

# Book review

## Arlo and the Orca

**Category:** Book Reviews

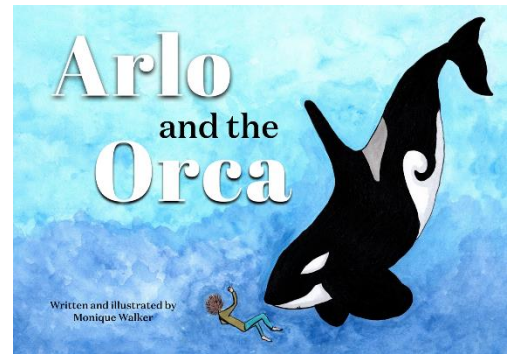
**Author:** by Monique Walker

**Year:** 2021

**Publisher:** Kōwhai Heart Books NZ

**ISBN:** 9780473588526

**Audience:** Supporting young people



*Arlo and the Orca* is a stunning picture book, written and illustrated by New Zealand author Monique Walker.

Inspired by the author's own experience of grief, *Arlo and the Orca* is the story of Arlo, who is struggling to understand his grief after the passing of his grandfather. While it is not explicitly stated, it is implied that Arlo's grandfather has died by suicide but the details of his death are not discussed. I found this refreshing, as it's a topic not often seen in such literature, despite its prevalence in New Zealand, but it is a factor readers should be aware of.

Don't be fooled by the fact this is a picture book – this story will tug on your heartstrings and get you thinking about your own feelings! On both a surface level and on a deeper level, this book is a beautiful story. From an adult perspective, it's not hard to see the symbolism in the book, but it's also an easy-to-understand way to talk about big feelings with younger readers. I loved the flow of the story and the beautiful illustrations to show how grief can feel. It can be a huge wave that sweeps us off our feet, especially when we bottle things up, but it does not have to be that way. The metaphors alongside the pictures interwoven into the story is done beautifully without feeling forced.

This book is relatable to anyone who has been overcome by big feelings, whether or not those were a result of grief. It would be a good one to read together with younger readers and relate back to experiences. While the underlying themes are deep, they are not too in-your-face and this book can be read in a gentle way, making things that are hard to talk about easier to approach. This book should be a staple in primary school rooms and libraries, among other places.

**Review by Hannah Longley – Child and Adolescent psychotherapist @readwithhannah\_**