



## OMNIBUS BOOKS

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*Jodie: The Book of You*

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*The Friendship Matchmaker Goes*

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*The Friendship Matchmaker*

(Omnibus Books, 2011)

*Buzz Off!* (Omnibus Books, 2011)

# Teachers' Notes

## Rania The Book of You

Randa Abdel-Fattah

Teachers' Notes by Rae Carlyle

### Contents

Introduction.....	2
About the Author .....	2
Reading the Text .....	2
After Reading the Text .....	6
Extension Activities .....	7

## Introduction

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Art-loving Rania thinks that right now, life just couldn't get better. True, her father died before she was born, so it has just been her and her mother for her whole life, but she tells herself that you can't miss someone you have never met. And Rania's life is full. She has been helping with all the artistic components of her mum's business that they both love, her teacher has recommended that she should run for school captain, and to make things even better her uncle and his family are moving to Rania's area, and her cousin Andrea will not only be going to the same school, but might even be in the same class as Rania! But when the mysterious *Book of You* starts leaving cryptic messages, Rania is filled with confusion. The book and its riddles helped her friend Jodie when she was struggling, but Rania's life is about as good as it could be – isn't it? This second story in *The Book of You* series explores the reality of friendship, families and personal identity, and Rania's learning to understand herself and develop empathy others' problems is both engaging and a captivating read.

## About the Author

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Randa Abdel-Fattah is the award-winning author of the novels *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, *Ten Things I Hate About Me*, *Where the Streets Had a Name*, *Noah's Law* and *No Sex in the City*, and books for younger readers *The Friendship Matchmaker*, *The Friendship Matchmaker Goes Undercover* and *Buzz Off!* Randa is published around the world and regularly gives talks and workshops at schools and writers' festivals in Australia and overseas. She lives in Sydney with her husband, Ibrahim, and their three children. A former lawyer, Randa is also a human rights activist and is currently undertaking a PhD in sociology. You can find more about Randa and her books at [www.randaabdefattah.com](http://www.randaabdefattah.com).

## Reading the Text

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### Part 1

#### *Class Discussion*

After reading the first two chapters, as a class discuss the story so far.

- 1) Who are the characters we have met in the first two chapters?
- 2) What do we know about them?
- 3) What happened to the main characters in the previous book? How do we know this?
- 4) Why is the series called *The Book of You*?
- 5) What challenges do you think Rania might face in the rest of the book? Why do you think this?

### *Research Task*

Rania's mother, just like Rania, loves art. She has her own wedding business, where she makes invitations, decorations, furniture coverings and jewellery. When Rania grows up, she also intends to have an art-related career. In pairs or small groups, make a list of as many different careers as you can think of that contain a strong artistic component. Once you have your list, use the internet to research what other art-based possibilities there might be. (Hint: Try looking at websites associated with art courses such as universities, TAFEs and institutes of technology.) Remember, not all art-based careers are going to involve paint and paper, or producing artworks for an exhibition in a gallery. Sign painters, interior decorators, book illustrators or webpage designers can also be artists and use their artistic ability and knowledge in their work. Choose one career from your list and write a brief paragraph explaining exactly why it is an art-related career.

### *Literary Component*

*Rania: The Book of You* is the second in a series. When reading a book that is part of a series, sometimes it is necessary to have read the first book in order for the second book to make sense. In this series, however, while the events in the second book take place after the events in the first one, the story can be enjoyed without having read *Jodie: The Book of You*. Randa Abdel-Fattah has used a variety of techniques to set the scene, and maintain the reader's interest in the current story, at the same time giving the reader enough information about what happened in book one so that the action in book two can be understood. Make a list in bullet points of all the information about Rania and her friends that has been presented to the reader in the first two chapters. Once your list is made, categorise the items based on whether or not they are new to the reader, or if they are a recap/retelling of events and facts from the first book. If you have read *Jodie*, then you should also identify where old information has been expanded upon to give a more complete picture (such as Rania talking about her love of colour, and how she feels about art), and hypothesise as to why the author might have chosen these things to focus on in *Rania* rather than in *Jodie*. If you have not read book one, you will need to state what your reasoning was when deciding a paragraph, sentence or phrase was a recap of previously told events, or was more likely to be new information.

Share your lists, hypotheses, and reasons with the class, then as a class use the individual assignments as the basis for creating a class-poster titled 'Starting a Sequel', which discusses the different features that class members have identified.

## **Part 2**

### *Class Discussion*

When Rania discovers that her cousin Andrea will be going to her school, and also be in her class, she is overjoyed. But when she finds out that Andrea is also going to run for school captain she feels hurt and betrayed, and as if Andrea is trying to take something away from her. Andrea doesn't understand why Rania is so upset – after all, to Andrea, running for school captain (and either winning or becoming vice captain) is just something she needs to do to make her scholarship application for Vista Grammar more competitive.

Both girls are confused and upset by the way the other one is behaving, and even when they talk about it, they find it hard to understand each other's point of view. As a class discuss the relationship between Andrea and Rania, and what makes it hard for them to empathise with each other's position.

- 1) What is Rania's motivation for wanting to be school captain?
- 2) What is Andrea's reason for running for school captain?
- 3) How does Rania see the vice-captain position?
- 4) Why are their attitudes towards the campaign so different?
- 5) The difference in attitude towards the campaign for school captain is a reflection of the differences in their home lives, and in their families' attitudes. What are some of these differences?
- 6) What could they have said or done that might have made it easier to understand each other's viewpoints?

#### *Research Task*

At the end of the story Rania and Andrea end up as vice captain and school captain. It is not common for more than one member of a single family to hold an elected position, but it is also not so rare as to be unusual. Research a world leader who has a close family member who has also held an elected position within a national government. Write a brief paragraph describing your findings about them. Include:

- 1) What country they were elected in
- 2) What level of government they were involved in (local, state, federal)
- 3) Who their family member is who also held an elected position, and how they are related (father, cousin, wife, brother)
- 4) Whether the two family members held office at the same time as each other, or at different times.

#### *Literary Component*

In *Rania: The Book of You* the story is told from the perspective of Rania, and the reader only learns about how Andrea feels from Rania's thoughts, reactions, and the dialogue.

Viewpoint is an important feature in any story, and influences the reader's interpretation of events and character motivation.

Write a short story about two people who are competing for the same thing at school (it can be an elected office, or an academic prize, or a sporting achievement if you wish). In your story switch viewpoints between the two main characters with each paragraph. Remember to make sure that you describe the same events – the only difference should be how the characters experience and interpret the events, not the objective sequence of actions.

### **Part 3**

#### *Class Discussion*

The *Book of You* that Rania, Deyana, and Jodie found gives the girls cryptic advice in verse form. To use the advice, they first have to work out what the verses are referring to.

As you read the book, stop at each verse and discuss what you think it might mean. For each verse discuss:

- 1) What do you think each individual line/couplet means?
- 2) What other interpretations might there be for that line/couplet?
- 3) What has already happened in the story that might give you a clue as to what the verse is referring to?

After reading further, discuss the previous verses, where the meaning has become apparent through the action of the story.

- 1) What did the previous verse mean?
- 2) How close was the actual meaning to your guesses?
- 3) Why do you think Rania sometimes struggles to guess the meaning of the verses?
- 4) How useful is the advice that the book is giving – do you think that Rania would have managed to solve her problems without the hints and clues?

### *Research Task*

Riddles have been used as plot devices in literature for both adults and children for a long time. Research riddles, either on the internet or in your school library. Choose one riddle that appeals to you and write a brief informative paragraph about it. In your paragraph include as much information as you can find about where it comes from, when its first recorded use was, what culture it originated with, when and if it was used by another culture/in another context, and what its purpose was. Present your riddle to the class – and see if anyone can guess what the answer to the riddle is!

### *Literary Component*

In pairs or small groups, write a treasure hunt where the clues consist of a series of riddles. Make a certificate of riddle-solving prowess as the prize to be found. Remember to take care that the riddles are not too cryptic, and that the descriptions are of accessible places around the school where it will be easy to place the next clue. For example, a verse such as

*At the back of the school where the water flows,  
at recess and lunch Class 6L goes.*

might mean the next clue is hidden by the bubblers. Have a set number of clues that each group has to compose, and write them in verse form. After your clues are all written trade with another group and see if you can solve them all.

## **Part 4**

### *Class Discussion*

By the end of the story Rania has come to terms with her cousin Andrea winning the election for school captain, and is at peace with her own decisions. She and Andrea are closer than ever, and Andrea spends the weekend helping Rania make the peacock sculpture she had promised the school.

On page 170 Rania states *I was surprised by how easy it was to forgive Andrea. It was almost like my heart and head were waiting for a reason to bury the jealousy.*

- 1) What do you think Rania means by this statement?
- 2) Why is it important that she mentions both her heart and her head? (Think about the difference between thought and feeling, and why this is relevant to Rania.)
- 3) Have you ever had times in your life where something you have known or thought has been in contrast to the way you feel about something?
- 4) Why is it important to forgive people?
- 5) When we forgive someone, who benefits?

Later on Rania says *Because Andrea and I were family, we had to work even harder to understand each other.*

- 6) Do you think this statement is true?
- 7) Why might family have to work harder to understand each other than friends do?
- 8) Even though Andrea and Rania are members of the same family, their lives, opinions, and attitudes are very different. Share some of the ways that make you different from people in your own family.

### *Literary Component*

Write a short story that incorporates the themes of family and forgiveness. You can base it on your own life if you wish, or the characters can be completely fictional. Remember to include descriptions of how the characters feel about events both before and after forgiveness. Think carefully about whether your protagonist will be the person who is offered forgiveness or the one who does the forgiving. After writing the story, add a brief factual paragraph that describes why you, the author, made the choices you did – how do you think your authorial choices influenced the story? Include such things in your discussion as whether it is written in first person or third (or possibly even second person!), viewpoint, setting, conflict points, and why you chose the resolution you did.

## After Reading the Text

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### *Class Discussion*

- 1) What is your overall opinion of the book?
- 2) Why do you think this?
- 3) What was the most exciting part of the story?
- 4) Which bits did you find hardest to understand, and why?
- 5) Which character is your favourite, and why?
- 6) Who do you relate to most in the story, and who do you relate to least?
- 7) How has Rania's growing up without a father affected her? And how much of this do the people around her see?

### Literary Component

When Rania, Andrea and the others had to make a speech as part of their campaigns for election as school captain, they were all focused on trying to convince people to do something. Speeches such as this are an example of persuasive writing. Persuasive writing can be found in advertising, in newspapers, in speeches and election campaigns. The text found on the back cover of a book, or in a published catalogue, is also an example of persuasive writing.

Write a brief persuasive text about *Rania: The Book of You* that is designed to encourage other people to read it. Model your article on book catalogues and back-cover blurbs you have read that were interesting enough that you ended up buying/borrowing/reading the book. Some points to consider are:

- 1) Who is your audience, and what are their interests likely to be?
- 2) How can you capture their attention?
- 3) What can you say that makes the book sound interesting, but doesn't give too much of the story away?
- 4) How long should a persuasive text such as this be – what are the positive and negative aspects of writing something that is either too long or too short?
- 5) How can you make the story sound appealing to as wide a range of people as possible?

Finish your text with a sentence that states what you liked about *Rania: The Book of You*.

## Extension Activities

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- 1) Rania likes to use recycled materials to make her jewellery and artworks. Go through the recycling bin at home or school and make an artwork using the things you find.
- 2) Rania's father collected buttons and spoons. What other things do people collect? Research collectors and collections, and make a poster advertising the fun people have collecting something unusual.
- 3) Start a collection of your own.
- 4) Write a speech designed to persuade people to elect you to a position of responsibility. Give your speech to the class and see how many votes you can gather!
- 5) On their class trip to Bobbin Head Park, Rania and her classmates collected, identified and labelled various items they found there. Go on a trip to a place near your school that has native bushland, and see how many different types of vegetation you can identify. You may need to take drawings or photographs of leaves, bark, seeds and twigs back to school for later research online or in the library. Also note down any wildlife you see!
- 6) Rania's school used to be an orphanage a long time ago. Research the history of the oldest buildings in your town. When were they built, by whom, and for what purpose? How are they being used now? Have they been restored, or are they in their original condition?