

Book review



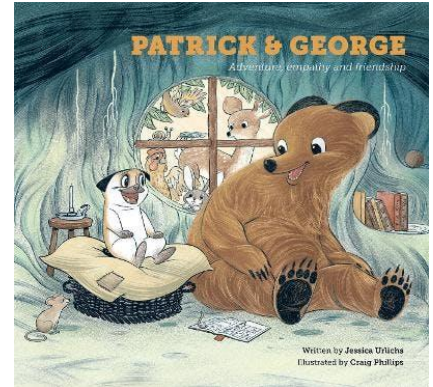
Patrick & George - Adventure, empathy and friendship

Author: Jessica Urlichs and illustrated by Craig Phillips.

Year: 2024

Publisher: Wilding Books

ISBN: 9781738599523



Behind Patrick and George there's a dynamic combination of creatives. Jessica Urlichs is a New Zealand poet and children's author. Her Rainbow in My Heart series are some of my favourites. Illustrating is Craig Phillips whom we know from the Wildling Book series Aroha's Way, Finding My Calm, How Do I Feel... as well as Rebekah Lipp, also from Wildling Books, who has added the Parent and Teacher notes to support us to make the most of the opportunities that can come from this book. We could just start with a deep grateful sigh for these three superhumans, and all the heart they bring to our children through their powerful books and resources.

Patrick and George is a truly gorgeous book! There's something about it that takes me back to my grandparent's bookshelf, left overs of their childhood books, as well as my mother's. The books where you would curl up on the floor of the hallway, pages filled with cool blues, aqua greens, a richness and illustrations of woodland animals, and outdoor worlds with more to explore each time you opened them.

The general premise of the book is to support children (and adults!) with developing empathy, but it is really clever and might I say, gifted to us in an incredibly empathetic way. While Patrick the bear is good at problem solving, here he recognises that he can't solve George the pug's problem, instead George takes him on an imaginary journey. They cross ravines together, raft graded rivers, and we learn that Patrick is supporting George to talk about his challenges and be vulnerable. His job is to listen.

I know, right? How many of us need this book? Um, all of us!

Continued over...

It's better than I'm describing to be honest. The illustrations have a movement with them, Philips is so skilled at this, every stroke is rounded - the river, the treetops, the ridges in a tree trunk, they're a pathway, curving, winding. Pair this with the expressions of our new friends Patrick and George as they jump and push and pull and wonder. Some pages insert a close up of these expressions, which will spark such great conversations with our children about all sorts of thoughts and emotions.

Urlichs' words are so spot on - they mimic our own, so are familiar and meaningful. I smiled as I read:

"I also find it hard to keep my head above the water," George said.

My favourite page, George and Patrick are crossing a log they've pushed, lifted and landed across a deep ravine. George is joyful, Patrick concentrated with the Urlichs' words:

With their arms out like wings, Patrick and George put one foot in front of the other until they reached the other side.

At the back Lipp reminds us of how we can support our children with empathy and vulnerability, including for our neuro-diverse children, and adults, which I so appreciate. It's a culmination of these three creative's bravery - they bring us books that mean we can have more curious conversations. We get to talk about the things we didn't hear about as children ourselves, yet we did... "keeping our heads above water." But we struggled to make sense of it. Here though, we can. Empathy and vulnerability are described, imagined, supported, listened to, unfold pathways and are not so scary because of this book.

Many times, Jessica Urlichs, Craig Phillips and Rebekah Lipp, thank you!

Review by Anna Mowat director of Real Parents

Disclaimer: Please note these reviews are not intended as endorsements or recommendations from the Mental Health Foundation. This feature introduces resources that may be useful for individuals with an interest in mental health and wellbeing topics.

