

Youthful enterprise

ANN PACKER's monthly roundup of books for children and young adults.

YES, as most Kiwi college students know, is the acronym for the Young Enterprise Scheme, which offers teens the chance to try out business principles while still at school. For Deborah Burnside's hero Marty, it's more personal than that – he's always saying **YES** (HarperCollins, paperback, \$22.99) to his mate Luke's hare-brained schemes; Luke's his best and only friend, apart from his suddenly unpredictable childhood friend Francesca. Because of his autism spectrum disorder, Marty has particular trouble reading people, so when his mum, who has coached him since childhood using emotional flashcards, takes off on a midlife OE leaving him in his dad's care, Marty flounders. The author's research into autism, which led to the discovery that her own son is on the spectrum, offers illuminating insights into how such a child functions – and in Marty's case, can ultimately triumph. Funny, tender, memorable.

Elise, about to turn 12, has started a new school, along with her best friend, Franklin. They've been chums for ever, but his solicitude is starting to drive her crazy, and the other kids make fun of her as a result. Then she finds a key, which unlocks a room in her uncle's barn. In **EIGHT KEYS** (Puffin, PB, \$21), Suzanne LaFleur, author of the acclaimed *Love, Aubrey*, draws a heroine at war with herself and bullied at school, yet loved unconditionally by the sensible adults who care for her. There are many lessons to be learnt and discoveries to be made in this heart-warming tale with just enough mystery to charm pre-teens.

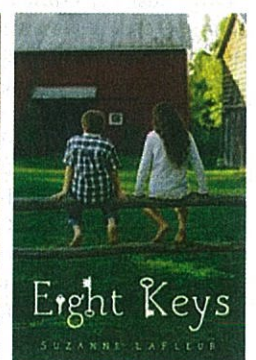
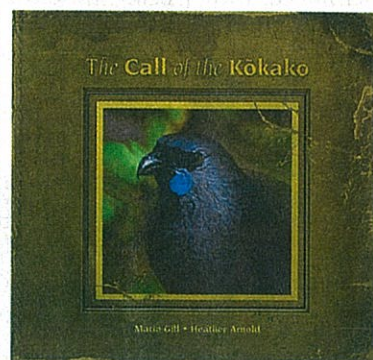
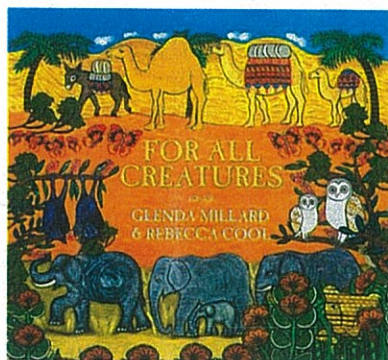
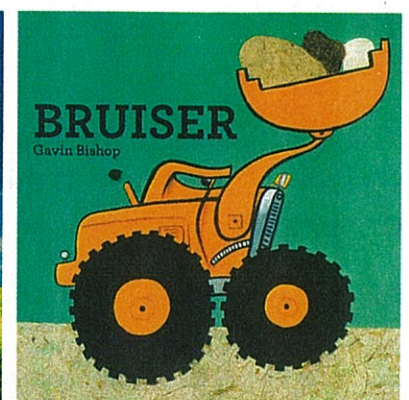
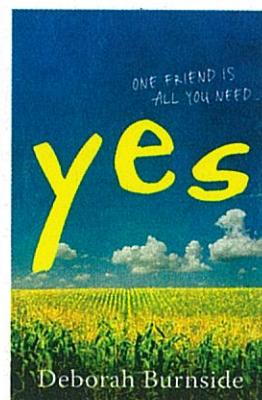
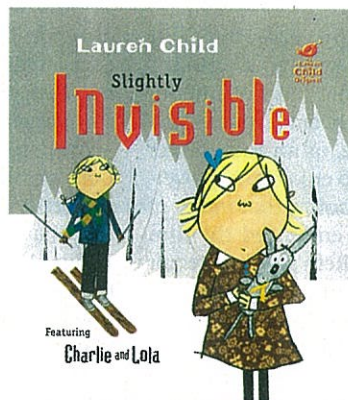
In Kate Greenaway Medal-winner Lauren Child's latest picture book, **SLIGHTLY INVISIBLE** (Orchard Books, PB, \$19.99), Charlie's biggest problem is, as always, his annoying little sister, Lola. Charlie and his mate Marv decide to get rid of her by inventing an invisibility potion – but the one who really gains from it is

Lola's (invisible) friend Soren Lorensen, who swallowed rather a lot of it. There's no arguing with Lola's logic though – through thick and thin, it's irrefutable, sucking in even the most doubting big boys.

Tenderness and nurturing don't come into the picture when Gavin Bishop's **BRUISER** (Random House, PB, \$22) starts out on his rampage. Following the now-classic format of Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, Bishop's unstoppable front-end loader, Bruiser, devours everything in his path towards building a motorway: "On Monday he ploughed through five hills. On Tuesday he crushed ten rocks ..." and so on. So far, so predictable. But then he gets stuck

and universal values – but **FOR ALL CREATURES** (Walker, hardback, \$32.99) brings together a richly lyrical text by Australian Glenda Millard with sumptuous, highly patterned pictures by fellow-Australian Rebecca Cool in a glorious visual and aural interpretation of the biblical injunction to "be thankful in all things". With an all-encompassing and life-affirming assortment of creatures large and small, principles and practices, old – "wrinkles and remembering" – and new – "born and unseen" – this is above all a gift for families.

Matakana author Maria Gill's and illustrator Heather Arnold's **THE CALL OF THE**



"In a tree above the ditch Mother Magpie had just got her baby off to sleep." Now he's got our attention – Bruiser thinks of his own mother and is undone. He begins reconstructing what he's demolished. The language is robust while the digger displays possibly the most convincing emotions ever seen in picture books – and all faithful to the mechanical structure. Not just for boys.

It's a tall order to create a picture book that encompasses a whole world of creatures

KOKAKO (New Holland, HB, \$29.95) brings to life our least seen bird, the "grey ghost" of the forest, through historical, mythical and anecdotal texts, with hyper-realistic pictures recording sightings and efforts to save this endangered wattlebird, the last remaining species on the mainland. The tale of one conservationist, who saved 10 kokako, personalises the challenge. ■

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