

Book review

Aroha Knows

Category: Book Reviews / Fiction / Children and Youth

Author: Craig Phillips, Rebekah Lipp

Year: 2020

Publisher: Wildling Books, NZ

ISBN: 9780473527440

Audience: For Children and Youth



Summary: Aroha and her friends experience our amazing world and how it can benefit our wellbeing.

After two extremely wonder-filled and wonderful books - *Aroha's Way* and *Let It Go* - Rebekah Lipp and Craig Phillips are back with *Aroha Knows*. I'm never sure how to describe these series in terms of their purpose, but they do have a purpose. I would say they are books providing practical strategies for children and whānau in order to nurture their wellbeing. But I'm not happy with those words alone, so let me 'try' to do this better... the definition commonly used for wellbeing is 'feeling good and functioning well', and it's here that Aroha and her friends gently guide us to. What can we do to nurture our wellbeing? This is the question all of the Aroha books answer. And they all do it so succinctly and beautifully. My advice – buy the set!

But back to *Aroha Knows* – she knows about places that support her to feel good. I'm in love (again)! This book is all about our comfy beds, our front yard lawns, at our beach, down the river, or in the garden – all the places 'we' know - and that are familiar, safe, fun and full of adventures.

New Zealand is strong in the illustrations – the birds, trees, home. Also strong are the emotions these places evoke. Each page reveals: calmness, gratitude, happiness, bravery, amazement, serenity and acceptance. And the movement in the pages is so apparent – children are rarely still, and when they are, they:

Watch the heavens pass by - See our daydreams piled high - In the sky

What a fantastic way to speak to children about both our environment and our mental health and wellbeing – they are intrinsically intertwined – whenua (land) is all the places we love, we feel we belong, we are ourselves and we can relax. And we share it. That's going to have me head out to the lawn and take a breath or two...

Anna Mowat has a background in psychology and works as part of the All Right? wellbeing campaign brought about post-Christchurch earthquakes. Here she leads Sparklers, a school and whānau website dedicated to actively teaching tamariki about their mental health and wellbeing in fun ways. She is also the director of Real Parents, a mum, and finds knitting and skiing super tricky.