



NZ AUTHOR



NOVEL STUDY



About This Study

This novel study is designed to keep students engaged with Charlie's adventure while developing key literacy skills aligned with the NZ Curriculum for Years 7-8. Activities are purposefully brief to maintain reading momentum through this exciting story of gods, family, and environmental responsibility.

Key Focus Areas (NZ Curriculum Phase 3):

- Comprehension and critical thinking
- Understanding Māori mythology and mātauranga Māori
- Vocabulary development (including te reo Māori)
- Analysing themes of environmental protection, family bonds, disability representation, and courage
- Understanding kaitiakitanga (guardianship)
- Oral language and discussion

About the Book: Thirteen-year-old Charlie Tangaroa lives with his mother, brother Robbie, and grandfather (Koro) on a remote farm in Tolaga Bay on the East Coast. Charlie has one leg (born with amelia) and is a keen Sea Cadet who loves the ocean. When he and Robbie find a ponaturi (sea creature) washed up on the beach during their patrol, Charlie becomes embroiled in an ancient battle between Māori gods that threatens his entire town. Charlie must use the mōteatea (traditional chants) his grandfather taught him to stop the war between Tangaroa (god of the sea) and Tāne (god of the forest) before everyone he loves is destroyed.

READING SCHEDULE SUGGESTION

Pacing Guide for a School Term:

- Week 1-2: Chapters 1-5 (Finding Pō-nuia and Early Discoveries)
- Week 3-4: Chapters 6-10 (Ancient Battles Begin)
- Week 5-6: Chapters 11-15 (Family Secrets and Rising Danger)
- Week 7-8: Chapters 16-22 (Confronting the Gods and Resolution)



SENSITIVE TOPICS GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS

Cultural Considerations:

- This book is written by T.K. Roxborogh (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Mutunga o Wharekauri)
- The author spent years learning te reo and her whakapapa before writing
- Encourage all students to engage with Māori content - it's Aotearoa's shared culture
- Be respectful when teaching about atua and mōteatea - these are sacred
- Pronounce te reo Māori correctly (seek help if needed)
- Use the book to celebrate Māori culture
- Acknowledge this is the author's cultural knowledge, told with permission

Disability Representation:

- Charlie's disability (amelia) is portrayed positively and matter-of-factly
- The book shows both challenges (pain, difficulty, teasing) and strengths
- Don't make Charlie's disability the only talking point
- Focus on his courage, intelligence, connection to culture, and growth
- Celebrate authentic disability representation
- The "kōmitimiti" interpretation may need discussion - is it empowering or problematic?



SENSITIVE TOPICS GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS

Family Topics:

- Charlie's father is "lost at sea" (later revealed to have returned to sea as a ponaturi)
- Mike (Robbie's father) left the family and wants custody
- Robbie grieves his father's absence
- Family secrets and when to tell difficult truths
- Be sensitive to students from separated families

Death and Near-Death:

- Robbie drowns in Chapter 18 and is brought back to life
- This is dramatic but not graphic
- Charlie's grief and determination are powerful
- The resurrection through mōteatea is spiritual/magical
- Some students may have experienced loss - be prepared

Environmental Topics:

- The book addresses real environmental destruction
- Tangaroa's anger is justified - humans ARE damaging oceans
- Some students may feel guilt or anxiety
- Focus on kaitiakitanga and positive actions
- Connect to what young people CAN do
- Avoid making it overwhelming or hopeless
- Celebrate the resolution and balance

PART ONE: Chapters 1-5

Finding Pō-nuia and Early Discoveries

Quick Comprehension Check

Answer in 2-3 sentences each:

1. Chapter 1: What are Charlie and Robbie doing when they encounter the litterbugs? How does Charlie use his prosthetic leg to trick them?
2. Chapter 2: What do the boys find on the beach? How does Charlie know she's alive?
3. Chapter 3: What does Grandad call the creature? How is this different from what Charlie and Robbie thought she was?
4. Chapter 4: Who do they meet in town? What is Jenny's connection to Tolaga Bay?
5. Chapter 5: What happens when other ponaturi try to take Pō-nuia? How do they defend her?

Vocabulary in Context - Te Reo Māori

Find these words in the text and write what they mean. Check the glossary at the back:

- ponaturi (Ch. 2-3)
- kaitiaki (Ch. 3)
- whānau (Ch. 3)
- koro/koroua (Grandad)
- mōteatea (Ch. 5)

Think Deeper (Choose ONE to discuss or write about)

- Charlie uses humour about his disability to deal with the litterbugs. Why is this effective? How does Charlie view his prosthetic leg - as a limitation or as a tool?
- Grandad immediately knows what Pō-nuia is and seems prepared for her arrival. What does this suggest about Grandad's knowledge and beliefs?

PART TWO: Chapters 6-10

Ancient Battles Begin

Quick Comprehension Check

Answer in 2-3 sentences each:

1. Chapter 6: What does Charlie hear during the night? What does Pō-nuia ask him to do?
2. Chapter 7: When Charlie sings the mōteatea, what happens? How does this change his ability to communicate with Pō-nuia?
3. Chapter 8: What does Pō-nuia reveal about Charlie's missing leg? What does "kōmitimiti" mean?
4. Chapter 9: What natural disaster strikes? How does this affect the town and Charlie's family?
5. Chapter 10: What does Pō-nuia explain about Tangaroa's anger? Why have her people fled to the forest?

Vocabulary in Context - Cultural Concepts

- kōmitimiti (blended/mixed) - Why does Pō-nuia use this word for Charlie?
- tohu (sign) - What is Charlie's "tohu"?
- tikanga (protocols/customs)
- mana (prestige, authority, power)
- utu (compensation, revenge)

Think Deeper (Choose ONE)

- Pō-nuia says Charlie's missing leg is a "tohu" - a sign that he straddles both worlds and has power over Tūmatauenga (god of war). Do you think disabilities can be strengths? How?
- The earthquake (Rūaumoko) strikes in Chapter 9. How do natural disasters feel different in this story when you know they're caused by angry gods?

PART THREE: Chapters 11-15

Family Secrets and Rising Danger

Quick Comprehension Check

Answer in 2-3 sentences each:

1. Chapter 11: Who discovers Pō-nuia in the shed? How does Jenny react?
2. Chapter 12: What happens to Charlie in the forest? Who helps him?
3. Chapter 13: What family secret does Charlie discover in the photo?
What does this mean?
4. Chapter 14: What does Pō-nuia explain about the port? Why is it "death to Tangaroa's children"?
5. Chapter 15: What happens to Charlie's grandfather? How does Charlie react?

Vocabulary in Context - Family and Identity

- whakapapa (genealogy, ancestry)
- mātua (parent)
- Paketai (Charlie's father's name)
- aroha (love, compassion)

Think Deeper (Choose ONE)

- When Grandad is swallowed by the earthquake, Charlie feels helpless. How does this compare to other times Charlie has felt powerless? How does he respond?
- Charlie finds out his father was a ponaturi. How does this change his understanding of himself? Would you want to know something like this about your family?

Oral Language Activity

Partner Discussion: Charlie says he's always been told his missing leg is just "bad luck" or a medical condition called amelia. How does Pō-nuia's explanation (that it's Tūmataunga's trick on children of mixed gods) change the meaning of his disability?

PART FOUR: Chapters 16-18

Desperate Measures

Quick Comprehension Check

Answer in 2-3 sentences each:

1. Chapter 16: How do Charlie and Jenny try to reach Tāne? What form does the tipuna take?
2. Chapter 17: What happens to Robbie and Jenny in the sea? How does Charlie rescue them?
3. Chapter 18: What happens to Robbie after Charlie rescues him? How does Charlie bring him back to life?

Vocabulary in Context - Spiritual/Natural

- tipuna/tīpuna (ancestor, elder)
- wairua (spirit, soul)
- mauri (life force)
- karakia (prayer)

Think Deeper (Choose ONE)

- Charlie fights a shark with his bare hands while underwater. What gives him the strength and courage to do this? Is it just love for his brother or something more?
- The tipuna says Charlie has no right to "call the tīpuna to account." But Charlie does it anyway. When is it right to challenge authority or break rules?

Understanding the Haka

Charlie uses the haka and ancient chant to bring Robbie back to life.

Research:

What is a haka?

When is it used?

Why would it be powerful in this moment?

PART FIVE: Chapters 19-22 + Epilogue

Confronting the Gods and Resolution

Quick Comprehension Check

Answer in 2-3 sentences each:

1. Chapter 19: After Robbie is revived, what does Charlie realise he still needs to do?
2. Chapter 20: How do Charlie and Jenny find Grandad? What has happened to him?
3. Chapter 21: What does Grandad reveal about Charlie's father, Paketai?
4. Chapter 22: How does Charlie finally convince Tangaroa to stop the war?
5. Epilogue: Three months later, who emerges from the sea?

Vocabulary in Context - Resolution

- ea (balance)
- raruraru (problem, trouble)
- whakanoa (to neutralise, set free)

The Final Confrontation

On the beach at Tolaga Bay, Charlie faces all three gods: Tangaroa, Tāne, and Tāwhirimātea.

What Charlie does:

1. Sings the supplication to all three brothers
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How does each god respond?

- Tāwhirimātea:
- Tāne:
- Tangaroa:



PART FIVE: Chapters 19-22 + Epilogue

Confronting the Gods and Resolution

The final scene:

Why is this a satisfying ending? (4-5 sentences)

Think Deeper (Choose ONE)

- Tangaroa agrees to stop the war when the ponaturi sing to him and return to the sea. What does this show about what he really wanted? Was it revenge or something else?
- Charlie discovers his father was a ponaturi. His mother knew but never told him. Was she right to keep this secret? Would you want to know?

Final Reflection

Complete this in 6-8 sentences: "Charlie's journey from finding Pō-nuia to confronting the gods taught me..."

NOW YOU HAVE FINISHED THE BOOK...

Theme Exploration

Choose ONE theme and find THREE specific examples from the book:

Major Themes:

- Environmental protection (kaitiakitanga)
- Family bonds and secrets
- Disability as strength/difference as gift
- Power of traditional knowledge (mōteatea)
- Courage and responsibility
- Balance and harmony (ea)
- Identity and belonging
- Gods and mortals

Character Analysis: Charlie's Complete Arc

At the Beginning:

- Physical: 13, red hair, one leg, uses prosthetic
- Personality: Protective of Robbie, dutiful, somewhat ordinary
- Skills: Singing, swimming, beach patrol
- Knowledge: Knows mōteatea but doesn't understand their power
- Self-image:

By the End:

- Physical:
- Personality:
- Skills:
- Knowledge:
- Self-image:

What causes the biggest changes?

Write a paragraph (6-7 sentences): How does Charlie transform from an ordinary boy doing beach patrol to someone who can bring people back from death and convince gods to stop a war?

NOW YOU HAVE FINISHED THE BOOK...

Setting: Tolaga Bay as Character

The specific NZ setting is essential. Analyze:

Real place details:

- East Coast, remote
- Māori community
- Beach, bush, farming
- General store, camping ground
- Wharf
- New logging port being built

How setting shapes the story:

1. Remote location means they're cut off when disaster strikes
2. Māori cultural knowledge is alive here (Grandad, mōteatea)
- 3.
- 4.

Why this story could ONLY happen in Aotearoa: (4-5 sentences)

Disability Representation

Charlie has amelia (born without his left leg below the knee) and uses a prosthetic.

How the book represents disability:

Positive aspects:

- Charlie is capable, athletic, brave; His disability doesn't define him; He uses humour about it; He doesn't let it stop him; It's treated matter-of-factly

Challenges shown honestly:

- Blisters and pain from the prosthetic; Difficulty in rough terrain; Others' reactions (Robbie calling him "cripple"); Having to rely on others sometimes

The "kōmitimiti" interpretation: Pō-nuia says Charlie's missing leg is a "tohu" (sign) that he:

- Straddles both worlds (sea and land); Is blended from two gods; Has a claim against Tūmataunga

Reflection: Write 5-6 sentences about how this reframes Charlie's disability. Instead of being "less than," how does it make him "more than" ordinary?

FINAL CREATIVE PROJECTS

Choose ONE to complete

Option 1: The Mōteatea Collection

Create "Charlie's Book of Mōteatea" with 6-8 chants:

- Include the ones mentioned in the book (forest chant, ocean chant, etc.)
- Write each in English (you can create the words based on what the book describes)
- Explain when and why each is used
- Include Charlie's annotations about learning them from Grandad
- Add illustrations or Māori designs

(300-400 words total plus illustrations)

Option 2: Paketai's Story

Write the full story of Charlie's father from his perspective:

- Being washed up on the beach 20 years ago
- Grandad and Nana rescuing him
- Learning to live on land
- Falling in love with Mere
- Why he returned to the sea
- What he thinks of Charlie now

(400-500 words, can be in short chapters or as a continuous narrative)

Option 3: Jenny's Journal

Write 6-8 journal entries from Jenny's perspective:

- Arriving in Tolaga Bay, feeling carsick
- Meeting Charlie and Robbie
- Discovering Pō-nuia
- The earthquakes and storm
- Helping Charlie in the forest
- The final battle
- Three months later (epilogue)

Each entry 50-75 words with dates.

FINAL CREATIVE PROJECTS

Option 4: The Battle: Visual Narrative

Create a graphic novel/comic strip/storyboard of the final confrontation (Chapters 19-22):

- Charlie and Jenny on the beach
- The three gods appearing (Tāwhirimātea, Tāne, Tangaroa)
- Charlie singing the chants
- The ponaturi returning to the sea
- Resolution

Minimum 12 panels with dialogue/captions and illustrations.

Option 5: Environmental Action Plan

Create a proposal for making the logging port sustainable:

- Address the 5 hazards Jenny lists (dust, resin, shipping, waste, chemicals)
- Propose specific solutions for each
- Explain how this honors Tangaroa
- Include kaitiakitanga principles
- Show how development and environmental protection can coexist

(350-400 words, can include diagrams/charts)

Option 6: Book Review: More Than Percy Jackson

Write a review that explains why this book is important:

- Brief plot overview (no spoilers!)
- Why Māori mythology in modern setting matters
- How it represents disability
- Environmental themes
- What makes it uniquely Aotearoa
- Comparison to Percy Jackson but why it stands alone
- Who should read it and why

(400-450 words)



FINAL CREATIVE PROJECTS

Option 7: Sequel Proposal

T.K. Roxborough wrote a sequel: "Charlie Tangaroa and the God of War." Based on what you know:

- What would happen with Tūmataunga?
- Charlie now knows his father is alive - what next?
- What other environmental issues might arise?
- How has Charlie's identity changed?
- What new powers/knowledge might he have?

Write a detailed proposal (300-400 words) OR the first chapter (400-500 words).

Research Extension (optional)

Students could research (15-20 minutes):

- Tolaga Bay and the East Coast region
 - Ngāti Porou (the iwi T.K. Roxborough descends from)
 - Māori gods and their domains (using the appendix)
 - Ponaturi in Māori mythology
 - Current environmental challenges in NZ waters
 - Organizations protecting NZ marine environment (WWF NZ, Forest & Bird)
 - The real logging port controversy
 - Prosthetic technology
 - Amelia (congenital limb difference)
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Answers to Comprehension Questions

Answer Key: "Charlie Tangaroa and the Creature from the Sea" by T.K. Roxborough
Comprehension Check Questions - Teacher Reference

PART ONE: Chapters 1-5

Finding Pō-nuia and Early Discoveries

1. What are Charlie and Robbie doing when they encounter the litterbugs? How does Charlie use his prosthetic leg to trick them?

Charlie and Robbie are doing beach patrol as Sea Cadets, picking up rubbish. When they encounter litterbugs (people littering), Charlie extends his prosthetic leg and pretends the litterbugs broke it by bumping into him, teaching them a lesson about carelessness.

2. What do the boys find on the beach? How does Charlie know she's alive?

They find what looks like a dead sea creature/mermaid washed up on the beach. Charlie knows she's alive because he hears her breathing and sees her chest moving. She has red hair and webbed hands and feet.

3. What does Grandad call the creature? How is this different from what Charlie and Robbie thought she was?

Grandad calls her a ponaturi (a Māori sea creature/being). This is different because Charlie and Robbie thought she was a mermaid from Western mythology, but Grandad recognises her as being from Māori legend - creatures who live in the sea and fled the sun.

4. Who do they meet in town? What is Jenny's connection to Tolaga Bay?

They meet Jenny, an American tourist from New York City. Her father's company is building the new logging port in Tolaga Bay - ironically, the same port that's causing environmental problems and angering Tangaroa.

5. What happens when other ponaturi try to take Pō-nuia? How do they defend her?

Multiple ponaturi attack at night trying to take Pō-nuia back. Charlie and his family defend her using light (ponaturi fear daylight), and Charlie sings a mōteatea (traditional chant) that Grandad taught him, which helps drive them away.

Answers to Comprehension Questions

PART TWO: Chapters 6-10

Ancient Battles Begin

1. What does Charlie hear during the night? What does Pō-nuia ask him to do?

Charlie hears clicking/whistling sounds during the night - Pō-nuia trying to communicate with him in her language. She asks him to sing, because singing/mōteatea is how they can truly communicate across species.

2. When Charlie sings the mōteatea, what happens? How does this change his ability to communicate with Pō-nuia?

When Charlie sings the ocean mōteatea Grandad taught him, he and Pō-nuia can suddenly understand each other fully. The ancient chants create a bridge between their worlds - she can understand his words and he can understand her clicking language. They become able to have real conversations.

3. What does Pō-nuia reveal about Charlie's missing leg? What does "kōmitimiti" mean?

Pō-nuia reveals that Charlie's missing leg is a "tohu" (sign) showing he is kōmitimiti - meaning "blended" or mixed from two worlds/gods. His missing leg marks him as someone connected to both Tangaroa (sea) and Tūmataunga (god of war/humans), making him special and able to bridge both worlds.

4. What natural disaster strikes? How does this affect the town and Charlie's family?

A massive 7.9 earthquake strikes, caused by Rūaumoko (god of earthquakes) as part of the gods' war. Roads are blocked, the town is cut off, power is out. Charlie's mother Mere is injured (trapped under shelving at the store), and the community is in crisis mode.

5. What does Pō-nuia explain about Tangaroa's anger? Why have her people fled to the forest?

Pō-nuia explains that Tangaroa is furious because humans are destroying the ocean - pollution, the logging port, whale deaths (15 whales died at Whāngārā with plastic in their stomachs). His anger has sparked a war with other gods. The ponaturi fled to the forest to escape Tangaroa's wrath because he's killing his own creatures in his rage.

Answers to Comprehension Questions

PART THREE: Chapters 11-15

Family Secrets and Rising Danger

1. Who discovers Pō-nuia in the shed? How does Jenny react?

Jenny discovers Pō-nuia in the shed/swimming pool. Despite her initial shock, Jenny reacts with curiosity and kindness rather than fear, quickly accepting Pō-nuia and wanting to help. She becomes an ally in protecting her.

2. What happens to Charlie in the forest? Who helps him?

Charlie goes into the forest to try to communicate with Tāne (god of the forest). A tree falls on him and he loses his prosthetic leg. The forest creatures (particularly tīi birds) and Tāne's tipuna (ancestral spirits) help guide him, and Jenny piggybacks him when he can't walk.

3. What family secret does Charlie discover in the photo? What does this mean?

Charlie discovers an old photo showing his father Paketai had the same physical features as the ponaturi - webbed hands, unusual ears, red hair. This means his father was a ponaturi who lived as a human, loved Charlie's mother Mere, and eventually returned to the sea. Charlie is half-ponaturi, which explains his kōmitimiti nature.

4. What does Pō-nuia explain about the port? Why is it "death to Tangaroa's children"?

The logging port creates five deadly hazards for sea creatures: dust, tree resin, shipping traffic, human waste, and cleaning chemicals. All of these pollute the ocean and kill marine life. This is what triggered Tangaroa's rage and the war between gods.

5. What happens to Charlie's grandfather? How does Charlie react?

During another earthquake, Grandad is swallowed by a crack in the earth and disappears underground. Charlie is devastated and desperate - Grandad is his guide and teacher, the keeper of the mōteatea. Charlie feels lost without him but realises he must continue the mission himself.

Answers to Comprehension Questions

PART FOUR: Chapters 16-18

Desperate Measures

1. How do Charlie and Jenny try to reach Tāne? What form does the tipuna take?

Charlie and Jenny journey deeper into the forest to find Tāne's tipuna (ancestral spirits). The tipuna appear as tīi birds that speak to Charlie, guiding him. Tāne himself speaks through the birds and the forest, showing Charlie that the gods can communicate in many forms.

2. What happens to Robbie and Jenny in the sea? How does Charlie rescue them?

Robbie and Jenny are swept into the ocean by a massive wave (Tangaroa's anger). A shark attacks them. Charlie rides Magpie (his pony) into the water, dives in, and fights the shark - he climbs on its back and punches it in the gills to make it let go of Robbie. He pulls Robbie to shore.

3. What happens to Robbie after Charlie rescues him? How does Charlie bring him back to life?

Robbie has drowned - he's dead with no pulse or breathing. Charlie uses the "Tihei mauri ora" mōteatea (the sneeze of life chant) that Grandad taught him. He sings it with everything he has, and the tīi birds join in. Robbie coughs up water and comes back to life - the ancient chant resurrects him.

Answers to Comprehension Questions

PART FIVE: Chapters 19-22 + Epilogue

Confronting Gods and Resolution

1. After Robbie is revived, what does Charlie realise he still needs to do?

Charlie realises that rescuing Robbie and Jenny isn't enough - he still needs to stop the war between the gods. He must go to the beach and confront Tangaroa directly to convince him to stop destroying the land and make peace with Tāne before everyone dies.

2. How do Charlie and Jenny find Grandad? What has happened to him?

They find Grandad underground in a cave with Papatūānuku (Earth Mother). He's been talking with her all this time. She's kept him safe and alive. He emerges through another earthquake crack when Papatūānuku releases him, weak but alive.

3. What does Grandad reveal about Charlie's father, Paketai?

Grandad confirms what Charlie suspected from the photo: Paketai was a ponaturi who came onto land, fell in love with Mere (Charlie's mother), stayed for 20 years living as a human, but eventually had to return to the sea. He loved his family but couldn't stay in the human world forever. Charlie is the child of both worlds.

4. How does Charlie finally convince Tangaroa to stop the war?

Charlie stands on the beach and calls all three gods (Tangaroa, Tāne, and Tāwhirimātea - wind) to appear before him. He sings mōteatea to them, speaks about kaitiakitanga (guardianship), acknowledges Tangaroa's justified anger about ocean pollution, but argues that destroying everything won't fix it. He shows them that humans can be kaitiaki too. His kōmitimiti nature (half-human, part-ponaturi) gives him the authority to speak to gods. They agree to stop the war.

5. Three months later, who emerges from the sea?

In the epilogue, three months later during a celebration, Paketai (Charlie's father) emerges from the sea along with Pō-nuia. He's come to visit his family. He can't stay permanently, but he can visit. The ponaturi are returning to the ocean now that Tangaroa's anger has subsided.