendall taught him to read. There are endless layers to be recognised, investigated and studied. The paintings are greatly enriched by Bishop's recording of Māori and Pākehā dress, canoes, household paraphernalia, guns, tools, ships and the natural environment.



This will turn 10-year-olds into historians.

And once they start doing some research they will find that the book is a poetic rendition of an imagined history. Bishop, in an effort to present the Māori as strong, powerful and spiritual, has also understated their economic significance. At this time



This is the cock that crowed in the morn
that woke the priest all shaven and shorn
that married the man all tattered and torn
that kissed the maiden all forlorn
that milked the cow with the crumpled horn
that tossed the dog
that worried the cat
that killed the rat
that ate the malt
that lay in the house that Jack built.

Māori in real life were the great grain, kūmara and potato farmers, and supplied Auckland with produce in their own ships, but Māori are not shown as successful traders and farmers. The end note refers to “both cultures now intertwined in the rich history of Aotearoa”, but the pictures in most of the book tell a different story. Food for thought – and a thinking person’s book.

Trevor Agnew *Magpies*

New Zealand Section
Number One, March 2012.

There is a new generation that has never seen Gavin Bishop’s 1999 classic *The House That Jack Built*. Try to see this picture book through the eyes of a young reader, opening it for the first time. Here is the familiar rhyme ‘This is the dog that worried the cat that killed the rat that ate the malt . . .’ Here are handsome double-page pen and ink drawings of ‘the maiden all forlorn’ and ‘the cow with the crumpled horn’.

With its heavy paper and fine colour washes, the book is a handsome presentation of a traditional nursery rhyme. The dramatic illustration of the rooster crowing is worth the price of the book by itself.

Now return to the book as a

somewhat older reader. The first thing you notice is that it is set in a recognisable (if fictional) colonial settlement of Jackston. Jack is Jack Bull, an English merchant, who migrates from a Hogarthian London to seek his fortune in the South Seas, trading with the Māori. Jack’s axes, blankets and nails, as well as his introduced farm animals are part of the colonisation process which changes Aotearoa into New Zealand. Vignettes, which frame many of the illustrations, show the process of change, with pigs, potatoes, buttons, Bibles, weapons and bullock carts. Seals are slaughtered, whales flensed and forests converted to farmed fields.

Our hypothetical reader, perhaps a little older now, might find that this book also uses symbolism to convey the changing status of the Māori in the early 19th century. Along with the tiny pictorial details showing Māori trading, farming and selling timber, can be seen some remarkable symbols. Jack’s red door, which pops up in almost every picture, marks the growing prosperity of the Pakeha settlers. In the sky, eyes symbolise the tribal ancestor figures, such as Rangī and Papa. These all-seeing eyes dominate the early years of contact but fade and shrink as Māori control is eroded by the rising tide of European settlement. As tensions over land increase, the skies darken and a brooding volcano roars into life. Finally

Tūmataunga, the god of war, is seen over the land.

Repeated reading of the pictures and text reveals even more satisfying details. Māori religious beliefs, trading accounts, hand-writing exercises and old maps are all to be discovered. The illustrations reflect the influence of Hogarth, Cook’s illustrators, colonial sketchers, Māori craft workers, and the folk art style developed for the ‘painted histories’ in some meeting houses. Yet all of it forms a united whole.

Finally the reader looks inside the cover and finds a large reproduction of Bishop’s original storyboard plan for this project, complete with plans for cover and endpapers, as well as the author’s illuminating synopsis. There is pleasure to be found at many levels in this splendid book.

Gecko Press has done its edition on high quality paper, with the artwork reproduced at 100 percent, so that the superb draughtsmanship and imaginative layout can be fully appreciated. *The House That Jack Built* was selected a NZ Post Book of the Year at the end of last century, and now seems destined to also become one of the important books of the 21st.