

## Full Reviews

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### Barbara Murison, on her blog *Around the Bookshops* (11 Nov '14)

<http://barbaramurison.blogspot.co.nz/2014/11/health-resources-6-years-and-up.html>

On Santos's tenth birthday he wakes early to find the sun shining and a cheerfully wrapped parcel containing a pair of Moss skis on his bedside table. It is to be his last really happy time for a while because from the next day everything turns to custard when his parents begin to fight; a drought is declared on the Islands of Sallamong and Santos has to decide whether or not to shed his skin - a ritual that will determine the way he grows up. **On the surface this appears to be like any other short chapter book with an unusual and very engaging hero and an exotic location. However, it is much more than that. For children it will reinforce the comfortable truth that whatever happens to them in life (being bullied/ surviving an earthquake/ getting sick/ moving house) they will always be themselves within their own skin and nothing can change that.** This is a book that would sit very well in the NZ School Curriculum Health and Physical education resource area.



### Mamta Madhavan for Readers' Favorite (Nov '14)

A Sallamong's Story by Mona Roper is the story of Santos the Sallamong, a cute little creature. The book opens with Santos's tenth birthday where he gets a pair of moss skis as a gift. Now he is eagerly waiting for his twenty-first birthday where, as per the Sallamong tradition, he will have to dive down to the ocean floor to find the red stone which is very special to the Sallamong. Things change for Santos when drought hits his island and things become difficult at home. Along with it, the time has come for him to shed his skin for the first time. He is already excited, thinking about his skin shedding party. What will happen to him when he sheds his skin? Will he change or will he be the same Santos?

**It is an endearing story with a beautiful concept and a profound message for readers.** Life changes for Santos when he realizes that, no matter what happens externally, inside he will always remain the same person. The illustrations are bright and colorful and breathe life and movement into the story. Santos is lovable and the kids will adore him and his antics. The book has a good message and teaches kids about strength and integrity of character. I would recommend this book to parents and grandparents to read out as a bedtime story because it has a great story, a profound message and an excellent concept. It is a good book for school libraries too.



## Emily-Jane Hills Orford for Readers' Favorite (Nov '14)

Santos is a sallamong. What is a sallamong? I asked myself the same question but, after reading this delightful and very colorfully illustrated children's book, I realized that it really didn't matter what a sallamong is. It's the story that matters and the message within the story. You see, Santos has just turned 10. He is growing up and, like all sallamongs, Santos is outgrowing his clothes (in this case, his skin). He is very worried about shedding his skin. Actually, he is very worried about a lot of things as there are some unsettling events happening in his world. He seeks out his grandmother for help and understanding and, with her help, he realizes that the changes and difficulties around him and the shedding of his skin will not change who he really is. Santos will always be Santos, no matter what he looks like, no matter how difficult life becomes. And, most importantly, Santos will always be loved by his family and his friends.

This is a very lighthearted, easy-to-read picture book/early chapter book, that allows young readers to share in Santos's uncertainty and to learn with him that we are all unique and important and beautiful in our uniqueness. **At a time when so many young people look critically at themselves, even at the very young age of 10, Mona Roper has written a story that helps us all, young and old, to understand the importance of being ourselves, just like Santos came to understand in the end. As Santos sings his little song, we can all agree, "I've always been me, I'll always be me."**



## Jack Magnus for Readers' Favorite (Nov '14)

A Sallamong's Story is a children's book written and illustrated by Mona Roper. Santos, a Sallamong, is excited when he wakes up on his tenth birthday. He sees a brightly wrapped present on the table next to his bed. When he opens it, he finds a new pair of moss skis, which means he can ski down the mossy hills to school. Now that Santos is 10, he can also shed his skin. It's pretty easy to do; he just has to stand on the bump on his head for a few minutes each night for four nights to make it happen. His parents have promised that once he sheds his skin, he'll be allowed to ski down Big Bill, the tallest hill around. Santos is worried about the changes that will happen when he sheds that skin; he wonders if he'll still be himself. While he debates shedding, his skin gets tighter and tighter until it's hard for him to move around at all. His grandmother tells him about a caterpillar who had the same fears about spinning a cocoon.

**Mona Roper's children's tale, A Sallamong's Story, is marvelous.** Santos has the normal fears and worries that any ten-year-old has: are his parents fighting because of something he did and will growing up mean he changes? His grandmother calmly and kindly shares her wisdom with him and the reader. Santos' story is accompanied by Roper's wonderful watercolors. My favorites are the nature scenes, especially the picture of Santos swimming in the sea to find a Redstone and the outdoor scenes at his grandmother's house. Each picture brings to life the story being told and does so simply and eloquently. A Sallamong's Story made me smile as I read it, and I think anyone who does have the good fortune to come across Roper's heartwarming tale will be smiling as well. **It's highly recommended.**

★★★★★ **Mariana Farcas, Goodreads (Nov '14)**

A Sallamong's Story deals with children's insecurities and how they should react to their own and grown ups problems. What to do when your parents fight? What to do when you don't feel comfortable in your own skin? A great book to anticipate difficult situations in the family.

★★★★★ **Devi Nair, Amazon.com (Feb '15)**

**Amazing story and Amazing book hands!!**

Children's stories are always endearing, even if it is a soft copy to be read on an e-book reader. But when it is in hard-copy and you can see the cartoons and drawings on high-definition and the spacing of the words, clarity, smoothness of the page, colourful cover page, it is just an experience unlike anything else. The reading experience heightens and the pleasure of it, even for an adult, is so amazing. So, before anything, a special thanks to Mona Roper for agreeing to provide a hard copy for review and sending it all the way to India. I finished the book half an hour after receiving it. That is how much the book cover and a glance inside made me love the book.

Santos is a 10-year-old Sallamong, and is how a normal 10-year-old Sallamong is expected to be – cute, naughty, adorable and thinks the world of his parents and grand parents. Now at the age of 10, Sallamong's shed their skin. Santos has mixed feelings of shedding. The story is about how a child handles a conflicting matter and how the adults around children should handle such conflicts efficiently.

The story is beautifully illustrated with a colourful, wonderful drawing at every page. These drawings help imagine and picture the happenings of the story very nicely. The words are really easy to understand, which kids can try to read themselves too. The family bonding shown in the story is really cute. "Green glow" of pride of the grandparents in the end is just beautiful.

Since everything is mentioned, I have to mention that the printing quality of the book is unparalleled. The cover page drawing is very catchy. The paper quality is beautiful. The shine of the pages and smoothness is another thing that drove me to read it so soon. Very light yet very nicely done. The book is a complete package.

Review by Devi Nair on her website: <https://theverdictsout.wordpress.com/2015/02/26/book-review-of-a-sallamong-s-story-by-mona-roper/>

★★★★★ **Davor Dimoski, Goodreads (May '15)**

At the end of the book it says "Written for 6 to 10-year-olds and older folks who are young at heart" - I found myself in the latter category. This book holds an important message for kids - that change is good. The illustrations are beautiful and along with the story they capture the reader's attention.