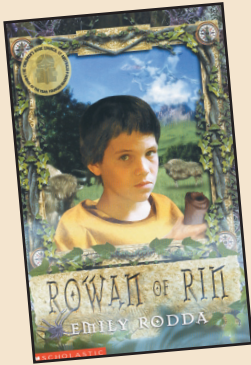


ROWAN OF RIN

by Emily Rodda



A LITERATURE UNIT BY KIM BANFFY,
WITH HELP FROM JOE BANFFY

INTRODUCTION

This unit is suitable for Upper Primary classes and is an excellent way to start off the year for the following reasons:

- It is a fast-moving story that quickly pulls readers and listeners in.
- It takes the form of a journey, which can be likened to the journey of the school year ahead.
- With the use of the 'Challenge Rhyme' written by Emily Rodda, this unit can form the basis of each student's personal goals for the year, thus providing students with something to aim towards. This provides a framework for a focussed, sequential learning pattern that caters for growth in seven of Howard Gardner's (1989) Areas of Intelligence.

PREAMBLE

In writing this unit we sought to provide a springboard from which teachers could 'dive off' and swim with their own ideas. The possibilities with this kind of teaching are endless. It revitalises our work practices and the children whom we teach can't help but catch our enthusiasm. It's contagious!

The ideas we have included have been used in our own classrooms with great success. Some are a conglomeration of activities that one or another of us has used independently and we realised in hindsight would have worked well together.

I am grateful to Emily Rodda for writing the 'Challenge Rhyme' when we were doing our unit on Rowan of Rin. It provided a focus for a previously unfocussed group for an entire year. I know they don't realise quite how fortunate they were, but perhaps they will in years to come.

Good luck with the units. We hope they provide a stimulus for your own literature units, and that they will relieve some of the drudgery of paperwork in order to enable you to channel your energy into teaching!

UNIT OUTLINE

This unit has been designed around a teacher reading of Rowan of Rin to a class, and for class activities to flow from there. If two teachers on the same grade were to bring classes together for this reading time, this could also be a springboard for whole-grade team-

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Teacher Notes for Rowan of Rin Series

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building activities. If teachers so desire, spelling words can be drawn from the text. We planned a class camp outside the classroom as an extension of the unit. This included team-building games and a personal-development focus. We returned from the camp to the classroom to set our goals for the year.

The challenge and contract are made achievable by covering some of the areas in focus studies on specific KLAs, eg for Naturalist Intelligence (Gardner 1989) the whole class completed the 'Earthkeepers™' program as a three-day excursion (see the list at the end of this unit for sites that conduct this excellent excursion).

We found it to be most effective to post the contracts (signed by both students and teachers) to parents at the end of Term One. To post the contracts, rather than sending them home via the students, ensured that parents actually received them and that they were made a part of the decision-making process as far as students' goals were concerned. This ensured the challenge took on more serious proportions in the students' minds.

Students then returned their contracts, complete with parents' signatures, in the first week of Term Two. We then gave each student a copy of their completed contract to keep in a prominent place at home. Original copies of the contracts were retained by the class teacher, and each area of the contract was signed and dated as related tasks were completed.

In Term Four, a special awards ceremony was planned for the presentation of awards. Every student who fulfilled all areas of the challenge received a medallion inscribed with 'Seven tasks fulfil your quest' on one side and their name on the other. They also received a certificate signed by their teacher and principal. (If the medallions prove too expensive there are other, less costly alternatives, such as terracotta discs, dog tags or wall plaques.)

Those who only completed parts of The Challenge received certificates specifying which areas they had completed, signed by the teacher and the principal.

OUTCOMES

Values and Attitudes

Students will:

- Create a range of spoken and written texts.
- Experience and respond to a range of spoken and written texts.
- Experiment with different aspects of spoken and written language.
- Show confidence in using language in a variety of contexts.
- Use language to respond to, support and encourage others.

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- Choose to use language to communicate, to express ideas and feelings, to explore and to inquire.
- Show independence in using and learning language.
- Choose to reflect on and share experiences of text.
- Explore the fact that people with different personalities have different and equally acceptable strengths and weaknesses, and methods of coping with shared situations (personal development link).

Talking and Listening

The following outcomes are the Stage Three Outcomes from the NSW English Syllabus, hence the references in brackets next to them.

Students will:

- Communicate effectively for a range of purposes and with a variety of audiences to express well-developed, well-organised ideas dealing with more challenging topics. (TS3.1)
- Interact productively and with autonomy in pairs and groups of various sizes and composition and use effective oral presentation skills and strategies and listen attentively. (TS3.2)
- Discuss ways in which spoken language differs from written language and how spoken language varies according to different contexts. (TS3.3)

Reading

The following outcomes are the Stage Three Outcomes from the NSW English Syllabus, hence the references in brackets next to them.

Students will:

- Read independently an extensive range of texts with increasing content demands and respond to themes and issues. (RS3.5)
- Use a comprehensive range of skills and strategies appropriate to the type of text being read. (RS3.6)
- Critically analyse techniques used by writers to create certain effects, to use language creatively, to position the reader in various ways and to construct different interpretations of experience. (RS3.7)
- Identify text structure of a wider range of more complex text types and discuss how the characteristic grammatical features work to influence readers' and viewers' understanding of texts. (RS3.8)

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Writing

The following outcomes are the Stage Three Outcomes from the NSW English Syllabus, hence the references in brackets next to them.

Students will:

- Produce a wide range of well-structured and well-presented literary and factual texts for a wide variety of purposes and audiences using increasingly challenging topics, ideas, issues and written language features. (WS3.9)
- Use knowledge of sentence-structure, grammar and punctuation to edit own writing. (WS3.10)
- Spell most common words accurately and use a range of strategies to spell unfamiliar words. (WS3.11)
- Produce texts in a fluent and legible style and use computer technology to present these effectively in a variety of ways. (WS3.12)
- Critically analyse own texts in terms of how well they have been written, how effectively they present the subject matter, and how they influence the reader. (WS3.13)
- Critically evaluate how own texts have been structured to achieve their purpose and discuss ways of using related grammatical features and conventions of written language to shape readers' and viewers' understanding of texts. (WS3.14)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Bloom's taxonomy was used as a guide for the activities, hence the headings. There are plenty of other possible related activities, so feel free to improvise. Often the best activities spring from following the interests of students.

Knowledge

- Make a list of the main events of the story by constructing a story map.
- Find the meaning of the following words from the story: parchment, quest, precious, exhaustion. (This could, of course, be done with other words, but the class teacher is the best judge of which words to include.)
- Look at the secret messages that were revealed to Rowan on his journey. Why were they only revealed to Rowan? In what way were they similar?
- Describe what happened when Rowan met the dragon.
- Explain why the sweet water had stopped flowing to Rin.

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- Tell why each of these characters had to return to Rin: Val, Ellis, Bronden, Allun, Marlie.
- What happened when Marlie and Allun returned to Rin and spoke to Val and Ellis?
- Who was it that announced Rowan's bravery to the rest of the village?
- Cite the incidents that tested Rowan's bravery along his journey.

Comprehension

- Put yourself in the shoes of a character and write an account of how and when that character's heart broke—from their viewpoint, ie in the first person.
- Read Chapter three, paragraph 1. Discuss the way in which Jiller reacts to Rowan's injury. Does Jiller act as you would expect a mother to act towards her son? Why do you think it is so important to the people of Rin to hide their feelings?
- Discuss Sheba's riddle. What do you think it means? At the beginning of the story, who did you think the 'bravest heart' was going to be?
- Did Rowan change over the course of his journey, or was it other people's perceptions that changed?
- What is a phobia? Find out what these phobias are: agoraphobia, claustrophobia, arachnophobia, hydrophobia, mysophobia.
- Was there a person on the quest who didn't have a fear or a phobia? Write down what you thought were each character's fears.
- What was Rowan's phobia?
- What was different about Rowan compared with the others on the quest when it came to their phobias?
- Write a description of true bravery.
- Write what you think could happen next in Rin.

Application

- Find as many words as you can in the text that Emily Rodda has used instead of 'said'. There are many! You could read out appropriate parts of the book so that students can record words used instead of 'said' (chapter two is a particularly good one to read aloud). At the end of the reading, a class list could be compiled.
- Make a diorama of a favourite scene in the story.

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- Draw what you think the spider forest looked like. Use only black and white in your illustration. Discuss how to draw trees in different ways and the fact that if the effect wanted is spooky then the 'lollipop' kind of tree that many children draw is not really appropriate. Encourage students to draw each branch of each tree and to not worry too much about foliage. Having done this, and looked at examples of how artists portray trees, the teacher should read the chapter about the spider forest out loud.

Encourage students to draw whilst you are reading. The chapter may need to be read aloud a couple of times. Finished drawings should take several sessions, and can be touched up using a silver pen to highlight the spider webs. Some students may elect to use only lead pencil for this exercise. Others might use black felt-tipped pens. Either produces great results. Emphasise to students that they should listen to the description a few times as you read it out, and then attempt their drawings. The beauty of this exercise is that students don't have to copy anything from reality and therefore don't risk being ridiculed because of poor copying skills-it is all from their imagination.

Playing contemplative music whilst students draw sometimes aids the process. Don't allow conversation-they need to concentrate. You will be amazed at the results.

- Write a description of one of the characters in the story, but don't reveal whom you are describing. Your description should be so good that we can guess who it is!

OR

One of the book characters has gone missing. You must make a 'wanted' poster with an illustration as well as a detailed description of the person's appearance and character.

Analysis

- What was the main theme of the story? Were there any other themes?
If so, what were they?
- What was the climax of the story?
- Explain how you think Rowan's life would have changed due to his adventure.
- Which events in the story could not really happen?

Synthesis

- Write a conversation between two spiders in the forest as they see the travellers approaching. Try to use alternative words for 'said'.
- Write an encyclopedia entry, describing what a bukshah looks like, its habitat, country and region of origin, eating and breeding habits, gestation period and reasons why people keep them, ie for products such as cheese and wool. Illustrate your entry.
(See Chapter 2, pages 13,14)

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- Write a recipe for Hoopberry Pie (*Chapter 1, page 9*)
- The camp and related activities fit into this area. See the separate section entitled 'Class Camp'.
- After each time the book is read to the class, ask students to imagine they are Rowan and to keep journal entries of their journey, describing what has happened, and how they feel about what happened and the reactions of the others in their party.
- You are the nightly television newsreader in Rin.
 1. Write and read aloud your news report of the night it was discovered that the water had stopped flowing to Rin.
 2. Write and read your news report bringing the news of the return of the water and the quest party.

Evaluation

- We all have fears or dislikes that we avoid-things that prevent us being the best we can be. Think about things you avoid, or the fears you have. How would you have felt if you were in Rowan's position when he:
 - climbed the cliff?
 - walked through the spider forest?
 - crossed the swamp?
 - crawled through the cave?
 - met the dragon?
 - slid down the watercourse to Rin?
 - was re-united with Star and greeted by the people of Rin?
- Design a new dust jacket for Rowan of Rin, including a blurb for the back cover. Remember you need to divulge just enough to lure readers without giving the story away;

OR

Write a book report about Emily Rodda's Rowan of Rin.

- This unit greatly lends itself to building self-esteem. Rowan, the seemingly 'weakest' member of the expedition, ended up being the hero. Play Mariah Carey's song 'Hero' to the class and discuss the meaning of the words.

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CLASS CAMP

The camp should take place at the end of the term, when the unit is nearly complete.

What you need

- Seven flags on poles
- Beads for zipper tags
- Zipper tags-one for each child
- Emily Rodda 'Challenge Rhyme' written large on cardboard and made to look aged
- Old shoeboxes for dioramas
- Medallions inscribed with 'Seven tasks fulfil your quest'
- Contract sheets-enough for one per student and plenty of spares for final copies

What to do

Name your campsite to set the tone for the camp. Our camp was called 'Bungawarra'. Each student received a booklet (journal) containing pages of lined paper, with an attractive natural-looking border on which they could write. There were a couple of blank pages for drawing, and a page at the end for writing personal goals. The front page was as follows:

While you're at Bungawarra, you'll have the opportunity to earn beads for your zipper-tag. The colours are listed below. You'll notice that each deed mentioned starts with one of the letters of the word 'Bungawarra'. Any of the adults who are with us on camp can award the beads for acts that they think are worthy of reward.

You can only earn each bead once.



BRAVERY... *long beige bead*



UNITY—*working as a team ... yellow bead*



NATURAL WORLD—*appreciating and/or caring for nature... orange bead*



GOOD DEEDS FOR OTHERS ... *long pink bead*



APPLICATION—*having a 'go' ... round brown bead*



WILLINGNESS TO CO-OPERATE ... *red bead*



AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF OTHERS ... *round pink bead*



RESPECT ... *purple bead*



RESPONSIBILITY ... *green bead*



APPRECIATION OF PEOPLE, THEIR TIME, THE ENVIRONMENT ... *long brown bead.*



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CHALLENGE RHYME

by Emily Rodda

*Seven tasks fulfil your quest,
Seven feats your hearts will test:
To bend your mind, to strive and win,
To live inside another's skin,
To test your body, strength and will,
To let your soul with music fill,
To learn how people live and grow,
To feel the Earth's beat; soft and slow,
To shape real beauty all your own.
In just a year how you'll have grown.
You'll look and see what you have done,
And know your quest is truly won.*

The camp can follow your own program to a large extent, but it is important to:

- Provide plenty of opportunities for personal growth. Perhaps trying something that was previously not attempted, eg the flying fox, could result in a student receiving their bravery bead, if it was something that really provided a challenge for them.
- Provide time (about twenty minutes each day—yes, twenty!) for children to sit quietly, alone in their own special places to write in their journals. No child should be within three metres of another. A bushy place, or a place at the edge of a creek is ideal, but you should have, say, three adults interspersed amongst them.

During this time, students are not to speak. They may draw, write, or just sit quietly and contemplate their surroundings. Early morning, about 6 am, is a good time.

- Provide times for team games and team problem-solving opportunities.
- Have a campfire on the last night and, while children are seated around it, have someone deliver the scroll (containing Emily Rodda's rhyme on it) just before it's time to retire. The scroll should be old-looking (burnt at the edges), and contain the Challenge Rhyme. It should be addressed to the class at the campsite, and be from Emily Rodda. It is important not to tell students what it means at this point. Act as if you haven't seen it before, and as if it is a mystery to you as well as them. Encourage students to postulate about what they think it means. Retire for supper and display the Challenge Rhyme on the dining-room wall.
- The day after the campfire, while everyone is eating breakfast, have someone set up seven flags of different colours, spread several hundred metres apart, up hill and down dale, each with one specific challenge-area task attached to the flagpole. Explain to the class before dismissing them from breakfast that they have a task to complete. Divide the class into seven groups and explain that each group is to search for a specific flag,

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discuss what they find there, and bring back the information to the whole class. Ideally, not all flags will be visible from the base-point. Each group should decide who their spokesperson is to be. It is good to have an adult with each group, not to lead the discussion but to ensure that it stays 'on track'.

- After thirty to forty-five minutes has elapsed, signal the groups to return to base and present their findings to the class. Have the class discuss their findings. The discussion should take place where the Challenge Rhyme is visible. Children will begin to draw parallels with the rhyme. Lead the discussion about how Emily Rodda has sent the class on their own 'quest' for the year.
- After this, break for journal-writing, this time specifically for students to contemplate their own personal goals for the year's quest, and to write down ideas.
- On your next day back at school, provide students with their contract sheets, and encourage them to write rough drafts before completing them. When the final copies are complete, have students sign them, and you should also sign them. Collect the sheets, for posting to parents.

EARTHKEEPERS™ PROGRAM

Sites at which the 'Earthkeepers' program is conducted:

NSW

Sawpit Creek Education Centre
Kosciusko National Park
Glengarry Girl Guide Centre, Turramurra 2074
Ellison Public School, Springwood 2777
Warrimoo Public School, Warrimoo 2774

ACT

Birrigai Outdoor School, Tharwa

VICTORIA

Contact the Victorian Girl Guides

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Accompany Outdoors (Tel: 0883468850)
South Australian Girl Guides

TASMANIA

Contact the Tasmanian Girl Guides

QUEENSLAND

Contact Rod Dann at Stanley River Environmental Education Centre, Kilcoy