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Bidibidi – Gavin Bishop

Publisher: Scholastic NZ

RRP \$19.50

Also available in te reo Maori by Ngaere Roberts.

Bidibidi was first published in 1982 (OUP), in paperback in 1991 (Ashton Scholastic Limited) and here it returns as a redesigned edition in 2014 in both English and Maori.

Gavin Bishop showed with this story that he is a class act as a story teller and as an illustrator. One of his first books, its quality was quickly recognised: a finalist for the NZ Picture Book of the Year 1983 and Prizewinner of the NOMA CONCOURS Prize for Children's Picture Books, Japan, 1982.

This is the story of Bidibidi, the sheep who wants a better life, who is persuaded to search for it and to follow her dreams. After some scary incidents Bidibidi finds a wonderful life as a maker of rainbows.

The almost monochromatic illustrations often with just one bright colour, interspersed with full colour illustrations make this book a delight to the eye. The double page spread that opens the story is so typically high country South Island New Zealand.

The story quite naturally includes kea, takahe, bittern, brown trout, mallard ducks and the changing landscape from rocky high country to wide snow-filled rivers on the plains – with 'rabbit-cropped turf' slipped in too.

Bidibidi remembers one of the instructions but forgets the other two. Fear and disaster strike. Rescue follows, but again she must flee: "I am going home," she panted.

But before she gets there a storm stops her in her tracks. This time her rescue is for good. The advice that she should follow her dreams has held true.

Reviewed by Chris Wright

