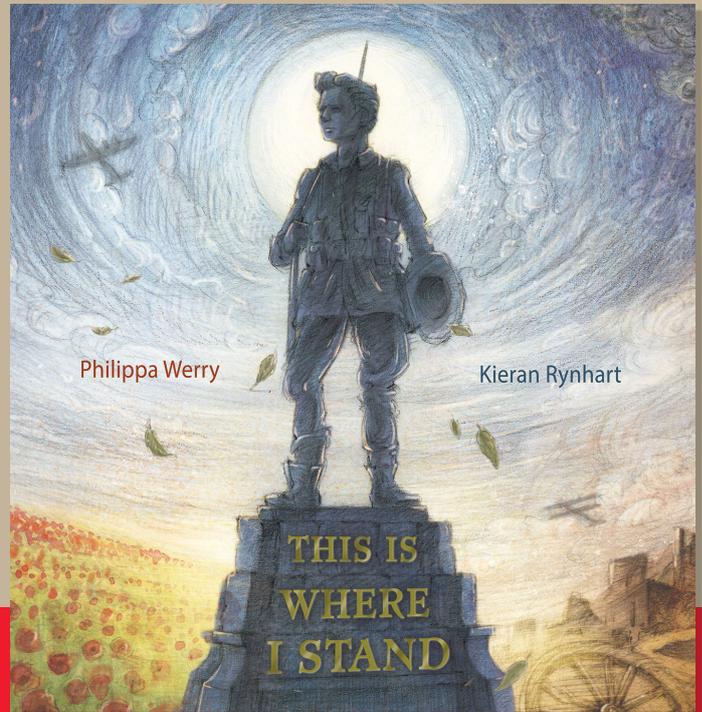


This is Where I Stand

By Philippa Werry
Pictures by Kieran Rynhart

• Reading • Writing • Art • Thinking Skills •



Synopsis

A statue of a soldier stands in a square in the wind, rain and sun, every day and every night. The statue watches everything around him grow and the days, months and years tick past. Every year, people gather near the statue to remember and honour the soldiers who fought on their behalf. The statue remembers how he came to be there, travelling over blue oceans, sandy deserts, up steep cliffs and through ruined villages. He remembers the roar of gunfire, the silence of the graves and those soldiers who never came back. He also remembers those with dark, haunted eyes and tears. Although people have aged and the land around him changed, he does not. He is memory, and this is where he stands.

About the Author

Philippa Werry lives in Wellington with her family. After university, she worked as a librarian and started writing for the *School Journal* when the first of her three daughters was born. Philippa has written many stories, plays, poems and articles for the *School Journal* and other educational publications. She has written sixteen fiction and non-fiction books, and her work has been included in several anthologies. She went to Gallipoli in April 2014 to help at the Anzac Day services with Gallipoli Volunteers. This is her fifth Anzac-themed book.

About the Illustrator

Kieran Rynhart is an illustrator and animator based in Wellington. He illustrated *The New Zealand Art Activity Book* for Te Papa Press in 2013, *If I was a Banana* in 2017 and *Seagull Seagull: a collection of James K. Baxter's poems for children* in 2020. He has also animated and illustrated an eclectic mix of music videos and commissions. He has been selected as one of Luerzer's Archive best 200 illustrators.

Writing Style

This poignant, creative non-fiction picture book is lyrical and emotive. It is written in first person point of view (from the soldier statue's point of view) in present tense. The reader will see the life, blood and tears that a soldier statue represents and how, though it will stay the same for many years, everything around it can change.

The author has included a mix of very short poetic sentences and longer descriptive or active sentences with conjunctions. Repetition is used to emphasise the steadfast and long-lasting nature of the statue. Alliteration is used sparingly over a stanza on pages 6-7. The author uses directional words such as 'beside', 'over', 'beneath', 'up', to compare the size of the statue to the visitors. The author uses a simile on page 12: 'poppies red as blood'. *This is Where I Stand* has 32 pages and is written for 3-8-year-old readers with themes of Anzac, remembrance and longevity.

The illustrator has created the illustrations using pencil and acrylic inks and then scanned the pictures into the computer to enhance colour and add more detail. Kirkus Reviews said of the Kieran Rynhart's illustrations in *If I were a Banana* that they "come in multiple sizes, from vignettes to double-page spreads, and unusual perspectives, providing interest and rhythm. Rich textures and muted colours add to the dreamy quality of the text, which has a thoughtful, reflective tone throughout."

That can also be said of *This is Where I Stand*. Kieran had added movement with the swirl of clouds, leaves and sand—in contrast with the stillness of the statue. Sometimes the texts appear in spaces left for the words, and sometimes on white pages with a dramatic illustration on the page beside it. The hauntingly beautiful illustrations are thoughtful, stunning and bring added depth to the text.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make inferences and predictions, relating to their own experiences. Read the passages aloud and have the students read alongside or by themselves.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the cover and read the blurb.

- Who is the main character in the story?
- What do you think this story is about? Why do you think that?
- What do you already know about the two World Wars?

Comprehension questions

- Why do you think the illustrator has autumn leaves blowing in the wind on the title page?
- Why do you think *This is Where I Stand* is in different lettering to the rest of the text on the page? What do you think the words mean?
- Why has the author said the statue stands all day, every day, all night, every night? How has she paid particular attention to the wording?
- How have the author and illustrator shown time past on pages 6-7?
- The author has used the letter 's' cleverly on pages 8-9; what has she done?
- How are people reacting to the statue on pages 10-11?
- What day do the people gather in the dawn to remember? (pp.12-13)
- What is the soldier remembering on pages 14-15?
- What countries do you think the soldiers have travelled to on pages 16-17?
- What is happening on pages 18-19 and what is the significance of the poppies?
- Why do you think the illustrator has drawn people inside the statue's head? (pp.20-21)
- Who are the people in the forefront of the picture on pages 22-23?
- How has the environment around the soldier changed on pages 24-25?
- Why did some people protest at the Dawn Parade? (pp.26-27)
- Why do you think the author has circled back to the beginning on pages 28-29 and how has she done that?
- From the illustration and the words, what seasons does the statue stand in?
- How do you feel about those words 'this is where I stand' by the end of the book?
- Do you think the author has written a story about one particular soldier, or all the soldiers who have gone to war? Why do you think that?



Activities

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT'S GOING ON IN THIS PICTURE?

Photocopy four of the pages and blank out the text so the students see only the picture. Students then discuss what is going on in this picture. How has the illustrator shown that time has passed?

Ask student to use descriptive words to write a caption to go with the picture(s).

ACTIVITY 2: SCULPT IT

Artists make models so that they can see the character from different angles when drawing it. Look at the pictures to see all the different angles the artist has drawn the statue from.

In pairs, students design/sketch a statue of a significant person that they will sculpt. Then decide the materials they will use. For example, air-dry clay, plasticine, plaster of Paris, Sculpey, play dough, or papier-mâché. When it is finished, design a plaque and name the statue. For example, in the story the author named the statue 'This is Where I Stand'. Display the statues during Anzac commemorations.

Extension activity: Draw the statue from different angles.

ACTIVITY 3: BOOK TRAILER TIME

Design a book trailer for the book. Use a software package like 'Animoto', using one of their free templates. Storyboard what you want to say in the book trailer; collect photos, illustrations and videos (if needed), and then insert them into the Animoto template you have chosen. Show it to the class. See if the school library or website would like to include it on their site.

ACTIVITY 4: STORYTIME

Ask the students to find a statue or memorial plaque in their community. After a visit to the statue/plaque, ask the students to write down how they felt when they first looked at the statue. Can they find out more information about the statue/plaque and when it was erected? Next, ask the students to write a poem or story saying what that statue/plaque can see. Students then edit their work, and share with the class.

ACTIVITY 5: THINKING

What if the statue could talk? Ask the students what it would say. Would it be happy, sad, or angry? And why that emotion? In groups, the students write a short play about children visiting the statue – and it answers them back! The groups then practise their plays and perform them in front of the class.

Written by Maria Gill



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC