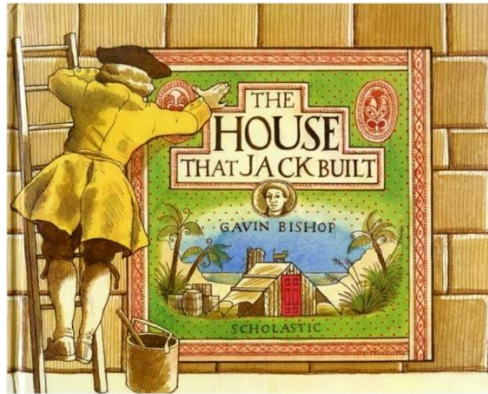


# PUKAPUKA TĀWHIRI

## *The House that Jack Built* by Gavin Bishop

Published 1999



Pukapuka Tāwhiri refers to books that keep calling us back – books that we’ve connected with in the past and continue to emotionally resonate with us. What is it about these books that stick in our heads? Whether the fires of interest are stoked through connections with characters, through particularly vivid imagery, or through exciting themes of magic or mysticism, once burning they can energize us for a future of reading for pleasure. A lifetime of reading is a lifetime of placing ourselves in others’ shoes and a lifetime of learning about people whose lives are different to us. These emotional connections developed through reading occur at a neurological level, but the effects span to a societal one, as they teach us how to develop empathy and understand others.

When reading, think about how this book ignites your interest, or doesn’t. Why does it continue to sit on Aotearoa’s bookshelf decades after it was first published? In exploring the themes and characters of *The House that Jack Built*, we can find many different elements that readers might resonate with. The major themes are: **Colonialism, New Zealand History, and early Māori and Pākehā interactions.**

### **Discuss the historical context of the story.**

The House that Jack Built is set in 1798 as British settlers were beginning to come to New Zealand. As the European immigrant population increased it took a toll on the Māori population who experienced loss of land, displacement, and increased mortality due to introduced diseases. The effects of colonisation continue today as European institutions fail to prioritise Māori and racism, both conscious and unconscious, continues to affect Māori people.

More info here:

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/death-rates-and-life-expectancy/page-4>

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/page-1>

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/history-of-new-zealand-1769-1914>

## **Themes in *The House That Jack Built***

### **Theme one: Colonialism**

- Jack travels from Europe to settle in New Zealand as part of the movement to colonise this country. This had massive effects on the people who already lived here, some of which are illustrated in this book.

#### **Possible questions/discussion points:**

1. At the beginning we see a map of Australia and New Zealand. What is Australia called in this map and why do you think it is called this? Where did New Zealand get its name? Is this the only name for our country?
2. Does the rhyme seem familiar? What are its origins? How does this fit with the overall theme of the book?
3. What changes can we see occurring in the book as it progresses? What happens to the Pākehā? What happens to the Māori people?

### **Theme two: Māori and Pākehā relationships**

- As more and more European people came to New Zealand there were many different interactions between them and Māori, some of which are illustrated in *The House that Jack Built*.

#### **Possible questions/discussion points:**

1. At the beginning we see a list of goods to trade. Who is Jack going to trade these with, and for what?
2. How are the illustrations used to tell the story? How are the borders and central images different and whose perspectives do they tell us?
3. We are told the story of Papatūānuku and Ranginui through the illustrations. Why does this get smaller throughout the story as the pākehā settlement gets bigger?

### **After Reading: Beyond the Book:**

Create a broader discussion surrounding these books and readership.

#### **Possible questions/discussion points:**

1. This book was published almost four decades ago, yet it remains a well-known and classic New Zealand book. Why do you think this book has persisted, whereas others

have not? Is this book unique?

2. Can you think of any more recent books that remind you of *The House that Jack Built*? How do they differ?
3. How did you find the illustrations in the book? How did they aid the meaning of the story? Is there any illustration that stuck out to you?
4. How did the book make you feel?
5. Did you like the book? Was there something that stuck out to you?
6. What kind of books do you normally like? What is it about these books that call to you? For example, vivid imagery, or characters that you find relatable.
7. Do you think we should read this book over more modern ones? What is the continuing value of traditional books?