Shake a Leg

Three hungry friends follow their noses to Bertie’s Pizzeria in Far North Queensland and get an entertaining lesson in Italian and in the origin of Murri (native Australian) dances while their pizza is made. The story content is unusual (refreshingly so) but easy to follow. A great deal of thought has been put into the production of this book and to excellent effect. The mix of comic strip and full double page illustrations with text overlaid works very well. It’s helped by very subtle use of colour to distinguish between the two elements of the narrative: what’s happening now at Bertie’s Pizzeria and his explanation of aboriginal cultural traditions and the stories behind the dances. The boys learn some Italian and aboriginal words along the way. The illustrations draw us in to the cultural heritage being narrated by Bertie. There’s a lightness of touch in the writing and it keeps the reader absorbed throughout, right to the superb end pages where strength of cultural identity and close-knit family ties come through exuberantly. The boys eat their pizza, get painted up with flour, water and tomato sauce and learn to dance, to *warrima*, to shake a leg. A super title.

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