

# Home Child

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Illustrated by Trish Bowles



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## Teacher Resource

‘Tears were close as I talked to the class about where I had come from. The way I spoke, my accent, the words I used, made me different from everyone else.’

*Home Child* is the true story of Pat Brown, whose father made the heart-wrenching decision in 1950 to send his children from London to New Zealand for a better life.

The four children enjoyed their ship voyage from Britain, not knowing that they would never be going home again — nor that only Pat and her sister would be staying together when they were fostered by Kiwi families.

In this book Pat retells her story to her granddaughter Sarah Rose.

### Background information

For 350 years Britain transported human cargo around the world to populate the colonies. Most went between 1860 and 1920 but it was as late as 1967 when the shipping finally stopped. Children as young as three were shipped abroad. The children were gathered from across Britain and taken to major ports such as London and Glasgow, Liverpool and Southampton. They were given a trunk of new clothes and shipped off to their new homes. The vast majority never returned.

The children were from children’s homes, council care, or from deprived situations, perhaps where parents were unable to care for them and thought they would be better off abroad. To the organising charities at that time it may have seemed to be the best thing for the children, a chance for a new and better life. But many children were deceived into thinking their parents were dead, and parents who tried to trace their

children were told that they had been adopted and nothing could be done.

Approximately 100,000 children were sent to Canada, over 7000 to Australia, and several hundred to New Zealand and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The migrating children did not know what to expect. They faced the future with fear and excitement. They were promised new places, new sights. The children enjoyed the luxury of the ship journeys but on their arrival they faced foreign lands and often harsh conditions. They had no idea that they were going away forever.

Some of the children lived good lives, but a great many faced very difficult circumstances, growing up with abuse, a sense of loss and loneliness, a lack of identity and a sense of betrayal. They had lost their families, and their heritage. In 2010 the British Government extended a formal apology to the child migrants.

## Questions

Why is Sarah Rose so determined for her Gran to tell the story again?

Why did Pat's father let his children go to New Zealand?

Why do you think the author decided to write Pat's story as a picture book and not as a novel?

The illustrator has painted beautiful pictures showing real people and places in this story. How do you think she managed to paint such accurate pictures?

The children were on a strange journey. Why were they so happy on the ship?

What emotions did you experience as you read the story?

What was the author's purpose? Was she trying to persuade, inform or entertain you?

Did you like the way the story ended? What did you like about it?

What are you still wondering about?

## Discussion points

The story tells of how the children felt when they were away from home. Discuss how their father might have felt as time went on.

It's interesting that the author did not mention Pat's other siblings until the end of the book. Why do you think she chose to do this?

Pat's life in New Zealand has had times of great joy and yet she still gets upset when she talks about coming to New Zealand. Discuss the reasons for this.

How do you think Pat's children and grandchildren feel about Pat being a child migrant?



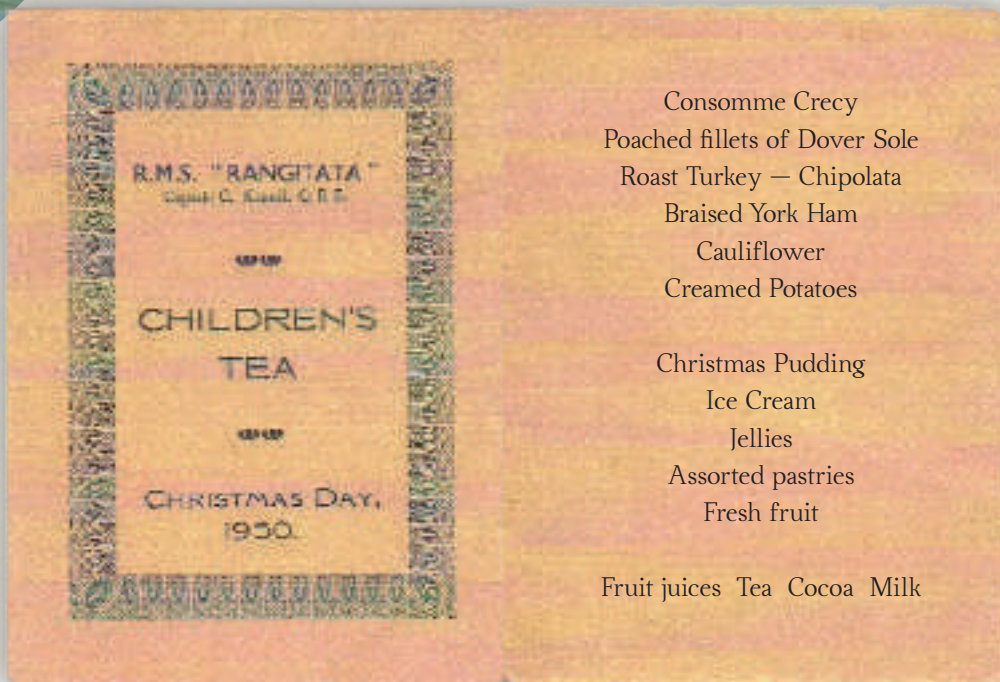
## Activities

1. Here are two posters advertising the trip from Britain to New Zealand. Make your own poster showing the route for the *Rangitata* in 1950–51, the trip that Pat and her siblings were on.



## Activities, continued

- Below is the menu for the children's Christmas dinner on board the *Rangitata* in 1950. What do you suppose Pat thought when she saw the menu? How did she feel when she went into the dining room? Even today, Pat is still unsure what 'Consomme Crecy' is. Can you help her by researching this dish? Perhaps you could make it!



- Write a letter to Mrs Pat Brown. Send your letter to Pat at: Oratia Publishing, 783 West Coast Road, Oratia, Auckland 0604. Pat will be delighted to receive your letter.

## Activities for the advanced and mature reader

- Sadly, today children are still being removed from their homelands, and from their parents. Use your research skills and discover where this is happening.
- Watch, with teacher guidance, and discuss the video *The Boy in the Lifebouy* <https://vimeo.com/6249351>
- Learn about the New Zealand Shipping company and the ships *Rangitiki*, *Rangitata* and *Rangitane*. Explore a passenger list and choose one passenger. Write a diary page for that passenger.

