



# Teachers' Notes ROWAN OF THE BUKSHAH

Book 5 in the Rowan series

EMILY RODDA

Teachers' Notes written by Kate Rowe

## OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Junior fiction
Title	Rowan of the Bukshah
Author	Emily Rodda
Extent	224 pp
ISBN	978 1 86291 639 5

## CONTENTS

Introduction.....	2
About the Author.....	2
Writing Style.....	3
Before Reading the Text.....	4
Reading the Text.....	4
Questions About the Text.....	4
Creative Activities.....	9
Further Discussion/Activities.....	11
Further Reading.....	11
Websites.....	11

Teachers' Notes may be reproduced for use in school activities. They may not be redistributed for commercial sale or posted to other networks.

## INTRODUCTION

---

*Rowan of the Bukshah* is the fifth and final book in the *Rowan of Rin* series.

At the Wise Woman Sheba's command, Rowan must set out on a final quest to save his land—the most dangerous journey yet.

It is winter in Rin, but no one remembers a winter like it. It has lasted far too long. Some say the Mountain has cursed Rin, while others believe the extended winter may be a natural part of the land's cycles. Having settled in Rin as escaped slaves three centuries ago, the people of Rin have no record of what happened before they arrived.

One thing is certain, the villagers must leave for the coast at once, or they will die from lack of food. But Rowan has decided to stay with the bukshah herd, and save as many as he can, for without the wool, milk and labour the bukshah provide, there will be nothing for the villagers to come back to when the winter finally ends.

Despite being one of the frailest and weakest citizens of Rin, clever, gentle Rowan has saved his village from peril four times. He is now looked up to as an important person, instead of being regarded as a weakling. He has also gained confidence in himself. Even so, he is afraid when Sheba instructs him to travel to the Mountain, especially when she makes an ominous prophecy that speaks of sacrifices to be made.

Why won't winter end? Will Rowan's journey solve the problem? And why are the bukshah so afraid? Could the old tales of the deadly Ice Creepers be true? Rowan realises he is dealing with the final link in a chain of consequences set into motion a very, very long time ago. He has his new friends Shaaran and Norris, rescued from the land of the Zebak, and old friend Zeel the Traveller to help him, but in order to succeed he will need to learn to trust them. The quest will test his courage and confidence, plus his ability to trust and to be trustworthy. It will also reveal the last missing pieces of the puzzle concerning Rin's history.

## 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 90 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.

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. She has won two Aurealis Awards, for *Deltora Quest Series 1* and also *Deltora Book of Monsters* with Marc McBride in 2002, and for *The Wizard of Rondo*, the second book in her *Rondo* trilogy, in 2008.

Emily has also written eight mysteries for adults under her real name, Jennifer Rowe. She has four children, and lives in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney.

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

## **WRITING STYLE**

---

*Rowan of the Bukshah* is a fantasy novel in chapter form. The language is at a level aimed at readers 8-12, and the characters speak in the formal, old-fashioned way often associated with fantasy. The themes of *Rowan of the Bukshah* include friendship, sacrifice, trust, journey, quest, the cycles of nature, and the importance of history and knowledge in understanding the present and planning for the future.

## BEFORE READING THE TEXT

---

The fantasy genre is a rich genre in literature, television and film. Before reading *Rowan of the Bukshah*, students could discuss common elements of the fantasy genre, such as quests and imaginary/mythical creatures. They could also compare books they have read in the genre. Some may be familiar with *The Hobbit* or *Lord of the Rings* or more modern texts such as Emily Rodda's *Deltora Quest*, and some may have read earlier books in the *Rowan of Rin* series.

## 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

---

Students could answer these questions verbally, alone or in pairs, or as a written task to be handed in. In some cases the questions may spoil the story, so you might like to hand them out only after everyone has finished the relevant chapters.

### Chapter 1:

- Why is this winter unusual for Rin?  
A) It has never been this cold, and has never lasted so long.
- What precious historical item has been recently discovered by the people of Rin?  
A) Painted pieces of silk that record the history of the Rin people's slavery in the land of the Zebak.
- What does Neel the potter believe about the extended winter?  
A) Neel believes that Rin has been cursed by the Mountain.
- Why does Timon the teacher disagree with Neel?  
A) Timon says that the winters have been growing harder and longer for many years. He also points out that the people of Rin have only lived in the Valley for three centuries, and don't know what the long-term cycles of the land are.
- What old story is making Neel afraid?  
A) The Travellers' tale of the Cold Time, when ice creepers came down from the Mountain.

- What questions are the people of Rin asking themselves since they found the silks?  
A) They have begun to wonder how long they lived as slaves of the Zebak, and where they came from at first.

### **Chapter 2:**

- Draw four columns down a page and write a heading for each column: Name, Personality, Relationship to Rowan, Job. Start a list of the characters in the book and continue adding as you read. (You might not be able to find information for all the characters, but just add what you can.)
- Why can't the Travellers or the Maris folk bring food and help to Rin?  
A) Neither the Travellers nor the Maris folk are well adapted to the cold—they would die on the journey to Rin.
- Why has Rowan decided to stay behind?  
A) Rowan has decided to stay in Rin in order to look after the bukshah, who are too weak to travel.

### **Chapters 3–4:**

- Where is the heat in Sheba's hut coming from? Do you think it is a natural heat? Why or why not?  
A) The heat is coming from the fire. When Sheba throws a small stick into the fire it glows green, and the room seems to become even hotter. This suggests that there is magic involved.
- What item does Sheba give Rowan? Where has he seen it before?  
A) A medallion threaded on a plaited silk cord. Sheba gave it to Rowan once before, to take to the land of the Zebak.
- Why is Rowan so worried about Sheba's rhyme?  
A) Mainly because of the line "Four must make their sacrifice" which seems to suggest that Rowan will be going into great danger.

### **Chapters 5–8:**

- What does Rowan discover in the house of books?  
A) The house of books is on fire, Norris is unconscious, and Neel is struggling with Shaaran.
- Why is this happening?  
A) Neel is trying to destroy the silks because he believes they are the cause of Rin's problems.

- Which of the bukshah is missing?  
A) Twilight, the oldest.
- What great favour has Sheba done for the villagers?  
A) Sheba and her grach have burnt a pathway through the snow for people to walk on to the coast.
- Why does Norris think Shaaran has shamed them?  
A) Because she will not go to the coast with the others, because she doesn't want to leave him.
- Why is Shaaran very brave, according to Rowan?  
A) She fought with Neel to save the silks.
- What personality traits does Shaaran have in common with Rowan—traits that make her different to Norris and Lann, for example?  
A) She is gentle and shy.
- What does Rowan fear has happened to him since he visited Sheba?  
A) Rowan fears Sheba has given him the gift of prophecy, making him just like her.
- Why doesn't he tell his friends about this?  
A) He thinks they will be afraid of him, and not want to be his friends anymore.

### **Chapters 9–12:**

- When Lann and Rowan are talking, Lann lists three things Rowan has achieved that make him one of Rin's best. What are these achievements?  
A) First, Rowan climbed the Mountain and faced the dragon to make the stream flow again. Second, he forged bonds of trust with the Maris and Travellers. Third, he gave the people of Rin knowledge of their past and saved them from the Zebak.
- Where does Rowan think about running away to? Why doesn't he run?  
A) Rowan thinks about running away to the coast. However, the medallion gives him a vision of what will happen if the ice creepers are not stopped: a completely frozen land, even as far as the sea. He knows that this will be the future if he runs away, so he stays.
- What terrible thing happens to Rowan and his friends in the Vale of Horrors? How are they saved?  
A) Rowan, Zeel and Norris fall under the spell of an illusion and fight each other, believing that they are fighting enemies such as ice creepers, Zebak guards and ishkins. Shaaran's tears dispel the illusion.

### **Chapters 13–17:**

- Why does Norris feel so upset at the beginning of Chapter 13?  
A) Because he feels he failed his friends—he was supposed to protect them and instead he fought them, under the influence of the illusion in the Vale of Horrors.
- What method does Norris use to clear away the tree trunks?  
A) He uses ropes and branches to lever the trunks up out of the mud.
- What do the friends find beneath the dead trees, and what does it do?  
A) They find hot, foul-smelling water that makes the parasites drop off, and also heals wounds.

### **Chapters 18–20:**

- What is the relationship between the Pit of Unrin and the Valley of Gold?  
A) They are the same place. Flesh-eating trees destroyed the Valley of Gold, and in Rowan's time it is known as the Pit of Unrin.
- Did the first Cold Time kill the people of the Valley of Gold?  
A) No, they lived for a long time after the Cold Time, and then suddenly disappeared. It is believed that the flesh-eating trees killed them all.
- Why didn't the Travellers try to find the people of the Valley of Gold when they first disappeared?  
A) The Travellers had no idea the people in the Valley of Gold had disappeared. At the time it happened, the Travellers and the Maris were fighting a Zebak invasion.
- During the Zebak invasion Zeel mentions, the Maris and the Travellers were forced to flee, and hide. When they returned to fight again, what clever tactic did the Travellers use to destabilise the Zebak?  
A) The Travellers used ambushes, raids, theft of food and weapons, and disturbances night after night to deprive the Zebak of sleep and unsettle them.
- What big event led to final success for the Maris against the Zebak?  
A) The old Keeper of the Crystal died, and a new Keeper took his place. The magic of the Crystal flared up and gave the Maris new energy.
- When the second group of Traveller messengers returned from the Valley of Gold, what did they report?  
A) They said that the Valley of Gold was gone, replaced by a mass of hideous trees. Above the valley the face of the Mountain had fallen to rubble. And the people had vanished.
- Rowan fears that his friends will reject him when he tells them about his gift of prophecy. Do they?  
A) Rowan's friends do not reject him—on the contrary, they wish he had told them earlier, rather than suffering through his worries alone.

- What terrifying discovery do Rowan, Zeel and Norris make when they climb the rock pile?  
A) They find an ice creeper nest inside the Mountain, shielded from the outside air by strange grey fungus.

### **Chapters 21–24:**

- Why do the bukshah come close to Rowan, Norris and Zeel, but not Shaaran? (Clue: what do they come in contact with that she doesn't in chapter 19?)  
A) Rowan, Norris and Zeel have all been in contact with the grey fungus that the bukshah love to eat. The bukshah can smell it, which is why they come close to them.
- What sacrifice do Rowan, Norris and Zeel believe they have to make to end the Cold Time?  
A) They think they have to jump to their deaths into the molten gold.
- Why does Shaaran disagree with them?  
A) She can't logically see how their deaths will do anything to stop the Cold Time.
- How does the appearance of the bukshah's horns and wool change during their journey? What causes these changes?  
A) The bukshah's horns become white and sharp by rubbing against the walls of the narrow passageway early in the journey. Their wool becomes harsh to the touch when they swim in the grove spring.
- How are these changes useful for the bukshah inside the heart of the Mountain?  
A) Their sharpened horns are useful for digging out the grey fungus to eat in the cavern. Their wool has a protective layer from the water that shields them from the heat.
- Whose bones do the friends find inside the heart of the Mountain? What else is with them?  
A) They find the bones of Evan of the Bukshah, a former bukshah herder from long ago, and those of his friends Bron and Fliss. They also find very old silks showing the history of their people.
- What secret do Rowan and his friends learn about the history of the people of Rin?  
A) They learn that the people of Rin have always lived in this land. It was their original home all along. They are the lost people of the "mythical" Valley of Gold.

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

---

### 1. ART

- Draw or paint your favourite characters from *Rowan of the Bukshah*.
- Make a collage of a bukshah, using pieces of fabric or wool to make its coat.
- Make your own bukshah out of papier maché, giving it a name. If everyone in the class does this, you will have a class herd of bukshah!
- Using clues from chapter 3, draw a picture of what Sheba's grach, Unas, might look like.
- Draw or paint a picture to describe a part of the story, as if you are recording history on silk, like Shaaran does. Your picture doesn't actually have to be on silk, a long thin strip of paper will do! You could even divide the important events of the story among the class, and each make one panel of a long series to be displayed on the wall.
- Using the discoveries of the final chapters, draw a timeline that shows the history of the people of Rin. No exact times are given in the book, so you can just show the order in which big events happened.
- Draw a map showing the journey made by Rowan, his companions, and the bukshah in this story.
- The cycles of nature is one of the main themes of *Rowan of the Bukshah*. When the world of Rin is in balance, there are some ice creepers, but not too many. Draw a large circle, and mark points around it. At each point, write a sentence or two to describe one of the stages in the Mountain's cycle. The circle should show how the hot air of the Mountain cavern, the ice creepers, and the hungry bukshah are linked in a continuous cycle. (Hint: the last chapters will be the most helpful.)

### 2. CREATIVE WRITING

- Sheba the Wise Woman has a strange relationship with the other villagers of Rin, and they don't always seem to understand each other. Write about Sheba from a villager's point of view, and then write about the villagers from Sheba's point of view.
- Different people in Rin react differently to situations depending on their personalities. Choose a character from *Rowan of the Bukshah* and describe the difficulties of the Cold Time from the point of view of that character. For example, Rowan would be mainly concerned about the effects on the bukshah and his family, while Lann would be concerned about the safety of the village as a whole.
- Write a letter from Rowan to his Maris friend Perlain on the coast, describing the main points of what happened during his adventure.

- Teamwork is very important in the success of Rowan’s journey. What part do Shaaran, Zeel, and Norris each play in the quest to save Rin?

### **3. MUSIC & PERFORMANCE**

- Sometimes songwriters use songs to record history. Songs can be easier to remember than stories, especially when they rhyme and have a catchy melody. Make up a song telling all or part of the story of Rowan’s adventure. You can make up your own tune, or just use a tune you already know and put new words to it.
- Imagine *Rowan of the Bukshah* was made into a movie. There would be music throughout the movie to help create the atmosphere. Choose a part of the story, and decide what mood or feeling it has (e.g. exciting, scary, sad, happy). Now try to create that mood using sounds and music. Use the instruments you know how to play, and even sound effects (e.g. piano, recorder, voice, whispering, drums, violin, rustling newspaper, etc.) to go with the story. It doesn’t have to have words.
- Once you have got the music, choose people to act out the scene without words, and play the music at the same time. Can your other classmates guess which scene it is?
- In groups, rewrite your favourite scene from *Rowan of the Bukshah* as a script, and play it out for the class. (If these turn out well, and there is interest, students could even find costumes and perform scenes at school assembly.)

### **4. DISCUSSION TOPICS & CLASS PROJECTS**

- In the story, the bukshah act based on their animal instincts. Animals have instincts that we do not, which help them stay out of danger. A heightened sense of smell, the ability to see in the dark, very good hearing—discuss some of the senses that you know about, and see if you can find out more.
- In *Rowan of the Bukshah*, the history of the people of Rin has been lost. How do you think knowledge of the past might have helped them deal with the ice creepers in this story?
- Based on the events that take place in Rin, would you say that keeping historical records and studying history are useful and important activities? What might be the benefits of taking an interest in past events in our society?
- In the world of Rin, history is recorded in various ways: pictures on silk, written letters and books, and legends that are told rather than written down. As a class, think of all the different ways that you can record an important story in our world, so that everyone can learn about it and remember it.

- For its U.S. publication, *Rowan of the Bukshah* was retitled *Rowan and the Ice Creepers*. Why do you think the U.S. publishers did this? Which title do you like better? Which do you think suits the book better?

## FURTHER DISCUSSION/ACTIVITIES

---

- Where is the coldest place on Earth?  
A: Antarctica. For information on Antarctica, try <http://www.coolantarctica.com> and [http://www.coolantarctica.com/schools/antarctica\\_school.htm](http://www.coolantarctica.com/schools/antarctica_school.htm).
- If you're feeling adventurous, here is a science experiment about snow crystals: <http://www.schools.ash.org.au/paa2/deliver/content.asp?pid=753>
- Set up some teamwork activities to practice working as a team. You might try tug-of-war, tunnel ball, or other group sports.
- If you liked *Rowan of the Bukshah*, 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 either of the following addresses:  
Emily Rodda c/- Scholastic Australia, PO Box 579, Gosford NSW 2250  
Emily Rodda c/- Omnibus Books, 175–177 Young St, Parkside SA 5063

## FURTHER READING

---

Emily Rodda has written many other fantasy stories. If you liked *Rowan of the Bukshah* you might like to read the *Deltora Quest* series, *The Key to Rondo* trilogy, and of course the four other books about Rowan: *Rowan of Rin*, *Rowan and the Travellers*, *Rowan and the Keeper of the Crystal*, and *Rowan and the Zebak*. Your school librarian will have further suggestions.

## 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.scholastic.com.au>