

***The Hottest Boy Who Ever Lived* by Anna Fienberg and Kim Gamble**

This is a beautiful parable which shows that shared humanity can overcome seemingly irreconcilable differences. Deceptively simple, it is the story of Hector, forged in a volcano and *'too hot to handle'*. He lives alone in the jungle with only Minton the salamander for company, and he is *'bone-achingly' lonely*. He longs for human conversation, and for the touch of another. Even eight and nine year olds will recognise the poignancy of this situation, despite the appeal of Hector's freedom, his exotic diet of mangoes and pineapples, and the lure of having *'no one to tell him to go to bed'*.

A cathartic storm brings release from this torment. He is washed up far away in a land of extreme cold, where the Vikings live. Here he meets Gilda, a girl with golden hair – and an intrepid adventuress. She's not afraid of Hector, and when she grips his hand in welcome she is warm for the first time in her life. With her help he overcomes the fear and distrust of the adults and when he breathes life back into a child who had fallen into the ice, he earns a place in their community. He warms their icy water, he toasts barley cakes and chestnuts on his hands, and for some, he just hugs them *'till their toes tingle.'*

Feinberg's whimsical imagination sees these two friends eventually set up in business together as *Hector's Heating and Hot Water Service*, spending their evenings in storytelling and planning for future adventures!

The full colour illustrations are enchanting, and will ensure that this lovely book appeals to children of all ages.

Highly recommended.

Lisa Hill, Mossgiel Park Primary School, VIC

Anna Fienberg has done it again!

In this new edition of her 1993 book, she shows how Hector lives on a volcanic island. He is a very lonely, lonely boy whose only companion is Minton, a Salamander. They have been together for years.

Hector has never known family, human friends, or anything else – just Minton. That's not too bad, but he craves companionship for other people. The trouble is, everything he touches burns. He is just SO HOT!

One night there was a violent storm and both he and Milton were swept away on a log. They floated for miles and miles until they were rescued by Gilda, a cool [and attractive] Viking warrior.

She took them to her home in this strange cold land. The other Vikings didn't like him all that much and blamed all the bad things happening on him.

Then one day, he revives a baby who had fallen into the ice water, just by blowing gently on her cheeks, hands and feet. The baby became pink and warm, and Hector became not only a hero to his new friends [especially after some more special treats for them!], but finally found companionship and friendship for the first time in his life.

A lovely story every primary student would read.

Pauline Dunn, Mountain District Christian School, VIC

The Hottest Boy Who Ever Lived by Anna Fienberg and Kim Gamble is a short book for young readers about a boy called Hector and his pet salamander Minton. This simple tale explores the concepts of being different and wanting to belong. Hector *'burned like a volcano'* and has never had a *'cuddle'* with anyone before. A storm sweeps him out to sea and he meets Gila the Adventurer – a Viking girl – who takes him to her village in the ice. Because Hector is so different the villagers ostracise him calling him a *'demon'*, *'dragon'* and *'evil'*. He is blamed when any misfortune is suffered by the villagers. Hector becomes sad until the day he uses his body heat to revive a child that falls into the ice. The villagers embrace his difference and skills

and Gilda opens up a business called 'Hector's Heating and Hot Water Service' to warm up other villages as well. This book is colourfully illustrated with water paint style pictures. The simple morals relate to children and can be used as discussion points in the classroom. The story provokes questions of identity and belonging – how people treat others who are different and how having family and friends is important. Students could write short creative pieces such as – imagining that they have a special power that could help others or a personal piece about being lonely – as Hector says 'I'm lonelier here amongst all these people, than I ever was in my treehouse'. This book could provoke discussions on name calling, bullying and isolating others in the playground/classroom. I enjoyed reading this story and liked the simple messages that it promotes.

Charlotte Pyers, VIC