

Bear comes out of hibernation



The diary of Bear: Book 5

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One day when I was fast asleep in hibernation, there was a loud knocking on the toybox lid. 'Wake up, Bear!' shouted Alligator, 'You need to find out what's going on.'

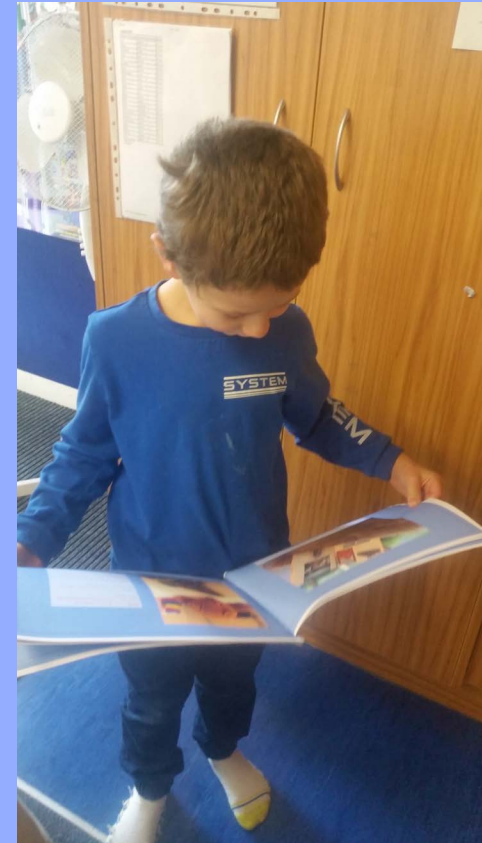
‘We are in Level 2 and we can go out and children are back at school. They are reading about you and the children want to know what you are doing now.’

I have to tell you that I was a bit grumpy about being woken up when I wasn't ready.

I climbed out of the toybox and Alligator set up the computer.



Well, I was amazed – teachers had emailed pictures of the children reading our stories, making bears of their own and drawing pictures of me and Alligator.



Classes had even made books about their own bears so the bears would know what to do when they went back to school.

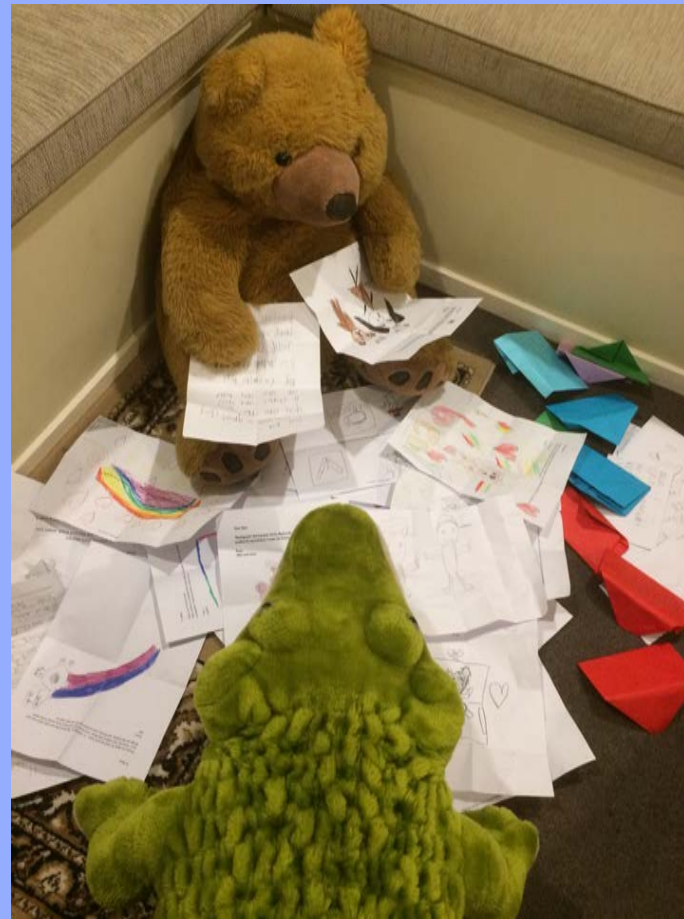


Bear Comes Back to School



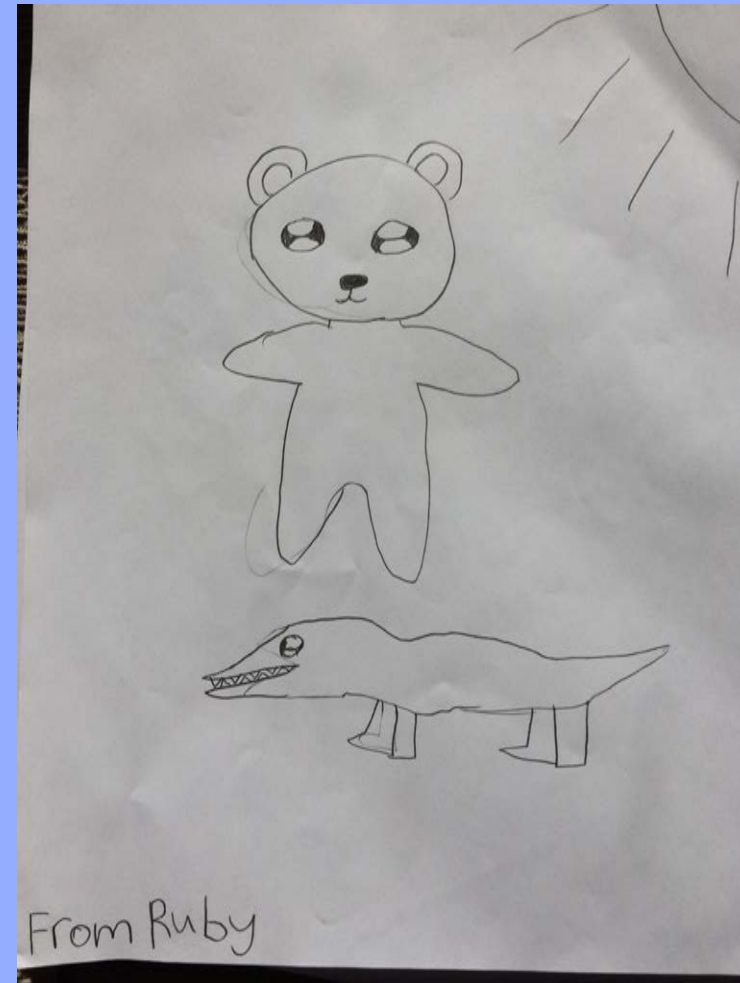
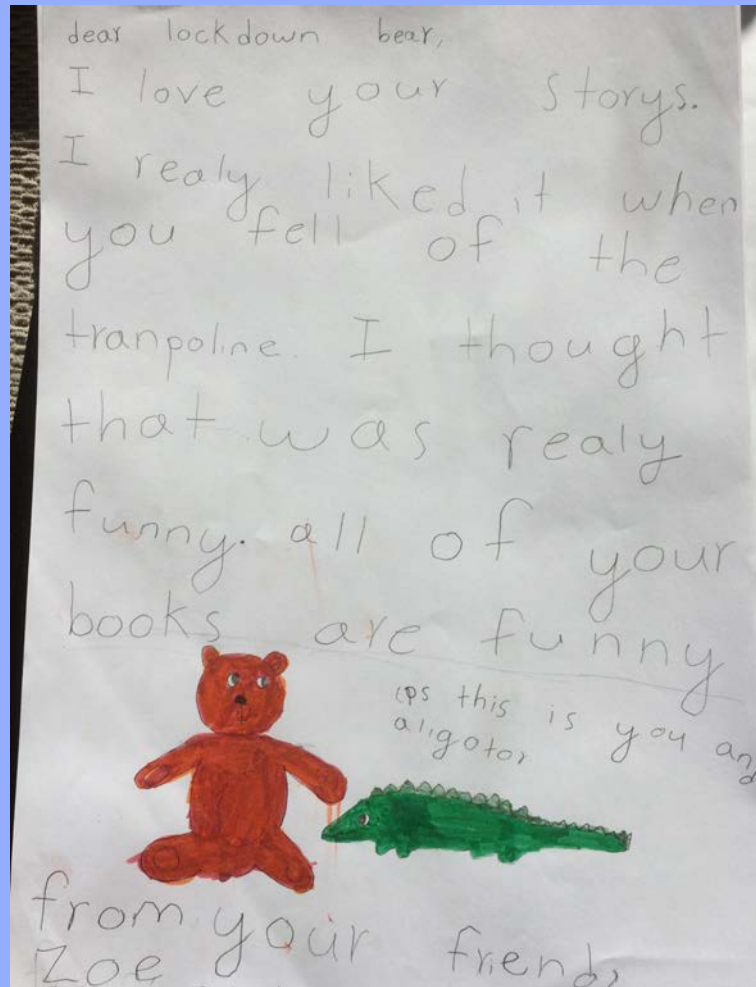
Room 1 & 2 Adventures

As if that wasn't enough, when the post started up again, big envelopes stuffed with letters and pictures began arriving.

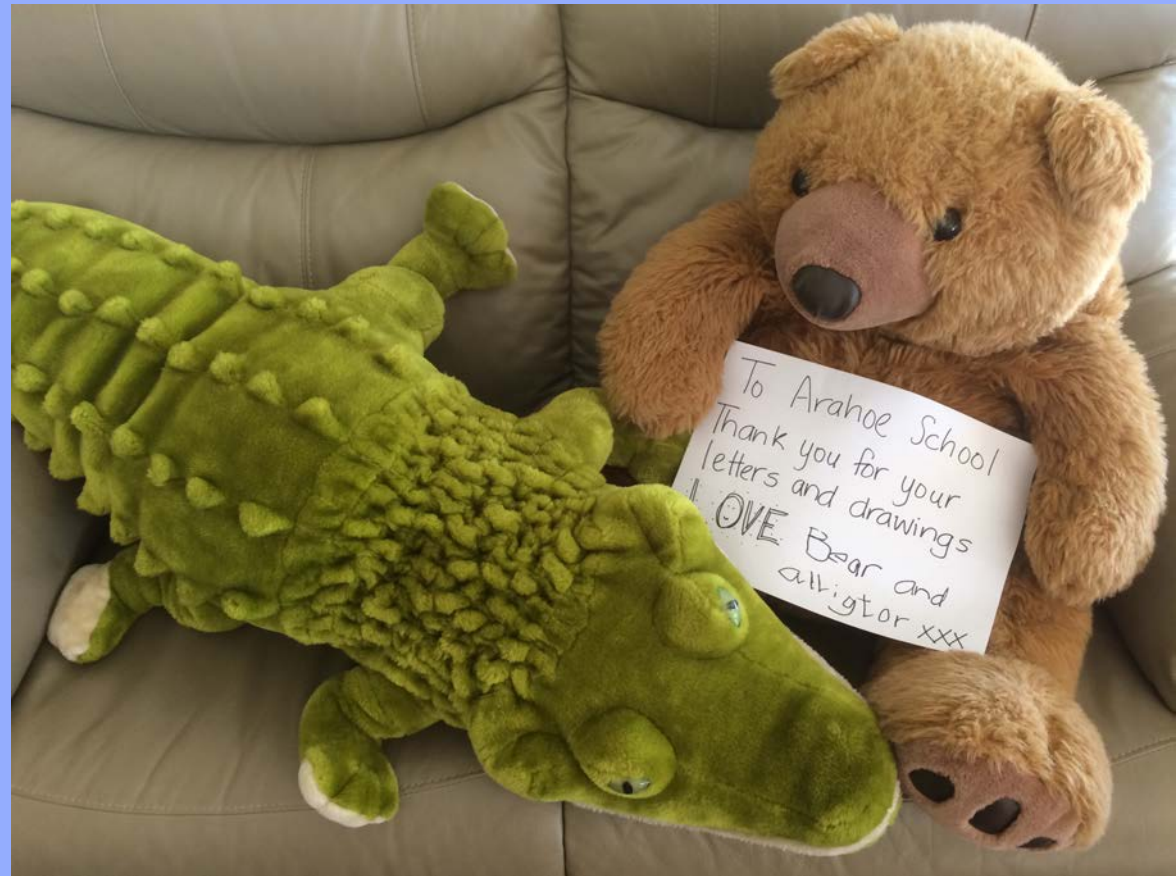


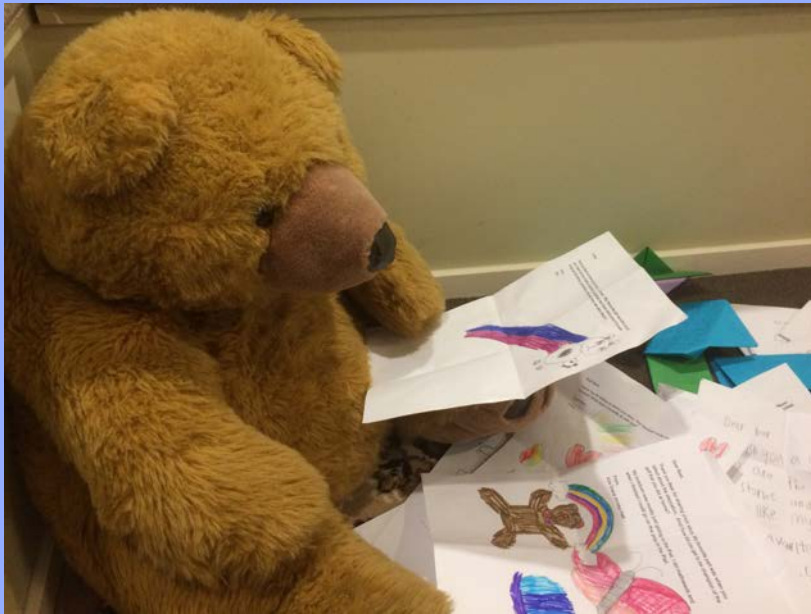
It's so hard to choose my favourite...

I like them all. Thank you everyone!



My humans said it is good manners to write back, so Alligator and I set to work.





Sometimes I sit and read the letters again because they make me happy.

The children told me what they did during lockdown. Some played on the computer and lots of them did baking. I'm hungry just thinking about it.

The children told also me what they liked best about my stories – they thought when I fell off the trampoline was funny and when I got stuck in the letterbox. The teachers told me they liked it when learned it was important to stay true to myself.

Not only did children and bears like hearing about me but grown-ups did too. Here is an item about our stories.



BEARING UP WELL IN LOCKDOWN

A lovable bear attracted an international following when his adventures during lockdown were shared on social media.

Bear is the co-star of a four-part homemade picture-book series alongside partner in crime, Alligator. They're the invention of Professor Carol Mutch, from the Faculty of Education and Social Work. She says the idea came as a way to entertain family – and distract herself. Bear's story ended up mirroring what was going on in Carol's own 'bubble'.

"Those first weeks were so stressful, getting all my courses transferred to online and learning about Zoom and recording podcasts and YouTube videos. And I just found myself out with my phone camera taking photos of Bear, who is actually my son's old toy, in a variety of settings around our rural property near Christchurch."

What she wasn't prepared for was the snowballing response after she posted Bear's latest adventure on Facebook each day at 8am. "He developed a worldwide following, people

sent in bear pictures and videos introducing their bears, and adults engaged as much as children; they talked to him as if he was real and poured out their hearts."

However after four sets of adventures that take Bear and Alligator through several weeks of lockdown, she says she needed to get her life back so Bear had to go into 'hibernation' in the toy box. "Some of his Facebook followers actually cried, it was so therapeutic for people on their own and he became their daily companion."

But Bear's fame has lived on, and a primary school class in West Auckland were so inspired by his adventures they made a sequel, *Bear Comes Back to School*, using a teacher's bear, Angus, who had to adjust to life at school during the level 2 response to Covid-19. Other schools from all over New Zealand have also been sending her their Bear stories.

Carol says the series is not just a story about a toy bear. "It contains many aspects of life under lockdown that readers will resonate with, and it also provides parents and teachers with an opportunity to discuss Bear's adventures with their children and relate them to their own experiences." – *Julianne Evans*

Full story auckland.ac.nz/lockdown-bear

Bear and Alligator's lockdown adventures reflected what was going in Carol Mutch's bubble.

8 UNINEWS



In their letters, the children asked what I was doing. I told them it gets cold here in the South Island and I still get tired so sometimes I sleep by the fire.

But the best thing about being out of hibernation is being able to be with Alligator again. On fine afternoons we go over to the playground.



Sometimes we go down to the school so we can walk home with our friends.



On other days we go for drives with the humans or just hang out together. We try not to get into mischief.



Now we are in Level 1, I'm really pleased that the team of five million has stopped Covid-19 from making lots of people in New Zealand sick.

Life in lockdown taught me some things. I learned it was important to stay home. I learned it was important to follow the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Dr Ashley ('the Eliminator') Bloomfield's advice.



I learned that keeping your distance, washing your paws and coughing into your elbow helps keeps you safe and everyone around you safe.

I learned that trying to make other people happy makes you happy.

And I learned that as long as you have family and friends in your bubble (and honey), you can get through the scary times.



Thanks for being part of my Covid-19 story. Until we have found a way to beat the virus...

Be safe

Be kind

Love, Bear





On March 25, 2020, New Zealand went into lockdown. This was the final step of a four-stage approach to fighting the COVID-19 virus. Bear's story was originally written to entertain family and friends and each day a new episode appeared on the author's Facebook page.

The story gained wider attention as it is not just a story about a toy bear. It contains many aspects of life under lockdown that readers will resonate with. It can also provide parents and teachers with an opportunity to discuss Bear's adventures with children and relate them to their own experiences.

In Book 5: 'Bear comes out of hibernation,' Bear finds that the outside world has changed while he was asleep. New Zealand has moved from Alert Level 4 to 2 and then 1. Bear shares what he has learned about his time in lockdown and what is important to him.