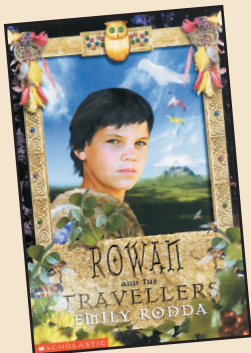


ROWAN OF RIN

by Emily Rodda



A LITERATURE UNIT BASED ON THE FANTASY **ROWAN AND THE TRAVELLERS** TEACHING NOTES BY KIM BANFFY

INTRODUCTION — UNIT TWO

This unit is suitable for an Upper Primary class but it could be extended to accommodate Lower Secondary students. It is designed to be implemented after completing Unit 1—a literature unit based on the first book in this series, *Rowan of Rin*.

Rowan and the Travellers provides an excellent opportunity to address issues of racial discrimination and how ignorance leads to suspicion, fear, and eventually war. As such, it provides a good companion to the HSIE unit 'People and Their Beliefs' and it is an excellent resource for focusing on Australia's multicultural society. Even if students live in a predominantly white-Anglo-Saxon area, it is a chance for them to explore issues they will encounter in the wider world.

The unit also provides a springboard to addressing the environmental issue of humans interfering with the balance of nature with disastrous consequences. If your students have completed the activities suggested in Unit 1—*Rowan of Rin*, in particular the Earthkeepers™ training, this focus will provide meaningful follow-up.

Once again, Bloom's taxonomy is used as a guide to the activities, and students are encouraged to use Edward de Bono's 'Six Thinking Hats' when contemplating questions that arise.

It is intended that *Rowan and the Travellers* be read aloud to students.

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.
- Choose to use language to communicate, to express ideas and feelings, to explore and inquire.
- Show independence in using and learning language.
- Choose to reflect on and share experiences of text.
- Explore the fact that people from different ethnic backgrounds bring equally acceptable cultural strengths and weaknesses that enrich a multicultural community (PD/H/PE).

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Talking and Listening

Students will:

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

Reading

Students will:

- Read independently an extensive range of texts with increasing content demands, and respond to the themes and issues explored.
- Use a comprehensive range of skills and strategies appropriate to the type of text being read.
- 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.
- Identify the text structure of a wider range of more complex text types and discuss how characteristic grammatical features work to influence readers' and viewers' understanding of texts.

Writing

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.
- Use knowledge of sentence structure, grammar and punctuation to edit own writing.
- Spell most common words accurately and use a range of strategies to spell unfamiliar words.
- Produce texts in a fluent and legible style and use computer technology to present these effectively in a variety of ways.
- 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.
- Critically evaluate how their 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.



ACTIVITIES BASED ON BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Knowledge

- Sequence the events in the story by constructing a story map.
- Use a dictionary to find the meanings of the following words from the story: courage, stake, exasperate, perish, pry, burden, glossy.
- Look at the rhyme that Sheba revealed to Rowan. You might ask: 'Why was it that it was revealed to the townspeople of Rin through him?'
- Answers to the following questions could take the form of a nightly Rin television news report, a television interview with Rowan himself, a front-page newspaper article in *The Rin Bugle*, a complete diary written by Rowan himself, or a recount.

Why were the people of Rin perplexed to see the Travellers again?

What happened when the townspeople held a meeting to discuss the Travellers' visit?

Why were Bree and Hanna so anxious to keep the Travellers away?

Why were people so suspicious of Allun?

What did Jonn, Jiller, Rowan and Annad discover when they went to the Mountain Berry garden after the storytelling?

Why did the townspeople assume the source of their problem was the Travellers?

Who were the two village members who set out in search of the Travellers?

How did Allun call the Travellers?

Why was Rowan suspicious of Zeel?

Why was Ogden suspicious of Rowan and Allun?

Who were the two people who went in search of answers to the problem?

Where did they have to go?

Where was the Valley of Gold?

What was the enemy?

How and why had the enemy managed to take hold in Rin?

How did Rowan, Allun, Ogden and the forerunners manage to eradicate the problem?

Why was Rowan the hero?



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Comprehension

Although we are all part of the one human race, people from different races bring different cultural strengths to any situation. As well, many races have defining traits, eg Italians are known for being good-humoured and fun-loving; the French are thought to be sophisticated and stylish; Africans are distinguished by their athletic ability and gift for rhythm and music; Pacific Islanders are known for their ability to sing in beautiful harmony. By acknowledging this, we in a multicultural society can enrich each other's lives immensely.

Students might:

- Write cultural personality profiles for a typical Traveller. 'What are the traits which set them apart from the other races around them?'
- Write personality profiles for a typical resident of Rin. 'What aspects of living do they value?'
- Encourage students to use de Bono's Six Thinking Hats to compile their profiles.

Application

- Refer students to chapter one and ask:

'What sentence is repeated six times throughout the chapter?'

'When in the text is it repeated?'

'Why do you think Emily Rodda has done this?'

'With what kind of sentence has Emily Rodda ended the chapter?'

'Why do you think she did this?'

- Refer students to chapter two and ask:
'What happens in the story at the very end of this chapter?'
- Refer students to the first six paragraphs of chapter seven and ask:
'Which of the Six Thinking Hats (de Bono 1992) was Ogden the storyteller using to think about the nature of the people of Rin?'

Students might:

- Make dioramas of their favourite parts of the story.
- Write botanical descriptions of the Mountain Berry plant, remembering to describe both the young and adult forms of the plant.
- Draw their impressions of what the Pit of Unrin looked like. NB: This exercise should be attempted after you have read chapter sixteen and the first part of chapter seventeen to the class. Stop to discuss what the spooky trees might look like and how



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they would differ from the standard lollipop-type trees that children draw. After discussing other features of the landscape, have students draw as you re-read the passage. After you have finished reading, do not allow children to speak until they have composed their pictures; they need to concentrate on their drawings, and speaking will prevent this.

- After reading the first fifteen paragraphs of chapter 14, ask:
‘If you have ever watched a bird riding the currents of the wind, you will know that they enjoy it. If you could fly, what kinds of things would you like to see? What kinds of places would you like to fly over?’

Students could:

- Imagine they are flying free in order to write descriptions of their flights. Ask them to describe in detail what they see, how they feel, and whether they can smell, hear or taste anything.

Analysis

- Refer students to page 105 when Ogden says:
We came because we felt a wrongness in the land. We felt a danger. We came to you, as friends, to see if the trouble lay with you. And when we had come we felt hardness. We felt secrets, and anger, under the smiling faces. We were forbidden in the village, and ordered to keep to the hills.

You might ask:

‘Of which part of Sheba’s rhyme does this remind you?’

‘Did you expect the villagers of Rin to be the ones to whom the rhyme was referring? Why or why not?’

- Refer students to Sheba’s rhyme:
‘What do you think it means?’

‘At the beginning of the story, who did you think the enemy was?’

‘What are the “past and present tales” that will meet?’

‘Can you retell the past tale in your own words?’

‘What similar things happened to the people of the Valley of Gold and the people of Rin?’

‘What were the same mistakes in both cultures?’

‘What was the “same old pride”?’



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- As a class, look at the following proverbs:

A stitch in time saves nine.

Never judge a book by its cover.

Experience teaches wisdom to fools.

Pride comes before a fall.

You might ask:

‘Which one matches the first line in Sheba’s rhyme?’

‘Which proverb matches the third and fourth lines in the rhyme?’

- In chapter eight, page 51, Jiller, Jonn and Annad have a conversation about the words ‘slips’. After students have read the passage, ask:
‘Why didn’t Jiller and Jonn want Annad to call the Travellers “slips”?’
- On pages 58 and 59 there is a passage that begins: *She looked around . . . and ends . . . And that would be dangerous. Dangerous to the whole of Rin.* After students have read this passage, you might ask: ‘Why would it be dangerous to Rin?’
- In chapter seven Emily Rodda writes, *But Rowan knew he wasn’t a hero really. Just as Sheba had said, he was the same boy he had always been—shy and full of fears.* As a class, listen again to the song ‘Hero’ by Mariah Carey and ask students, ‘Why is the above statement not true?’

Synthesis

- Have students work with partners to write interviews with Rowan about how it felt to walk through the Pit of Unrin. Students could make i-movies for ‘The 7.30 Report’, one partner being the interviewer and the other taking the part of Rowan.

Multicultural Focus

- Ask students to choose one of the races of people who have contributed to Australian culture, eg the Greek, Italian, Lebanese, Japanese or Vietnamese communities. Students could:

Research foods associated with the cultures of their choice.

On a world map indicate the regions in which these foods originated.

Write procedural texts explaining how to prepare that food.

Work with partners to make i-movies pretending they are Jamie Oliver demonstrating how to prepare a dish from another culture.

- Interview someone who has come from another country to live in Australia. They could ask why they moved here, what they miss from their home country, what they

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like about living here, what differences they notice about society here and what similarities they are aware of. If possible, students could make i-movies of their interviews.

- You might consider compiling a class 'Multicultural Recipe Book', or conducting a 'Multicultural Food Day' on which everyone brings in food from different cultures for others to try. Students might also delight in dressing up as people from different cultures.

Suggested recipes to research:

Dolmades (Greece)
Tsatsiki (Greece)
Fish cakes (Thailand)
Hommus (Middle East)
Falafel (Middle East)
Miso soup (Japan)
Tacos (Mexico)
Sushi (Japan)
Blinis (Russia)
Turkish delight (Turkey, Greece)
Spring rolls (China)
Cornish pasties (England)
Gingerbread (Germany)
ANZAC biscuits (Australia)
Shortbread (Scotland)
Spaghetti bolognaise (Italy)
Apple strudel (Germany)
Nachos (Mexico)
Polenta (South America)

- As an extension activity, you could ask students to research particular religions in order to compare different belief systems.
- Look at the following related songs and discuss their implications to your multicultural studies:

'Black and White' by Three Dog Night

'Ebony and Ivory' by Paul McCartney

'I Am Children of the World' by Genni Kane & John Kane (ABC Sing Book, 1996)

'You're My Friend' by Brian Simmons (ABC Sing Book, 1975)

Students could design black-and-white linocuts based on the ideas espoused in the songs. (If students have no experience with linocuts, it is better to start with a polystyrene print so that they might better understand how to balance the positive and negative space.



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For examples of linoprints, study children's books illustrated by Narelle Oliver, eg *The Best Beak In Boonaroo Bay* and *Mermaids Most Amazing*. You might also collect illustrations by Michael Fitzjames from *The Sydney Morning Herald* as they are usually black-and-white and they are perfect examples of balancing positive and negative space. You could do an art appreciation lesson on these works before you begin the design process.

The basic rules for doing these linocut designs should be: no letters or numbers (they print backwards); draw a frame around the design and decorate the frame; the work must be an original design.

You could display the artworks in your very own printmaking exhibition!

Environmental Focus

- On page 139, refer to the passage that reads:
Ogden rubbed his chin. On the mountain, rock lies just beneath the soil and cold winds blow. There this cursed plant must remain stunted, preying on insects and other crawling creatures. But here, as in the Valley of Gold, there will be no stopping it.
- This reflects a common environmental problem, often with disastrous consequences. Ask each student to choose one of the following plants to research and to find out in which areas of Australia the plant is a problem and why.
 - English privet
 - Salvation Jane (Paterson's curse)
 - Camphor laurel
 - Prickly pear
 - Scottish broom
 - Bamboo
 - Caliopsis (Coriopsis)

As part of their research, students should complete the following:

A statement as to the plant's country of origin and the area of Australia in which the plant has become a problem.

An explanation as to why the plant was not a problem in its country of origin.

An illustration of the plant, showing flowers and fruit.

A description of the plant, stating how tall it grows, the colour and size of its flowers and fruit, whether it is a tree or a bush, what kind of leaves it has (fleshy, spiky, glossy, small, large) and what colour and tone of that colour the leaves are.

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RESOURCE LIST

Books

Baker, Jeannie. *The Story of Rosy Dock*.

De Bono, Edward. *Six Thinking Hats for Schools*.

Songs

Carey, Mariah. 'Hero'.

Kane, G and J. 'Children of the World'.

McCartney, Paul. 'Ebony and Ivory'.

Simmons, Brian. 'You're My Friend'.

Three Dog Night. 'Black and White'.

Excursions/ Experiences

Earthkeepers™ (see Unit One: Rowan of Rin for Australian sites for this three-day excursion).

Art supplies

Art supplies shops for polystyrene sheets for printmaking.

Water-soluble printmaking ink for the lino or polystyrene prints. (Don't use ordinary Paint—the results will disappoint you). Available from government stores.

I-movies

I-movies can be made using Macintosh computers and i-movie software.