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***The House on the Hill* by Kyle Mewburn & Sarah Davis**

Publisher: Scholastic NZ

RRP \$27.00

With Halloween-themed activities becoming more widely enjoyed in New Zealand, this book will find a ready audience and lead some children on to a love of ghost stories. This is a book that fully deserves to be hardback – it is one that some children will return to again and again.

Because this is a ghost story that even the young can relate to, with a twist at the end that will surprise those reading and those read to, it comes recommended for the 4-8 year olds.

Sarah Davis' gloomy double-page illustrations in sepia tones add to the growing feeling of dread that is built through Kyle Mewburn's rhyming couplets and triplets with their repetitive final line:

*The gate it gave a weary groan,
an ancient sigh of creaking bones,
as two ghosts crept, crept all alone,
up the path to the house on the hill.*

The stairs to the porch, the screeching doors,
the moths and the cobwebs are all described.

*Inside was dark, and graveyard still,
'til a voice declared, with deathly chill:
"Pray, flee now, flee now if you will!
Or dare ye brave this house on the hill?"*

Everything from the punctuation to the evocative drawings to the unrelenting gloom of the words combines to great effect.

Author's website: www.kylemewburn.com

Illustrator's website: www.sarah-davis.org

Reviewed by Bookrapt member Chris Wright

