



Elastic Island Adventures: Rarotonga

by Karen McMillan

Published by Duckling Publishing

About the Book

Kiri, Jed and twins Emma and Ethan frequently journey on 'elastic island', a unique way to travel that sends them ping-ponging across the ocean to a variety of tropical destinations. This time, they travel with Blong the Cat and Heathcliff the Dog to beautiful Rarotonga.

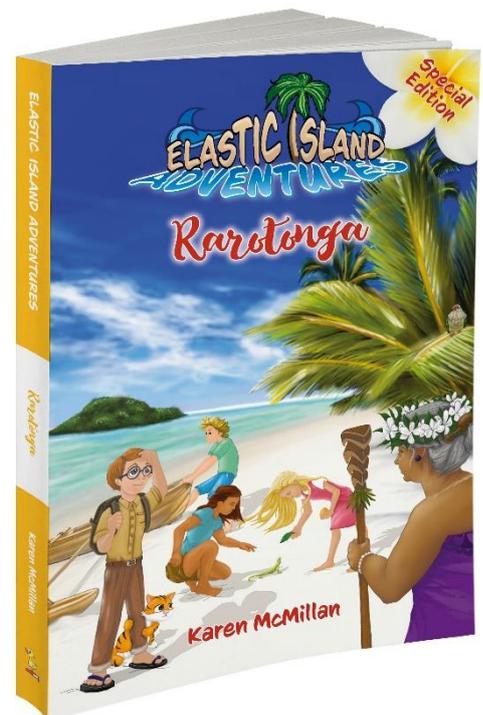
They are expecting to relax in the sun, but it's not long until they run into problems. Firstly, Mighty Moko, the resident grumpy gecko who lives in their room, is determined to get rid of them, no matter what! But his annoying antics are quickly surpassed when all the black pearls on the island are stolen in a brazen heist, the thief leaving clues scattered around the island. The children are determined to solve the clues, but even with the help of the wise Mana Tiaki, will they be successful? Will the people of Rarotonga ever see their precious black pearls again?

In each book of *Elastic Island Adventures*, four children travel via the Elastic Island service to different tropical destinations. In each book, they face different problems, and they must work together with the help of local creatures to make it home safely.

Every time the children ride Elastic Island, they must do a challenge to pay for their passage. In *Rarotonga*, the children race crabs and play drums.

There is always a different parrot helping Mr Jollybowler, who runs the Elastic Island service in each book. In this book, it is Kura the Kūkupa, a Cook Islands dove.

Each book also features one unusual real-life creature. In *Rarotonga*, it is Mighty Moko, a local gecko.



About the Author

Karen McMillan lives in New Zealand and is the author of 20 books, published in ten countries, a mixture of fiction, non-fiction and children's books.

Her non-fiction titles include *Everyday Strength* with co-author chef Sam Mannering, *Unbreakable Spirit*, *Love Bytes* and *Feast or Famine*. Karen has ghost-written *From the Blitz to the Burmese Jungle and Beyond*. Her fiction titles include the bestselling novels *The Paris of the East*, *The Paris of the West* and *Brushstrokes of Memory*. Karen is also the author of the popular *Elastic Island Adventure* series for children, which is in early development to be made into animated movies. Karen wrote *Elastic Island Adventures* purely as a fun family project, and some of the characters are inspired by stories she wrote as a child that were serialized in the children's pages of a nationwide New Zealand Sunday newspaper.

Karen was the resident book reviewer on The Cafe TV3, and she appears regularly in the media. She has been a speaker at many festivals and events, including the Going West Festival, the Devonport Arts Festival, the Tauranga Arts Festival, and Brisbane Book Week in Australia (thanks to Creative NZ Funding). She was able to research *Elastic Island Adventures: Rarotonga*, thanks to the Pacific Resort in Rarotonga.



Writing Style

Rarotonga is an action-adventure story full of exciting drama, but also with lots of humour. Themes include building resilience and confidence, problem-solving, looking out for others, making friends, being yourself and developing your talents, the importance of literacy, kindness and caring for others. The *Elastic Island Adventures* series encourages creativity, where children can enjoy the theatre of their minds! This book also highlights Rarotonga's rich and wonderful culture and history. Apart from going up The Needle, the book is written so if you visit Rarotonga you can catch a bus to see all the other destinations featured in the story.

Four engaging and relatable children feature in each story. There is feisty, outspoken Kiri, who often acts before she thinks. Emma, her best friend, is shy, bookish and dreamy. Ethan, Emma's twin brother, loves gadgets and inventing things and is ever-so-annoying. The new boy in town, Jed, is a born leader and athlete.

The text is in third person past tense. *Rarotonga* is written for the 8–12-year-old age group, but younger or older audiences will also enjoy this action-packed story.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Look at the cover with the illustration by Rarotongan artists Pania and Ivon Lee. What do you think the tone of the story might be?
- How has the author set the scene in the first few pages?
- In the first chapter, the children race hermit crabs, which is something that children in the Cook Islands enjoy. There are many videos online if you'd like to view a real-life race!
- We meet Kura the Kūkupa, in the first chapter. What can you find out about his real-life Cook Islands dove?
- What do you think it would be like to travel on Elastic Island if you could? Are there any changes you would make to the service?
- In chapter 2, we meet Mighty Moko, the gecko who lives in one of the rooms at the Pacific Resort. What do you make of his personality? What can you find out about geckos who live in the Cook Islands?
- The children have one problem in chapter 2, that Mighty Moko wants them to get out of his room, but in chapter 3, they discover a problem that affects the entire island. All the black pearls have been stolen. What can you learn about Cook Islands' black pearls? What do they look like, and where do they come from?
- The thief has left a series of clues throughout the book. What do you think of the first clue, and what do you think about the thief?
- In chapter 4, the children meet Mana Tiaki, a wise Rarotongan man. His name is based on a real-life concept in the Cook Islands. Can you find out more about the meaning of mana tiaki?
- In chapters 4 and 5, the children climb to the top of The Needle, otherwise known as Te Rua Manga. What can you find out about this mountain?
- The clues take everyone to Wigmore's Waterfall in chapter 6. What do you learn about this beautiful waterfall?
- In chapter 7, we learn about the Maire Nui Gardens. Are these gardens you would like to visit? If so, why?
- In chapter 7 we learn more about why Jed doesn't like mushrooms. Do you like mushrooms? Pick a side and argue about the pros or cons of mushrooms!
- There are quite a few Blong-a-grams throughout the book. Can you make up and draw your own Blong-a-gram about this story?
- Heathcliff the Dog is very wise in the book. Pretend you are wise like Heathcliff and write some inspirational sayings that would make another person feel better about their day.
- In chapter 8, Kiri and Jed go swimming with turtles. Is this something you would like to do? Find out all you can about the turtles of Rarotonga.
- What do you learn about Black Rock in Rarotonga in chapter 9? Ethan also does an experiment to check the clue boxes at this point in the story. Was this a good idea or not to check the clue boxes?



- What do you think of the sea wall mural in chapter 10? Draw your own sea mural, based on what you have learnt about the Cook Islands at this stage of the book.
- Mighty Moko enjoys modelling at the sea wall mural. Do you think he is having a change of heart about the children at this point? Why do you think that is?
- In chapter 11, Ethan finds a collection of vinyl records. What sort of music do you like? List ten of your favourite song, and say what you like the best about each song.
- The clues take the team to Takamoa Theological College in chapter 12. What do you learn about the early missionaries to the South Pacific?
- In chapter 13, Matthew from the *Cook Islands News* interviews the children at the Banana Court. Pretend you are a reporter and interview a classmate about the last holiday they had and what they did.
- In chapter 14, everyone visits the Punanga Nui Market. What do you think you would like to buy from this market?
- The team is part of a cultural night in chapter 15, and they have to dress in costume. Design your costumes for your own cultural event, choose some music and perform a dance.
- In chapter 16, we learn that Mighty Moko has changed his mind about the children staying in his room. What do you think of him as a character now? Do you like him more than at the beginning of the story?
- Throughout the book, Blong the Cat and Heathcliff the Dog struggle with the heat and fall asleep in usual places. What are the strangest things your pets have done?
- By this point in the story, you have learnt about many destinations in Rarotonga. Do you have a favourite place you'd like to visit? What is it, and why?
- We finally meet the thief in chapter 17. What do you think of this billionaire? The children get some reward money. What would you do with this money?
- In the final chapter, the children get to play the drums. Find some drums and take turns to create some unusual rhythms!
- Having read the book, which of the characters do you like the best, and why? Are any of the characters in any way like yourself?



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