



Teachers' Notes

FINDERS KEEPERS 2: THE TIMEKEEPER

EMILY RODDA

Teachers' Notes written by Kate Rowe

OMNIBUS BOOKS

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INTRODUCTION

The Timekeeper is a fantasy story for readers aged 8–12, and the sequel to *Finders Keepers*. In *Finders Keepers* a boy named Patrick discovers our world has a parallel dimension. This dimension is located on the other side of a wall known as the Barrier, which is invisible on our side, but shiny and smooth on the other side. Objects from our world sometimes slip through cracks in the Barrier and are mostly returned by diligent Barrier Guards working on the other side. Meanwhile a game show called *Finders Keepers* helps people from the other side find things they've lost on our side. Patrick is chosen as a Finder for the show and overcomes many obstacles to win the game and help a lot of different people along the way. The full plot of *Finders Keepers* is summarised in the introduction to *The Timekeeper*.

The Timekeeper picks up the story four days after Patrick's triumphant return from across the Barrier. Unable to contact his friends Max, Boopie and Estelle through the computer they have sent him, Patrick returns to the TV set at the Chestnut Tree Village shopping centre where he initially made contact with the *Finders Keepers* game show. There he is called back to help solve a crisis: the Barrier is being torn apart by a problem with the Chestnut Tree Village clock. This huge and unusual clock is in fact a Sector Timekeeper: it doesn't just tell time, it controls time, and keeps it running smoothly. If it breaks down, both worlds will ultimately be destroyed. To fix the clock, Patrick needs to find its owner and creator, and find out what has gone wrong. But who is the clockmaker, and what has happened to her? Patrick's quest becomes even more urgent when his little brother Danny and older sister Claire are accidentally transported across to the other side of the Barrier. How can he save them both and also save the world? Through his adventures, Patrick learns again about the importance of family and the value of cooperation, and he finds that everyone has something to offer, even the people you might least expect.

The Timekeeper was an Australian Children's Book Council Notable Book, and *Finders Keepers* won the Australian Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award for Younger Readers in 1991. Together, the books were made into a ten-part series for ABC TV.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Rodda's real name is Jennifer Rowe. She was born in Sydney and completed an MA (Hons) in English Literature at Sydney University in 1973. She worked in publishing for

many years, as an editor and then a publisher at Angus & Robertson, before becoming the editor of the *Australian Women's Weekly* magazine in 1988.

Always a keen reader and writer, Emily began writing children's stories in her spare time to entertain her young daughter Kate. She submitted her first manuscript to Angus & Robertson using a pseudonym – her grandmother's name, Emily Rodda – to make sure that she got an honest opinion of her work from her colleagues. This book, *Something Special*, won the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award, as did four other of her books in subsequent years: *Pigs Might Fly*, *The Best-Kept Secret*, *Finders Keepers*, and *Rowan of Rin*.

A full-time writer since 1992, Emily Rodda has published over ninety books. In recent times she is best known for the popular *Deltora Quest* fantasy series, which has sold more than any other Australian series, has been made into a successful animated TV series in Japan, and is published in over thirty countries around the world. Her latest books include *The Key to Rondo* and *The Wizard of Rondo*, both of which have been shortlisted for the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award.

In 1995 Emily Rodda won the prestigious Dromkeen Medal. The judges of the award said of her that she 'maintains a prolific writing schedule, continues to provide a role model in promoting children's literature, and still spends many hours sharing her love of books with children and educators'. She has also won many different kids' choice awards across Australia.

Emily has also written seven murder mysteries for adults under her real name, Jennifer Rowe. Her favourite hobbies are reading and writing stories. She has four children and lives in the Blue Mountains with her husband.

For further information, please consult Emily Rodda's online biography at <<http://www.emilyrodda.com>>.

WRITING STYLE

The themes of *The Timekeeper* will appeal to both boys and girls, and many students will relate to the problems Patrick experiences. The two different time streams and the characters are vividly described, and the story is carefully plotted, making both sides of the Barrier equally believable.

BEFORE READING THE TEXT

Emily Rodda is very interested by the idea of time. She says she came up with the idea for *The Timekeeper* because she was thinking about how strange it is that time seems to go by very slowly when you're waiting and waiting for something to happen, whereas at more exciting times it seems to go by very quickly!

Before reading *The Timekeeper*, students could discuss occasions in their lives where time has seemed to move very slowly, and occasions when it went very quickly. Does time really slow down and speed up, or is it just their perception that changes?

READING THE TEXT

The teacher might like to read the first chapters to the class, and ask the first comprehension questions orally, either for students to work on alone or in pairs, or as part of a class discussion. The teacher could continue to read the text or ask the students to continue reading on their own.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TEXT

Please note that many of these questions ask for opinions in order to help students engage with the text, and therefore may not have one 'right' answer. It would be a good idea for each student to answer these questions alone and then compare notes with a partner or with the class.

Chapters 1–4:

- Start a character chart with four columns. These columns should be headed *Name*, *Appearance*, *Personality* and *Relationship to Patrick*. Fill in the chart for the characters you meet in the first four chapters, and every major character you meet afterwards. If you don't have enough information to fill in one of the boxes, just leave it blank till later in the story.
- What is so special about Patrick's computer?
- What has gone wrong in the four days Patrick has been away from his house?
- What unusual things have gone wrong with the Chestnut Tree Village clock?

Chapters 5–8:

- The scene on the other side of the Barrier is scary to Patrick. Why?

- According to Ruby, why is Eleanor Doon hanging around the Barrier?
- What is a Sector Timekeeper?
- Why is Max worried about the clockmaker?

Chapters 9–12:

- What happened to Anna Varga at the moment the Chestnut Tree Village clock struck ten twice? How might you explain this?
- Describe the relationship between the Barrier-combers and the Agents. What does each group want, and why does this create problems?

Chapters 13–16:

- How did Anna Varga keep time before she built her clock? Why did she build the clock in the first place?
- What is the problem with the clock, according to Anna Varga and the plans?
- Describe the inside of Eleanor Doon's house.

Chapters 17–20:

- What surprising thing does Eleanor Doon do to help? Why do you think she does it?
- How does Danny help save the day?
- What is Patrick's prize this time?

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

1. ART

- Draw a picture of your favourite character from *The Timekeeper*, using clues from the book to make them look exactly how you think the author describes them.
- Make a collage showing the huge Barrier break in Chapter 5. You will need to find something shiny (e.g. aluminium foil) to look like the Barrier, and draw and cut out the Guards. You can use small real objects to represent the things falling through the Barrier or make your own (e.g. cut out small socks from pieces of felt or cardboard).
- Is there a special clock in your house, or maybe in a relative's house? You may like to use this as inspiration for your own Sector Timekeeper. Would it be a

cuckoo clock? A digital clock? Or something really unusual? You can draw the clock, or build it out of found materials. (The clock doesn't have to work, but make sure you explain what happens when it strikes the hour!)

- Max says that clockmakers like Anna Varga are 'odd beings'. We know from her description of building the clock that there are many clockmakers across the world. Draw Anna Varga as you imagine her, and then create a few new clockmaker characters who live in different countries. Make a detailed drawing of them, and their clocks, and write a short description of their character.

2. CREATIVE WRITING

- We don't have Barrier-combers on our side of the Barrier, but we do have beachcombers, people who search beaches for things the waves have thrown up onto the shore. Describe the best thing you've ever found washed up on the beach ... or describe something you'd like to find!
- What do you think would happen if time really did speed up or slow down? Write a short story about a day where time does not behave normally.
- Have you ever inexplicably lost or found something? Describe what happened as a result.
- Who is Anna Varga? Where do you think she came from? How do you imagine the clockmakers become clockmakers in the first place?
- Write a letter from Anna Varga to another clockmaker (one of the characters already created in the art section) telling this person what happened to Anna and her clock.
- Write a letter from a character across the Barrier to a friend or acquaintance, about what happened to the Barrier. For example, a message from Ruby to her sister, a report from the nasty Agent in Chapter 12 to his captain, or a message from Wendy to a friend.
- Why do you think it might be difficult sometimes for Patrick and Claire to have Danny for a younger brother? Why do you think it might be hard for Danny, being

the youngest? How do you think Patrick's and Claire's thoughts about Danny change throughout the story?

3. SCIENCE PROJECTS AND LIBRARY RESEARCH

- What is time? Why do we measure time, and why do we measure it in years, months, days, hours, minutes and seconds? Is there a unit of time smaller than a second?
- How many ways can you think of to measure time passing? E.g. sundials, egg timers, watches, digital clocks, singing a song that you know is three minutes long ... Can you invent a brand new way to measure time? You might like to work in pairs and try out a few different ideas.
- Can you guess how long a minute is without looking at a clock?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Use the Internet to research famous or interesting clocks from around the world, for example Big Ben in London. Find photos and information about when the clock was built, where it is located, and why it is famous. Then type a short report. Remember to write down any websites you used to find information and photos.
- As a class, create your own sundial in a safe spot in the playground.
- If you liked *The Timekeeper*, write and tell Emily Rodda why. Or if someone in your class comes up with a question about the book that no one can answer, write and ask her about it! Don't forget to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your reply. You can address your letter to the following address:

Emily Rodda c/- Omnibus Books, 335 Unley Rd, Malvern SA 5061

FURTHER READING

Emily Rodda has written several other books about fantasy worlds that exist alongside our own. If you enjoyed *The Timekeeper* you might like to read *Finders Keepers* (if you

haven't already), *Pigs Might Fly*, *The Key to Rondo* and *The Wizard of Rondo*. How do they compare to *The Timekeeper* in your opinion?

WEBSITES

EMILY RODDA

For information about Emily Rodda, including answers to frequently asked questions and a current booklist, please go to:

<<http://www.emilyrodda.com>> and

<<http://www.scholasticaustralia.com.au>>.