



THE BOOK AND BEYOND:

An educator's guide for exploring children's and YA literature

Title: How to Bee

Author(s): Bren MacDibble

Illustrator(s):

The aim of The Book and Beyond is to inspire an interest and passion for books and reading. This section is for your thoughts, questions and notes about different aspects of the book and to consider how you might frame discussion with students.

The book

Physical object

Standard shape and feel of a junior fiction novel in paperback — portrait orientation and rectangular. It is reassuring that it sticks to this form.

Design & cover

Cover has bright yellowy gold background with a tree (white pears) and girl in the branches in silhouette — striking contrast/effect. The title font is drawn in cursive by an ink pen with the ends of the letter trailing off like a bee flight path. Play on the word 'bee' which is beautiful. Peony wants to be a bee but learns also how to 'be' herself.

Illustration

Throughout the book there are illustrations of small leaves and 'chooks' in black ink. The leaves are a continuation of the tree on the front cover. These pictures appear in all chapters, even those set in the city, providing a continuity and a reminder of the farm.

Characters

Peony is a fantastic main character with a distinctive voice. She is a determined, single-minded, fearless, courageous and fierce 9 year old girl. These things are important as they often make her problems and challenges harder but we love her for these characteristics. She has an understanding, enthusiastic and caring side. Gramps — a loving, calm constant — represents the idea of 'home'.

Plot

Peony is a worker in an orchard, in a future setting where famine and lack of bees has changed the world. A problem for many is finding work and food. It is surprising/unexpected that Rose, Peony's mother is so intent on 'the ape', a different life and leaving them — this provides different situations and problems for Peony to solve.

Setting

Rural/ country orchard and a large city. In time — 30 years after bees have died. Could that be 40 or 50 years from now? This setting is similar to our world with similar technology/objects etc. The setting is important to the themes/messages and provokes thinking about the future.

Theme & message

Courage/resilience
Love and family — loyalty
Materialism — Rose sets a path for money/things rather than Peony/sister
Climate change and sustainability
Child labour
Questions about the future of food/bees

Language

Peony's voice — in narrating the story directly to us and in conversations with others — is important for the feel/appeal and style of the book. She has a distinct dialect — with very informal, shortened language and made up words/names. 'You's brave.', 'Cha!' — when she is frustrated, 'urbz' and 'coz', 'the ape' and 'blapped' for punched (Is this to make it less violent?).

Mood & feeling

Begins energetically, fast paced and exciting. The mood becomes sadder as she leaves the farm. The various situations/challenges and Peony's ways of solving them mean the pace and mood rises and falls. The end is hopeful with the promise of better conditions with a new scheme for Peony to work with bees. Restorative.

Genre & format

Bridges junior and early YA fiction in format.
It can be considered a dystopian novel with its future setting and effects of famine/lack of bees.

The inquiry

Rich question(s)

This section is for creating and exploring questions that might guide an overall inquiry for a particular book. These questions might be inspired by ideas in the book section and/or personal responses and/or the NZ Curriculum and/or available resources.

What are our responsibilities for the health of the environment?

What is our impact on the natural world? What personal contributions and changes can we make to reduce this impact?

How can we ensure our world is preserved for future generations?

What makes an individual thrive when faced with problems/challenges and others fail?



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Make connections

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Personal

Explore

Peony can't wait to become a 'Bee' to help pollinate the pear tree. Would life be better though if we didn't get to that stage and bees were OK?

Help students find out more and develop questions about bees - ngaro huru-huru/pi - and their role/ecosystems or about the hand pollinators in China's Sichuan province.

Flight of the Honey Bee/ Raymond Huber and Brian Lovelock
UnBEElievables - honeybee poems and paintings/ Douglas Florian

Find out more about the issues and the book from the writer's webpages www.macdibble.com

Download the 'How to Bee' Teacher's notes from the publisher (Alan and Unwin) [website](#), which includes links to resources around bees and pollination.

Explore

Topic Explorer has quality resources: images, video, webpages, articles about other environmental issues

Check out the 'Environmental Issues' set: <https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/topics>

Read more

Read the next in the series

Read another book by the same author

Published in March 2019 *The Dog Runner*/ Bren MacDibble

Read another book with the same idea/topic/ genre

Listen to an audio version of the book

Social (Share your experience)

Join

Find and join/follow an organisation that is linked to the theme of sustainability, global climate change/conservation, for example:

- Greenpeace www.greenpeace.org/new-zealand
- Bee organisations —
NZ: [www.fortheloveofbees.co.nz/](http://fortheloveofbees.co.nz/)
International: <https://beetime.eu/top-10-organizations-and-initiatives-helping-to-save-bees/>

or find a local beekeeping club

- The Kiwi Kids conservation club <http://kcc.org.nz> (great 'Wild Things' magazines each quarter for schools/classrooms). As well as downloadable activities you can become a KCC reporter, find out about and write a story/have your mahi published in a blog or in the magazine.

What connections can you make to yourself, other texts, the world?

Text to self

Connecting reading to our past and present experience. Students could connect to:

- the experience of making friends — like Peony and Ez.
- wanting to be free/competitive/running/having a role in the orchard
- having worries and overcoming them as Esmerelda does with her fear of the outside/open spaces.

Text to text

This book is like *A Little Princess* and *The Secret Garden* by Frances Burnett Hodgson. Wild, fierce and determined girls befriend and then help the sheltered, wealthy child.

A Girl Savage/Katherine Rundell

Text to world

The idea that bees are being affected and are under threat from sprays/insecticides and urban development is real and a concern.

How will this impact on us? What can we do?

NZ Curriculum

This section is intended as a prompt for thinking about how the book might relate to the NZ Curriculum. For example, is it a story about *cultural diversity*? What *language, symbols and text* tell the story?

Learning areas	Principles	Values	Key Competencies
<input checked="" type="radio"/> English	<input type="radio"/> Maths & Statistics	<input type="radio"/> High expectations	<input type="radio"/> Thinking
<input type="radio"/> The Arts	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Science	<input type="radio"/> Future focus	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Relating to others
<input type="radio"/> Health & PE	<input type="radio"/> Social Sciences	<input type="radio"/> Treaty of Waitangi	<input type="radio"/> Using language, symbols & text
<input type="radio"/> Languages	<input type="radio"/> Technology	<input type="radio"/> Cultural diversity	<input type="radio"/> Participating & contributing
		<input type="radio"/> Learning to learn	<input type="radio"/> Managing self
		<input type="radio"/> Community engagement	
		<input type="radio"/> Inclusion	
		<input type="radio"/> Excellence	<input type="radio"/> Integrity
		<input checked="" type="radio"/> Innovation, inquiry, curiosity	<input type="radio"/> Equity
		<input type="radio"/> Diversity	
		<input type="radio"/> Equity	