

the dialogue, and the action taking place. The text is tight, with no extraneous words, and at the same time, the story feels full and descriptive.

The battle with the octopus is told across three pages and provides a fantastic crescendo to the story, both visually and narratively. Overall, this book brings text, design, and illustrations together to tell a powerful story that will captivate a wide range of ages and readers.

Meg Nicoll, Christchurch

Reading All Stars, Alena Saili (2025)

David Riley, Reading Warrior, 56pp. 978 1 99107 982 4 \$24.99c Pb

David Riley has continued to succeed with his long tradition of the *Reading All Stars* series. *Alena Saili* is an inspiring biography that chronicles the journey of a young New Zealand Samoan woman from the South Island of Aotearoa, New Zealand, who achieved greatness in world rugby. The book celebrates Alena Saili's rise to prominence as a two-time Olympic gold medallist in women's rugby. It also commends her resilience and perseverance through non-selection and injury, and displays her courage and belief in herself.

This story will motivate young people to pursue their passions and become 'all stars' in whatever they love to do. This uplifting message is delivered through the accessible format of the *Reading All Stars* series. Always reader friendly, lots of photographs, simple language

structure and tells the story well. Alena Saili's story challenges the reader to redefine the meaning of 'failure'. We often think that to 'fail' is a lack of success, but in the sporting world and in life, failure is more common. Through this, we learn how to succeed and show gratitude when this happens. This is not a story of constant success without work; it is the story of hope and resilience through struggle and hard work. A story that young people will relate to and see themselves in.

This book about a world-class athlete offers an encouraging, highly readable account of determination and success, making it an excellent choice for its target audience. *Melissa Spark, Auckland*

Oceania Heritage: Sāmoa (2025)

David Riley, ill. *Various*, Reading Warrior, 63pp. 978 1 991079 98 5 \$24.95c Hb

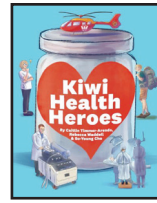
Oceania Heritage: Sāmoa is a collection of stories and illustrations about Sāmoan history and culture, by the children who celebrate their culture and identity. Sāmoan children from all over the world have contributed to this beautiful book—children and teens from Samoa, Aotearoa, France, Alaska, England, Abu Dhabi, Australia, Taiwan, Morocco and Sweden! This includes groups of students from Robert Louis Stevenson School in Sāmoa and Richmond Road School in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland. Echoed throughout the book is their love for their family, faith and homeland. The voices of these children express their pride, sharing myths, food and the appreciation they have for their parents, and those not living in Sāmoa are unapologetic about who they are. This lovely book, with its beautiful illustrations, also done by the students, gives me a sense of pride as a Sāmoan, and I am extremely proud of the children's contributions. It reminds me that many children in the diaspora, wherever they are from, are connected and proud of their identity.

This book is part of a series and was preceded by *Oceania Heritage: Niue*.

Mary Tulaga-Teleia, Auckland

Niue. People Culture and Identity (2025)

Mele Nemaia, Oratia Books, 48pp. 978 1 99 004271 3 \$29.99c Pb



We all need to know more about Niue. I was genuinely surprised when I read Lynda Finn's *Trevor the Daring Duck* (2023) and discovered that Niue has no streams. When a duck arrived from New Zealand, the kindly Niueans made him a pond!

Niue: People, Culture and Identity, the latest in the *Moana Oceania* series, introduces this charming island and its people with sympathetic text, fact boxes and colour photographs of daily life.

Two numbers show why this particular book is so important. Niue has just under 2,000 people, while some 35,000 Niuean people live in New Zealand. Both groups will value Mele Nemaia's overview of Niue and its people. Non-Niuean people will also find much to interest them in its colourful pages.

Oratia's *Moana Oceania* series of books (about the life and culture of such Pacific communities as Fiji, Sāmoa and the Cook Islands) are primarily written for people from those communities who want to know more about their heritage and identity. They are also written for New Zealanders who want to find out more about the people of the Pacific, since New Zealand's histories are inextricably intertwined with those of the Pacific. Niue was annexed by New Zealand in 1901 and 150 Niueans volunteered for the Great War. While Niue became self-governing in 1974, all Niuean people are also New Zealand citizens.

The author, Mele Nemaia MNZM, was born in Niue and has worked as a teacher and author in New Zealand. Thus, she is able to see this tiny community both from inside and outside and describe it with affection. I loved the way her first section, dealing with Niuean identity and values, begins with family. Of course, this book is bilingual with facing pages in English and Niuean. So *Niue values* translates as *Tau aga moe e tau Mahani Mahuiga a Niue*. Family connections are key elements in Niue's 14 villages and the plantations which supply the

people with food. The various crops and the changing cultivation methods are well described. Because food is important, there are several pages on how meals are prepared and cooked, with ingredients ranging from tuna to uga (coconut crab). Niue is the world's largest raised coral atoll, with a circumference of 65 kilometres. The island's fringing reefs and steep cliffs make it easy to see why Mele Nemaia says, *Niue has a beautiful but harsh environment*. It also has a lively culture, shown here in the churches and schools, along with music, dancing, sports and weaving.

Young readers will enjoy the account of the Takai New Year festival, where villages try to outdo each other with a procession of decorated vehicles: *who has the most beautiful decorations, who has the oldest and scrappiest vehicle, and who has the loudest boom box? ...The lolly scramble is an important part of the takai*.

The reading level for *Niue* is aimed at 8+, so it is also an ideal resource for schools and libraries. There is no index, but the contents page is a good guide to the well-organised sections.

Trevor Agnew, Christchurch

Kiwi Health Heroes (2026)

Caitlin Timmer and Rebecca Waddell, ill. *So-Young Cho*, Bateman Books, 72pp. 978 1 77689169 9 \$26.99c Pb

From strange symptoms that led to unusual discoveries, tragedies that inspired career pathways, and observant professionals who noticed areas of need and invented solutions, to people with health struggles who go on to achieve at high levels. *Kiwi Health Heroes* is an accessible, fascinating book that introduces young readers to the many New Zealanders who, in one way or another, contributed to health care and developments over more than 150 years. Deciding who to include within this collection would not have been easy, and the authors have done a fine job at providing a real variety. My only quibble is that in recent times the world has experienced the Covid pandemic, and apart from Sir Ashley Bloomfield, none of the other key figures of that period are included. The text is written in a chatty, simple style, which will make this appeal to a wide audience and will no doubt inspire some future health heroes. An interesting title to include in any school library collection.

Julie Harper-Taylor, Paparua