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Canterbury Quakes 2010-11 – Desna Wallace

Publisher: Scholastic NZ

**RRP \$19.50
e-book \$9.99**

An excellent read and an excellent addition to this fine series by Scholastic 'My New Zealand Story'. Every school should have copies in the library: for studies of NZ Disasters this should be in class sets.

I came to this story as one who lived in Christchurch for five years. When we were told the news by the hotel manager in northern Chile where we had arrived tired from long travel, we argued with him: “No, you must mean Wellington ... Christchurch doesn't have earthquakes ...” and so on. But no, he had seen it on the news. We connected our laptop ...

Since then I have been in Christchurch twice. The first time old friends showed us the cracks in their house and the uneven nature of their lawns and gardens. They drove us to see what was left of central Christchurch then out along the road to Sumner and back through the eastern suburbs. The second time other friends showed us round their new home then took us for a drive to see their old home, liveable, repairable but red-stickered because of the low-lying nature of its position beside the estuary. We drove ourselves to Lyttleton, with its gaping holes where once old proud buildings stood.

But this book described so much more than we could ever have absorbed from what we had seen or been told, or the media had shown. This first book by Desna Wallace draws on her experiences as a school librarian at the time, when she set up an after-school reading group as her way of helping students get back to doing something they loved.

Maddy lived through the thousands of quakes. She lived with the fear, for herself, for her family, for her school, for her future and her diary reflects these fears. This typical 11-12 year-old shows how it is possible to survive and more than that, to cope: with her moody older sister, her terrified younger brother, her over-worked father and out-of-work mother.

Life does go on through it all. Family life, school life, social life – all are changed forever, but Maddy comes to understand that life does go on.

Reviewed by Chris Wright

