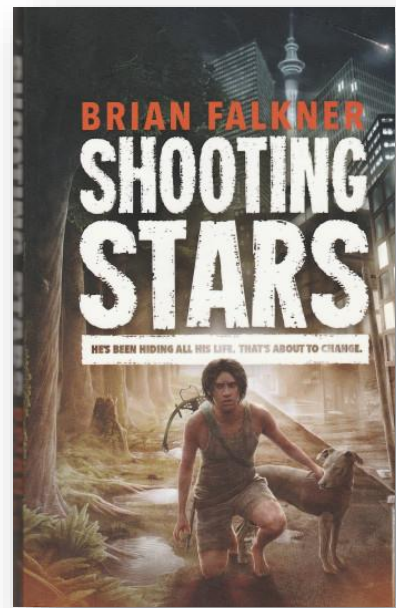


Shooting Stars

By
Brian Falkner



Egan Tucker has grown up in the middle of the New Zealand bush. When he was a baby, his mother lost a bitter custody battle and rather than hand him over to his abusive father, disappeared with Egan to live in a remote cottage deep in a New Zealand forest. Now fifteen years old, the boundaries of Egan's world are the hills that surround their tiny valley. This is the only life he knows. But he also knows that one day he will return to the world. In preparation for this, his mother has given him a 'code', a set of rules for living his life, to help him cope with the world and the people he will find in it. But Egan's world changes when his mother leaves to get supplies and never returns. Now Egan must venture out, by himself, into a world that is unlike anything he has ever known.

RECOMMENDED READING LEVEL: Mid Secondary (issues of domestic violence, sexual references, drug and alcohol references)

TEACHER NOTES

Living by a code

- Moma and Egan lived by a code. Thinking about how you view the world, design a code that you believe you do, or should, live by. As a class, discuss your codes. Develop a class code.

- Even though Egan has had no contact with people outside the forest, he is still able to read the situation he is in and react to protect himself. How was he able to do that? Do you think living by Moma's code is helping him in the city, or making life harder for him (pp 140-150)?
- Why is it so hard for the other kids to understand why Egan lives by a code? Is it hard for you to understand too, or do you agree it's a good way to live (pp 181–182)?

Deer culling

- In pairs, use online resources such as the NZ Department of Conservation website to research the reasons behind DOC employing deer cullers. Not everyone supports culling. Research the reasons people might be against culling. In your pair, decide which side of the argument you will take and present your arguments for and against to the class.

Final article

- At the end of the book, there is a New Zealand Herald article about Egan being hurt by his father. Write a further article for the newspaper about Egan's life and death. Include information about resources at the end for young people who might need help with domestic violence.

Homeless young people

- Research the agencies that support homeless people. Write interview questions and telephone or email the agency to find out what they do for young people who are homeless. Include a question about what kind of support the community could give to help them in their work. Using the information you gather, plan a fundraising activity to raise money, or goods, to donate to the homeless charity of your choice. As a class, evaluate the ideas and decide which idea would be best to use.

Re-writing the ending

- Pick up the story just before the television transcript in which we find out Egan has died. Write a new ending to Egan's story in which he recovers from his injuries. What happens next?