

Featured – THE BIG VOTE!

THE BIG VOTE! ENGAGING WITH THE NEW ZEALAND BOOK AWARDS FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS

WORDS

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For a few years now I have thought about doing a 'book battle' in our library. I've seen numerous variations of these and love the idea of engaging students with a competition to see which book is eventually chosen to be the winner – deemed the best of the best, as voted by the kids themselves. I'd thought about it, added it to my ideas and goals list... and there it stayed.

Until last year that is! I found myself thinking once again about running a battle/competition/vote. I thought about how it would work and got a bit tied up with how many books to include and how to set up a knockout draw.

I thought about how it could include all year levels – and realised it couldn't work with longer texts because I wanted the books to be read aloud to the classes.

I needed a cup of tea after all that thinking, and as I was sipping and scrolling, the answer came to me!

The New Zealand Book Awards for Children & Young Adults 2025 had just released their shortlists (always an

exciting post to see!) – the annual top five titles in each category of books created in Aotearoa for our tamariki and rangatahi.

The shortlists are generally released in June each year, with the winners announced at a flash event in Wellington in August.

So here it was – five finalist picture books, seven weeks away from the big winner announcement. Plenty of time to run our first ever whole school reading engagement vote for the winner programme! Ta-dah!

I got busy...

First, I made sure we had a copy of each finalist book – if we didn't already have it, I purchased it. I try to make sure we have these, and the Storylines Notable Books in our collection each year.

Last year the wonderful finalists were:

Beddy-bye Time in the Kōwhai Tree, (Juliette MacIver and Lily Uivel, published by Scholastic NZ);

Mataali'i, (Dahlia Mala'eulu (Vaivase Tai, Sinamoga) and Darcy Solia, published by Mila's Books);

Ten Nosey Weka, (Kate Preece and Isobel Joy Te Aho-White (Ngāti Kahungunu, Kāi Tahu), published by Bateman Books);

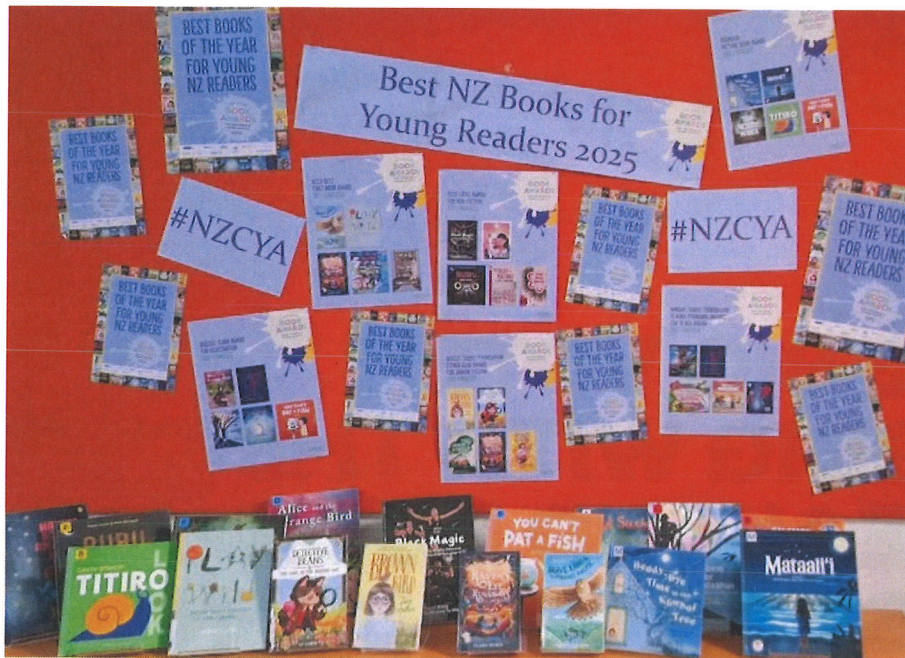
Titiro Look, Gavin Bishop (Tainui, Ngāti Awa) and Darryn Joseph (Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Rereahu), published by: Gecko Press, Lerner Publishing Group); and

You Can't Pat a Fish, (Ruth Paul, published by Walker Books Australia).

Then I created a huge (and I mean HUGE – I had to crawl around on the floor ruling lines on it!) voting spreadsheet with a row for each picture book and 23 columns – one for each class in our school – and put it up on the wall in the library where everyone could see it.

And the voting began! As each class visited the library, I read one of the finalist books aloud to them – the same book throughout the week. After reading, we had a discussion about each book; we talked about Weka, the Chatham Islands, farm life, illustration styles, customs, languages, and what makes a book an award winner.

Then the students voted by giving a thumbs-up whether they thought



LEFT NZYCA 2025

BELOW NZYCA final vote count

the book would be awarded the best. Votes were counted and recorded on the spreadsheet. And yes, the students could vote for every book if they enjoyed it.

As the weeks progressed the spreadsheet slowly filled up with numbers (which proved an added bonus for some maths cross-over learning) and the awards night came closer. I had students asking if the winner had been announced yet, and I had teachers discussing which book they felt would be the winner. Students and teachers alike had favourite books they had their fingers crossed for.

When all five books had been read to all the classes, I tallied up the votes and highlighted which book our school had given the most votes for. We were keen to find out: would our vote match the judges' decision?

It turned out not to be the case, which led to a few disappointed 'awwwws', but overall, it was a highly successful reading engagement programme. We all read some great New Zealand authored books, we had discussions about them, and we learned about the awards themselves - a win-win-win. Will I do it again this year? Absolutely - bring on the shortlist!

Can Botany Downs Pick		1	2	3	4	6	7	8	10	15	16	17	18
 	383	17	16	16	12	19	16	19	11	25	21	14	20
	353	11	13	17	12	15	17	17	13	15	11	13	11
	377	22	17	15	11	18	15	13	14	19	17	15	11
	410	20	16	22	13	17	18	16	20	17	13	13	13
	263	17	8	9	10	18	11	11	17	17	17	17	7