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## **Shooting Stars by Brian Falkner**

**Publisher: Scholastic NZ**

**RRP \$21.00**

If a reviewer can have their best book of the year, this is mine.

*Shooting Stars* is written largely in diary form over a four-month period by Egan, a teenager who has lived an isolated life in the Coromandel forest with only his mother and his dog for company. One day he meets a deer culler, JT, and they become good friends. When Egan's mother does not return from a trip to replenish supplies, JT is no longer there to help.

With only a limited knowledge of the outside world, but with Moma's Code of Honour to live by, Egan heads to Auckland to search for her and JT. He sleeps rough, becomes involved in fights with streetkids, befriends one group, eventually is found, and goes to live with his father. His story becomes a news sensation.

Where relevant, each diary entry ends with an explanation of one of his mother's Codes: a Thought for the Day, A Word of the Day, Book I am Reading, Things I am Afraid Of (or No Longer Afraid Of). Through these the reader learns more of Egan's character. Only 15, he is a thoughtful and resourceful boy whose love for, and belief in, his mother is challenged. His other great loves – the bush and books – sustain him, as does his growing awareness of the impact his mother's Code is having on most of the people he meets.

While Egan appears naïve to some, his steadfastness in the face of adversity wins over all but the most cynical and hardhearted. For readers who have not discovered Brian Falkner before, this book is an excellent introduction. He has upended the adage that stories with a moral should not spell these out for the reader. Instead, the 30 Points of Moma's Code of Honour are central.

This is a teenage story that could well become a classic, a personal and classroom favourite. A tragic ending can be turned into something uplifting, leaving the reader with plenty to ponder, plenty to discuss.

**Author's website:**

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**Reviewed by Chris Wright**

