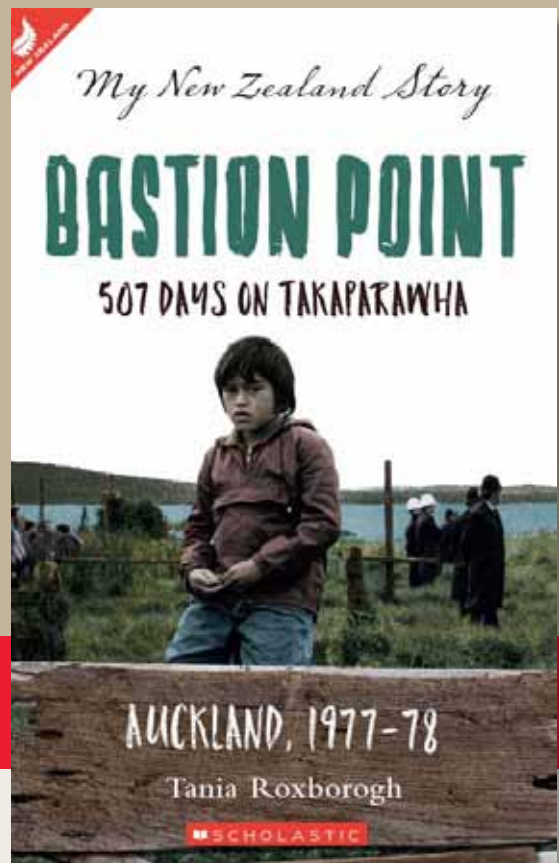


# Bastion Point: 507 days on Takaparawha

## The diary of Erica Tito, Auckland, 1977–78

By Tania Roxborough

• Writing • Reading • History • Social Studies  
• Oral Language • Art • Music



## Synopsis

*"I'm writing this by lamplight. That's right. Like Swiss Family Robinson or something. We're up here with no electricity or running water, while just across from us and down the road is the real world."*

Erica Tito had the perfect summer holiday planned. Then her father decided the whole family would pack up and join the protestors at Bastion Point in Auckland. No way! Instead of spending dreamy summer days training Silver, her horse, Erica and her family have to camp out in tents. At first, everyone thinks the protest will be over quickly, but as weeks turn into months, it becomes clear that Erica will not be going home and, worse, may never see Silver again.

The occupation of Bastion Point was to become the longest running land protest in New Zealand history. Its eventual showdown between police and protestors changed the way the country thought about Māori land and the pleas of those who had lost their papakāinga. Through Erica's heartfelt diary entries we learn about the daily lives of the protestors, listen in on grand speeches and fiery confrontations between the protestors, Ngāti Whātua elders, police and politicians. And we witness the distressing eviction of the occupiers – all seen through the eyes of a Māori girl previously unaware of race and land issues.

## About the Author

Tania Roxborough is an award-winning New Zealand writer. Her many publications cover a range of genres including poetry, non-fiction, historical novels, teaching resources, novels and plays for children and young adults. Her previous novels with Scholastic NZ include *Compulsion*, *Whispers* and *Limelight*. Tania has worked as a high school English and drama teacher since 1989 and recently graduated with a BA in Māori from Otago University. She has two grown daughters and lives in Canterbury with her husband. When she is not teaching, she is reading, writing, riding her horse or walking her dogs. Her whakapapa connects to tangata whenua as well as 'iwi' from Ireland, Germany, England and Scotland..

## Writing Style

*Bastion Point: 507 days on Takaparawha* is a fictional story written in the form of diary entries of the main character Erica Tito. The text follows the protest at Bastion Point through her eyes in a tender and meaningful way. Erica's heartfelt diary entries provide an insight into Ngāti Whātua's struggle for justice, and the dire conditions of life on 'the Point', where they stayed for 507 days. For some students the events of both the story and the actual protest may be confronting at times and some support may be required. The historical background to the story is well documented by the resources in the end notes, and there is a useful glossary.



# Shared Learning and Discussion Points

## ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Why was Alice Dimond writing to Mrs Tito? (p.5)
- What can we tell about Erica Tito and her life from her reply letter to Alice? (p.6)
- When does the story start? What does the main character, Erica, get for Christmas? How does she feel about it? What was she hoping for instead? Why did her mother choose that gift for her? Have you ever had a gift that you had to pretend to like? (p.7)
- What is a purchase agreement? Who is 'Silver'? What did Mr and Mrs Seddon give Erica for Christmas? (pp. 8–9)
- How is Erica going to pay for the horse? What is a 'muster'? What is a 'brood mare'? (pp.10–11)
- What did Erica do to Carmen to help her birth Silver? Where had she learnt the song? (pp.12–13)
- Why are Erica's parents arguing? Once she realises that packing a bag means a short holiday and not her parents splitting up, what is Erica's main concern? (pp.14–15)
- What does Erica see, hear and smell as she wakes up in the unfamiliar place? What happens when she leaves the tent? (pp.16–17)
- How do James and Joe greet each other? What is Erica's mother, Keri, worried about? How is Erica feeling about being there? (pp.18–19)
- Why is Keri keeping Erica so busy? Why does Erica think what they're doing is a waste of time? (pp.20–21)
- What did Erica forget about her Dad? Do you think she's being 'self-centred'? What is a 'dunger'? (pp.22–23)
- Who were the Swiss Family Robinson? What, or who, is a 'scab'? What is 'Māoritanga'? (pp.24–25)
- Why do all the digger drivers and bulldozer drivers take the machinery away? Who told them to move them? What might the consequence be for them being moved? (pp.26–27)
- What do Erica and the other children call adults whose names they don't know? Why do you think helicopters are flying over? (pp.28–29)
- What is 'papakāinga'? What do you think Mr and Mrs Hawke said to the adults to stop them arguing? (pp.30–31)
- How does Erica feel about the news from her parents that they are staying on, possibly for months? (pp.32–33)
- What did Erica's dad mean by 'something bigger than us interrupts the road we've chosen'? (pp.34–35)
- What is an 'occupation'? Do you think Erica, her family and the other people protesting at Bastion Point are 'occupiers'? What does Silver do when she sees Erica? (pp.36–37)
- How does Mr Seddon feel about Erica not being there to look after Silver like they'd agreed she would? What is Mr Seddon most worried about? (pp.38–39)
- Do you think Mr Seddon understands the importance of belonging to a piece of land and why someone might fight, or protest, to protect it? (pp.40–41)
- Who is 'Muldoon'? What, or who, are his 'constituents'? What is an 'electorate'? (pp.42–43)
- What were Erica's first impressions of the new school? (pp.44–45)
- What happens for the families when it rains? What does 'hōhā' mean? (pp.46–47)
- What does Erica's mum mean by 'The great government waka sails slowly'? How many days has the family been at Bastion Point? (pp.48–49)
- How did the government try to settle things with the elders? Why were the protestors so angry about it? (pp.50–51)
- Who was Gandhi? Why is Erica's dad going on the speaking tour? Do you think it's fair that the rest of the family have to stay at Bastion Point instead of going home while he's away? (pp.52–53)
- Who does Erica think Gandhi looks similar to? Who does Erica admire at the camp? (pp.54–55)
- What does 'arbitrate' mean? What does Joe tell the others at the camp about the meetings he's been having? (pp.56–57)
- What do Connor and Erica do to help with the rain coming into the tent? How does her mum respond? Why is Erica surprised by her mum? (pp.58–59)
- What does the government have to do now to get the protestors removed from Bastion Point? How long has Erica been at Bastion Point? (pp.60–61)
- What does the class find out about the people they're studying when they share the information they've gathered so far? (pp.62–63)
- How is Joannee's birthday celebrated? (pp.64–65)
- What does Mum say to Brianna about who is looking out for them? (pp.66–67)
- What does their dad bring back for the kids when he comes home for Easter? What does Erica think is the best thing about being at the camp? (pp.68–69)
- What arrives at the camp to make life easier on day 103? (pp.70–71)
- Why is Jason's mum pleased he's friends with Erica? Why are Jason's dad's views on the protest so confusing for Erica? (pp.72–73)
- How does Erica feel about Jason lying to his parents? (pp.74–75)
- What is the name of the new meeting house? What does it mean? (pp.76–77)



- What did Uncle Mike say the building arose from? What does the new meeting house signify for Erica? (pp.78–79)
- Why does her teacher's praise give Erica mixed feelings? (pp.80–81)
- Why did someone call the elders 'traitors'? What does 'e hoā' mean? (pp.82–83)
- Why would the Chief of Police be concerned about people from The Communist Party or Socialist Party being part of the protest? (pp.84–85)
- How has the protest affected Adele and her family? How do you think she feels about Erica and her family? Do you think Erica's feelings about the protest and the protesters are beginning to change? (pp.86–87)
- Do you think it's right that more people in New Zealand know about Guy Fawkes than Parihaka? (pp.88–89)
- Why did Koro wake everyone? What danger were they in? (pp.90–91)
- What happened to Erica in the library? (pp.92–93)
- Do you think Mrs Paki is right that the Camp is no place for children? (pp.94–95)
- How do you think Adele's father feels about the people at the camp? Why did Joe take the blame for hitting Adele's dad? Who do the adults and their dramas remind Erica of? (pp.96–97)
- What lesson did Joe get from his grandmother? Can Erica relate to this lesson in her own life? (pp.98–99)
- Why do you think the elders are focused only on peace? Do you agree with the elders, the government, or the protesters? Explain why. (pp.100–101)
- How long has Erica been at the camp now? What effect is the weather going to have on them? (pp.102–103)
- What do they find out is delayed on Day 250? Why do you think the trial is delayed? Who benefits by a delay in the trial? (pp.104–105)
- What has changed in the way Erica's dad refers to Titoki? How does that make Erica feel? (pp.106–107)
- What do the men do at the site of the burnt hut? What does 'tautoko' mean? (pp.108–109)
- Why has Erica become even more determined to record events and her thoughts? What is an 'urupā'? (pp.110–111)
- What happened to Erica's dad when he was ten? (pp.112–113)
- Why did Erica's dad promise to always return to Bastion Point if he was needed? Who did he make the promise to? What is a 'mokopuna'? (pp.114–115)
- Why is the woman in the car so unkind to Erica? (pp.116–117)
- Do you think the way Mrs Donovan tries to find out the truth is fair? What would you have written if you were Erica? What would you have written if you were Adele? (pp.118–119)
- Are you surprised at how seriously the school takes the incident with the light switch? Do you think it's fair that Mr and Mrs Paki think Erica is to blame for Jason's behaviour? (pp.120–121)
- Why do you think Mr Paki doesn't arrest Erica's dad? Are you shocked at the way the men speak to each other? Does it make you think that there have been changes in New Zealand society since the 1970s, or would you expect to still hear that kind of exchange between parents at your school today? (pp.122–123)
- Are you shocked by Aunty Hope's story? As the book goes on, are you feeling more sympathy for the protesters than at the beginning? (pp.124–125)
- Who does Erica blame for losing Silver? What do you think the people watching her have her meltdown are thinking? (pp.126–127)
- How many days have they been at the camp? Do you think Erica should agree to the letter being sent to Mr Seddon? (pp.128–129)
- How did Erica celebrate her birthday? If you were Jason, what would you have chosen for a birthday gift for her? (pp.130–131)
- What happens that makes Erica truly believe that she won't be going home? (pp.132–133)
- What do you think 'let us throw off everything that hinders and run with perseverance the race marked out for us' means? (pp.134–135)
- How do you think Adele feels about Erica and Jason being in her class? Are you surprised that Typing was a subject that you could take at High School? (pp.136–137)
- Why were the protesters at Raglan arrested? (pp.138–139)
- Why would the elders consider paying the government \$200,000 to buy back land, especially considering part of the deal would mean allowing the subdivision to go ahead as planned? (pp.140–141)
- Why can't Ngāti Whātua take the deal the government is offering them? Do you think it's a good deal? (pp.142–143)
- What is happening for Erica that's interfering with her school work? What is 'manaakitanga'? (pp.144–145)
- Do you agree with the statement 'Sometimes you need to break the law to change the law'? Can you think of an example when it would be ok to break the law? (pp.146–147)
- What is the example Erica finds that suggests it is okay to break the law? (pp.148–151)
- Why won't the group listen to Erica's ideas? (pp.152–152)
- Why are the government officials still speaking to only four of the protesters? (pp.158–159)
- Do you agree with the statement, 'My success is not the work of one person but the work of many'? Can you think of an example from your own life to support your view? (pp.160–161)
- What do you think the people at the Point would say about Erica having dinner with Mr Muldoon? Do you think Mrs Norris knew that would happen? (pp.162–163)



- If you were Erica, would you have asked to go home as soon as you heard what Muldoon said about the army? (pp.164–165)
- Why do you think Erica’s team didn’t win the debate? (pp.170–173)
- What does Erica tell the policewoman? What effect does it have? (pp.180–181)
- What does Erica’s dad say about her getting Silver back? What comparison does he make about it? (pp.182–183)

## Activities

### ACTIVITY 1: KEEPING A DIARY

We learn about life on the Point through Erica’s diary entries, but, because hers is the only voice we hear, we are missing the opposing views. Choose a place in the story that most interested you and write three diary entries over three weeks in the story from another character’s point of view.

### ACTIVITY 2: DEBATING THE FACTS

Erica became a strong debater through her experiences at the Point. Write an opening argument for the moot, ‘The protestors should not have been removed from Bastion Point’. Use the Historical Notes on pp.187–189 to support your argument.

### ACTIVITY 3: COMMEMORATING THE PROTEST

There were extremely strong feelings from both sides during the protest at Bastion Point. Design a piece of art, a mural, sculpture or something else that represents both sides’ struggles that would be appropriate to mark the 507 days of protest on Bastion Point.

### ACTIVITY 4: SONGS OF PROTEST

On several occasions in Erica’s diary she mentions the protestors using music to make a point, to bring everyone together, or to raise their spirits. Research protest songs on the Internet. Share your findings with the class, or in small groups. Is there a theme running through the songs? Could you write a verse or chorus for something you would like to protest about that you see happening in the world now?

### ACTIVITY 5: IN THE NEWS TODAY

Choose a photograph from pp.198–203. Use it to write a factual newspaper article by describing what you can from the photograph and adding supporting information from the resources at the back of the book, the story text and your own research. Include a meaningful headline designed to sell newspapers, or act as clickbait.

Written by Sarina Dickson

