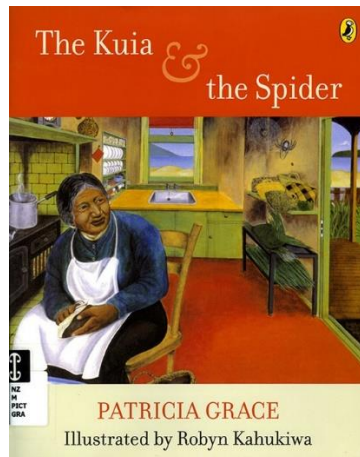


PUKAPUKA TĀWHIRI

***The Kuia and the Spider* by Patricia Grace & Robyn Kahukiwa (*Te Kuia me te Pungawerewere*)**
Published 1981



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 Kuia and the Spider*, we can find many different elements that readers might resonate with. The major themes are: **love, family, and intergenerational knowledge.**

Discuss the historical context of the story:

This was one of the first picture books where both the author and illustrator are Māori, which was an uncommon thing in the 1980s when Pākehā dominated the production of mainstream media. **The Kuia and the Spider** was also released in Te Reo Māori – titled **Te Kuia me te Pungawerewere**. The English version uses some Te Reo words. What are they and what do they mean?

Themes in *The Kuia and the Spider*:

Theme one: Familial love and intergenerational bonds

- Both the kuia and the spider love their grandchildren very much and put their skills to use to provide for them.

Possible questions/discussion points:

1. Are the kuia and spider excited for their grandchildren to visit? Why is this?
2. Do you think the relationship between them and their grandchildren is important to them?
3. What is your relationship to your grandparents?

Theme two: cultural knowledge

- Both the kuia and the spider use weaving knowledge passed down to them. They weave different things but both types of weaving have value to those who use it.
- The kuia and the spider argue about whose weaving is best, telling each other what would happen if their grandchildren went to sleep on the other's weaving.

Possible questions/discussion points:

4. What does the Kuia weave? What does the spider weave?
5. When asked whose weaving was best, did the grandchildren of the spider and the kuia answer? What did they do instead?
6. What would happen if the spider's grandchildren went to sleep on the kuia's mats? And vice-versa, if the kuia's grandchildren went to sleep on the spider's mats? What does this tell us about the purpose of the weaving, and who the weaving is for?
7. Do you think one type of weaving is really better than the other?

After Reading: Beyond the Book:

Create a broader discussion surrounding this book 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 Kuia and the Spider*? 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?