



PINK SHIRT DAY
FRIDAY 21ST MAY 2021

The Boys in the Waka Ama

Angie Belcher, illustrated by Debbie Tipuna. (2020). Picture Puffin.



The Boys in the Waka Ama by New Zealand teacher and writer Angie Belcher is a follow-up to her successful book *The Girls in the Kapa Haka*. This story follows a team of six boys training together for a waka ama competition, from their early morning training sessions to the day of the big race. We see the dedication and the determination on their faces showing their passion for the sport, and witness the necessary teamwork and whanau support that leads to their success.

Waka ama, outrigger canoe racing, is a Polynesian sport growing in popularity in New Zealand. Integral to the sport are Māori culture and values such as Kotahitanga - inclusivity, and Whanaungatanga - belonging, identity and collective strength. This story is a great way to demonstrate and perhaps initiate a discussion on the values of teamwork, dedication, leadership and respecting Aotearoa's cultures - all values important to both the New Zealand Early Childhood and Primary curriculums. Therefore, this book would not only be great addition to the home library but also an excellent resource for teachers.

With a rhythmical text and repetition of Te Reo Māori phrases, it engages and educates the listener. For many New Zealand children, Māori tikanga (values and practices) such as saying a karakia/prayer will be familiar, as will counting in Te Reo Māori. This story introduces some words and phrases which may be new to some readers such 'Kia tere' - give more! The book also includes a useful glossary of the Te Reo Māori terms used.

The Boys in the Waka Ama is a joyful book with lively illustrations that celebrates a sport that is special to Aotearoa and the Pacific. It is best suited to children 4 years of age and over.

Reviewed by Charmaine Denney, Early Childhood Teacher and mum to two boys.

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