



Also included are numerous diagrams, maps, a Maori song, a relevant Maori legend, a volcanic cross-section, many bird and plant facts and timelines. It is amazing how much is packed in to 32 pages. This is non-fiction writing and presentation at its best.

Trevor Agnew, Christchurch

### **Rangitoto** (2009)

Maria Gill, ill. Heather Arnold,  
Picture Puffin, 978 0 14 350334 7  
\$19.95 Pb

This book is so good that I want to stand in the street waving copies and shouting, 'Buy it!' After a lifetime in schools and libraries, I know a good non-fiction book when I see it.

**Rangitoto** is not just good; it's excellent.

There are plenty of books about volcanoes; what sets **Rangitoto** apart is its attractive approach and versatility. Maria Gill's text has a simple narrative running along the bottom of each double-page spread. For example, the *Green Facts* section, a double-page spread on the island's plant life, is written so simply that young readers can easily grasp it:

*Over time the scoria on the island cools. Ferns and lichens grow on the rocks. The wind disperses seeds from the mainland.*

A list of *Hot Facts* on the left margin describes the way vegetation on Rangitoto has developed over recent centuries and the role played by birds. Smaller photos identify kidney ferns, lichens, moss and pohutukawa seedlings. A glossary stripped down the right side defines such terms as vegetation, ferns and lichens. This gives young readers the choice of following a quick narrative or lingering for detail. (This also means a wide range of reading abilities can also be accommodated.)

Each double-page spread offers the same range of choices. The main illustration for each section is a handsome combination of a colour photo and acrylic paintings by Heather Arnold. These place birds, Maori hunters, prison-workers, feral cats, holiday-makers and DOC staff into their island context. There are splendid portrayals of the volcano's creation and development.