



The Ghosts of Tarawera

Sue Copsey

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* Storylines Children's Literature Trust of New Zealand Notable Book 2016*

On vacation, Joe and Eddie are intrigued by the bubbling mud pools and gushing geysers that dot the landscape around the lake where they're staying. They meet local volcano expert Rocky, who tells them about the cataclysmic 1886 eruption of Mt Tarawera – the volcano that casts a long shadow towards their holiday cottage.

But Joe's fascination turns to unease when ghostly sightings on the lake and dark rumblings from the Earth hint that the volcano is reawakening. Can he persuade Rocky, who puts his faith only in science, to sound a warning?

The past reaches out to touch the present in this spooky middle grade adventure story from the author of *The Ghosts of Young Nick's Head*. Read it at night, if you dare ...

The Ghosts of Tarawera Details

Date : Published June 1st 2015 by Treehouse Books

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Author : Sue Copsey

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From Reader Review The Ghosts of Tarawera for online ebook

Kerry says

A cracking book which I am going to recommend to our year 5-6 teachers as a great read-aloud. Action, adventure and mystery with a NZ flavour, what more could you ask for. Particularly liked the Maori warrior spirit guide. Looking forward to the next Spooky Adventure.....

Kathleen Dixon says

Sue Copsey has brought us a great sequel to The Ghosts of Young Nick's Head (though one doesn't have to have read it to enjoy this book) as Joe's parents take the family on holiday to Rotorua, famous for its geothermal activity. Eddie is with Joe, of course, and younger sister Beckie also gets a friend to bring along - a new and popular girl at school, Anastasia, the daughter of an American diplomat.

Joe, we quickly learn, has a sixth sense - he gets prickles on the back of his neck, and he sees ghosts. And as any student of New Zealand history will tell you, when you see a ghost canoe on Lake Tarawera there's something dire about to happen.

There's a great mix of modern technology in this exciting ghost story - Joe gets strange messages on his Facebook feed, and peculiar texts. And there are the two geologists doing some research nearby, with all their up-to-the-minute equipment. But as we all know, mother nature can still spring surprises on the scientists.

This is a fun read. When's the next one, Sue?

Katie Furze says

Mr 10 and Mr 12 really enjoyed this one! As the grown-up reading it out loud I particularly enjoyed the humour, the NZ scenery, and the characters. (The child characters are very real and relatable). The story is a fun adventure, and just the right amount of scary for this age group. Recommended.

Kylie says

An excellent spooky book for kids (probably older elementary/primary). As a New Zealander myself, and one who loves to visit Rotorua, it made a fantastic setting for a ghost story. I imagine that it could be rather exotic for readers who haven't visited, which would add another element. The kids in the book are really well written and enjoyable to read - not too bratty at all, and the sibling relationship is portrayed well too.

The ghostly side of things is very eerie - and I do know of at least one 10 year old who couldn't complete as they found it a bit too scary, so that is something to consider for any younger readers.

Fine as a stand alone, as I haven't read the first in the series, however, now that I have read it, I will seek out

the first one.

Alexander Walker says

Disclaimer: I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review

Discovering a thoroughly enjoyable book for children can sadly be a difficult task. A thoroughly enjoyable sequel even more so. As such, you may imagine my surprise when upon putting down Sue Copsey's *The Ghosts of Tarawera* I realized it was the most engaging story I had read in a long time. The book's unbridled enthusiasm for both the supernatural and the scientific lends itself to an infectious sense of fun, engaging children and reminding adults why they fell in love with storytelling in the first place. *The Ghost of Tarawera* undoubtedly lives up to the idea of escapism, all while being darned scary too!

The book continues the adventure of Joe and Eddie, who we last saw in the midst of a ghostly adventure in 2011's *Ghost of Young Nick's Head*. Have no fear if you have not picked up that installment however, as Sue Copsey writes with an approachable flair and allow the story to stand by its own merits. The narrative revolves around the impending threat of the volcano Mount Tarawa in Rotorua – a threat that only Joe is convinced will inevitably end in disaster. Ghostly sightings and scientific rumblings are both used in tandem to increase the tension, thus intertwining the natural and the supernatural in a rather inspired way. Whereas *Ghost of Young Nick's* was effectively a contained creepy tale, this book elevates the scales to the utmost degree. Crucially, though, the narrative still contains many of the smaller and more enclosed horror moments that characterised the first installment. Be prepared to instinctively stay up into the later hours of the night in order to find out what happens.

An immediately distinctive aspect of Copsey's writing is her use of education and setting. Rotorua (effectively a main character in its own right) is wonderfully realised, inciting a feeling of rightness for those who have visited and a feeling of excitement for those who have yet to experience its wonders. The educational side of the book is similarly impressive. One might expect a ghost story to eschew science in an effort to keep the writing digestible for young readers but thankfully this is not the case. Sue Copsey does not pander down to children, opting instead to convey key facts about geology in an easily understandable manner. However, the exposition can be quite clunky in its placement, particularly during the early pages of the story where a sizable amount of background information on the setting is laid out for the reader. Luckily these sections are the exception rather than the norm and mostly work on the basis that the main characters of the story are still adolescents.

The greatest strength of *Ghost of Young Nick's Head* was its wonderful character interactions, a fact that has thankfully remained true for the sequel. Joe and Eddie feel like real children, which may seem rather pat before one realises just how rare that is in fiction. Authors tend to write their younger characters as either tiny adults or as caricatured kids, often falling short of the fascinating mix of irreverence, intelligence, and defiance that boil within the younger mind. This is certainly not applicable here. Joe's outlook on the world and especially his feelings towards his sister Beckie feel extremely realistic, providing both a source of humour and pathos in the story. Elsewhere Beckie's friend Anastasia is possibly the funniest character introduced in the series so far; her commentary on living in New Zealand is priceless for adult and child readers alike. More importantly, she is by no means a stereotypical character and actually greatly influences Joe's personal arc. Perhaps therein lies the talent of Sue Copsey's writing: everything has a purpose and

nothing could be called shallow.

The Ghosts of Tarawera is an engaging read that successfully balances supernatural scares, wonderful humour, and genuinely interesting education. It is the perfect story for a child whose reading ability has progressed to more advanced chapter books, yet Sue Copsey ensures that there is plenty of intrigue for adult fans too. The Ghosts of Tarawera is proof of how lucky young readers are to have stories that provoke excitement in a ghostly plot and – perhaps more importantly – excitement in the world.

Rachael says

I am so impressed by this adventure story that so cleverly weaves science and the supernatural to both educate and captivate its readers. Joe and Eddie go on holiday with Joe's family - 'annoying' little sister Beckie and her 'annoying' friend Anastasia included. They explore Lake Rotomahana situated near Mt Tarawera and the site of the long lost Pink and White Terraces. Joe's 6th sense tunes into some ghostly warnings that dangerous rumbling is on the horizon.

Sue Copsey creates engaging believable characters with authentic voices. The story whips along and is filled with humour, fascinating science and great spooky adventure. I really enjoyed seeing how the children worked together under pressure. I basically couldn't put it down and by the end I was saying: this should be a movie. Very entertaining reading for middle grade/junior readers and oldies like me!

(And I just loved Anastasia!)

Julie Scott says

Joe and his best friend Eddie are back for another spooky adventure, this time in the hydrothermal area of Lake Tarawera. This is a great follow-up to Sue Copsey's earlier book, The Ghosts of Young Nick's Head, although it also works well as a standalone book. By combining the tragic history of the Mt Tarawera eruption with current geological science, Sue Copsey has written a fast-paced tale of ghost canoes, spirit warriors and volcanic eruptions that is sure to capture children's attention. A fun and exciting read for any 8-12 year old.

Sarah Johnson says

Suitably spooky tale will have kids on the edge of their seats

This is my review of Sue Copsey's book – The Ghosts of Tarawera. The other posted review (below) is by my 13 year old son, Dughall, who nabbed the book when it first arrived. Then my 11 year old claimed it. They both loved it. But I had to wait until I could read it to my 7 year old, as a bed time story, before I could enjoy it.

And enjoy it I did. This is a wonderful book. A suitably spooky adventure story, firmly set in New Zealand, with totally believable young protagonists, which had my 7 year old alternately gripping my arm in fright and begging me to read more.

I always think it's a good sign when the adult reading the book doesn't want to put it down either, and every night we managed to slip in 'just one more chapter'.

I think what makes the story so engaging is its subtlety. This is no blood and guts in-your-face horror story. It is a classic ghost story, with carefully calibrated suspense and tension-inducing detail, so that even though it involves spirits from the past heralding cataclysmic events to come, it is totally believable. It also draws on true, and truly scary, real events from the past, with this historical context (the Mount Tarawera eruption of 1886) and the well-known landscape within which it occurs adding another layer of interest to the story.

The style, and the plot, of the book remind me of a Famous Five story. At first I thought this was a shortcoming, but by the end of the book I had swung around to thinking that, actually, this was exactly what New Zealand children's literature needs. A series (this book is number two of a planned series involving the same characters) of adventure stories for kids that encourage them to explore and be curious and wonder, and seek out some real adventures of their own.

Another detail of the book that I initially had reservations about, but came to appreciate as a strength, was the way the author skilfully interweaves technology into the plot. The hero, Joe, not only has a special ability to perceive and communicate with ghosts, he receives texts from them! And Facebook messages!

This is a particular bug bear of mine – when writers gratuitously plant elements in stories that are not required for the plot, but are included with the intention of 'roping in' young readers. This was not the case here. The author's use of cell phones to transmit messages from the dead served to heighten the stakes and the tension – again in a believable way.

I think the only minor weakness I perceived by the end of it, was the young characters' relationship with their landscape. Three of them are New Zealanders, and one from the United States, yet they all had a slight reserve and ignorance about the natural settings they found themselves in, which (to me) didn't quite ring true.

In any event, this is an observation, rather than a flaw, and does nothing to detract from the enjoyment of this truly wonderful book.

If you'd like to find out more about how, and why, Sue Copsey wrote the story, and what she has planned next...there's an interview with her on my blog: <http://sarahjohnsonauthor.blogspot.co...>

Dughall's review

This is my son, Dughall's, review. He read the book before me, but enjoyed it just as much. Given that he's so much closer in age to the target audience than me he's 13), it makes it much more pertinent that he liked it so much!

Ghosts of Tarawera is a thrilling book, which kept me on my toes throughout the whole story. Combining 19th Century New Zealand with modern day styles gives the book an excellent contrast for readers. The suspense is mixed in with the plot evenly, making it not too rushed or too slow. Interesting facts pop up in random places, giving the reader more knowledge and understanding about the book and its plot. At the end of every chapter there is some sort of action which will leave the reader tingling with suspense and action for the next chapter.

The bit I enjoyed most was the ever-changing geothermal activity and the haphazard chance of survival. To sum it all up it is a great book that I would strongly recommend to readers of most ages.

- Review by Dughall Eadie

Tom Moffatt says

Don't let the ghostly title put you off ... this book is awesome! It's more of a stay-up-all-night-to-finish-it book than one of the can't-sleep-cos-I'm-having-nightmares variety. Yet there is enough ghostly action to satisfy that rebellious streak (think Casper in traditional Maori dress) and kids will get so caught up in the adventure that they'll probably forget what they originally signed up for anyway. The real scary part for me was the fact that my hometown was the setting for this incredibly realistic geological disaster. In fact, it was so convincing that I found myself rushing out to buy an earthquake kit.

Sue says

Well yes I thoroughly enjoyed this one. And I hear that if you message the author she will sort you a special signed copy :)

Z.R. Southcombe says

Another great adventure story from Sue Copsey. Loved how the supernatural was weaved in so realistically.

Suzanne Main says

The Ghosts of Tarawera ticks all my boxes both as a parent & a reader. It's an exciting adventure filled with well researched history & modern science. Kids will love the fast paced action & the fun characters.

Darren says

I won this book as a good reads giveaway. I enjoyed it a lot. The author mailed it to me from her publishing company in Auckland, New Zealand by air mail. The furthest away I have gotten a book before this was from the UK. I hope to read more books by this author and hope that she has more giveaways here on good reads.

Scott Butler says

Another great book from Sue Copsey. We read this out of order, though it didn't matter. We loved Moonlight Creek, though thought this was even better. Great descriptions, grounded beautifully in a wonderful part of New Zealand. Great characters, I have a ten year daughter who just adored it.

Lorraine Orman says

I'm joining the ranks of fans who have written rave reviews for this book. It's an excellent read for children of about 10 to 13, offering an exciting mix of adventure and the supernatural. Joe and Eddie (previously in The Ghosts of Young Nick's Head) are holidaying on the shores of Lake Rotomahana when Joe starts seeing strange apparitions and receiving mysterious messages on his phone. They are a warning that Mount Tarawera is about to blow again. When it happens Joe, Eddie, Joe's sister Beckie, and her friend Anastasia are trapped in a world of roaring volcano vents, ash clouds, creeping lava and flying mud - will they survive? The descriptions of being caught near an erupting volcano are nail-biting stuff. Recommended. (Lorraine Orman, reviewer)
