

# Quaky Cat

Author: Diana Noonan

Illustrator: Gavin Bishop

## Synopsis

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At 4.35 on the morning of September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the city of Christchurch is hit by a massive earthquake. Tiger the cat is asleep when the house begins to shake. Alerted to the immediate danger by his animal instincts, Tiger flees from his home. Lost and hungry, Tiger wanders the streets of Christchurch, observing the huge destruction caused by the quake. His house is in ruins and his beloved owner, Emma, is nowhere to be found. He has only one thing on his mind: finding Emma and reuniting with his family.

## Text Type

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*Quaky Cat* was written in response to the September 4<sup>th</sup> earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand. Wanting to help the people of Christchurch, author Diana Noonan donated her services for free, as did well-known Christchurch artist Gavin Bishop. 50% of the publisher's proceeds from the sale of this book, which includes the author's and illustrator's royalties, will be donated to the people in the affected regions via the following charities: The Christchurch Mayoral Earthquake Appeal, the Christchurch Women's Refuge and Te Tai Tamariki: Aotearoa New Zealand Children's Literature Charitable Trust.

Since September 2010, Christchurch has been rebuilding, only to be hit by a massive aftershock on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011. This time, in addition to massive destruction of buildings, there has been significant loss of life. The people of Canterbury need help and by purchasing *Quaky Cat* you are making a contribution.

*Quaky Cat* is an evocative and uplifting story about Tiger the cat and his experiences during the Christchurch earthquake. Frightened and displaced, Tiger wanders the streets, a witness to the massive destruction caused by the quake. Finally, he manages to find his owner and he learns the valuable lesson that home isn't a building, but a family.

*Quaky Cat* is beautifully illustrated and includes musings on the 2010 earthquake by Mayor Bob Parker, author Margaret Mahy, and television presenter Jason Gunn. A useful glossary of terms associated with earthquakes is also included.

## Sharing the Story

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*Quaky Cat* is a suitable for readers ages 3+ and is an excellent book to read aloud.

## Introducing the Novel

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Have students study the front cover of the novel.

- Why do you think the story might be called *Quaky Cat*?
- Why do you think the cat on the cover is crying?

Teacher reads the blurb at the back of the book aloud to students.

- Where does the earthquake happen?
- What is the name of the cat that the story is about?
- When does the earthquake occur?
- Where is Tiger when the earthquake occurs?
- What do you know about earthquakes? What causes them? What damage can they cause? What images of the Christchurch earthquakes from television and the newspaper most affected you and why?

## Level 1

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- What is the name of Tiger's owner?
- Study the picture of Tiger. Describe what he looks like.
- What does the earthquake sound like?
- Where does Tiger run to?
- What destruction does he notice as he runs away?
- What familiar Christchurch landmarks are mentioned in the story?
- Write down 10 words that are used to describe the noise and motion of the earthquake.
- What does Tiger notice when he gets to the top of the tree?
- How does Tiger feel as he sits in the tree watching the sun rise?
- Which cat comes down out of the tree in the evening?
- How does Tiger feel as he returns to his home?
- What does Tiger see when he looks at his house?
- What does Tiger smell as he makes his way down the street?
- How does Tiger feel when he finds Emma and she picks him up and hugs him?

## Level 2

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- What does the story suggest about animals and their instincts?
- Do you have any animals? How do you think they would react in an earthquake? What sorts of things could you do to help the scared and lost animals after an earthquake?
- What time does the earthquake hit? How do you know this?
- Most of the cats in the tree are too frightened to come down. What is Tiger's motivation?
- Where do you think Emma and her family ended up after the quake? What does this suggest about the community and how people react after a disaster? What does the author mean by "Home is the giving and helping and sharing"?
- While the Christchurch earthquake is a terrible tragedy, what positive things does the story suggest may come out of it?

## Level 3

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- This story is about the experiences of a family pet. How might Tiger's experience be similar or different to a human's experience? What devastation has the latest earthquake caused? How has the city been affected? What have been some of the challenges or difficulties faced by people in the affected areas? How do you think the citizens of Christchurch are dealing with the loss of life?
- What do you think the main message or idea in this story is? What is more important than bricks and mortar?
- What sorts of things could people do to help the people of Christchurch?

## Activities

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**Adapt tasks to suit age group that you are reading with.**

- Write a letter to Diana Noonan explaining what you liked about the story.
- Design a poster advertising the story that would be appropriate for display in your school library.
- Design a 'Missing' poster for Tiger.
- Conduct some research and then design a brochure that advises people how to be prepared for an earthquake.
- Write a poem or song lyrics about the Christchurch earthquake.
- Conduct some library research on a person considered a hero during the quake. Present your information to the class orally.

- Conduct some research on what causes earthquakes. Use the glossary provided at the end of the story as a starting point.
- Design a newspaper front page about the Christchurch earthquake. Include a banner headline, a feature article, and a picture or photograph.
- Write 5 questions that you would like to ask a survivor of the quake.