



Teachers' Notes

The Three Doors Trilogy

The Golden Door

EMILY RODDA

Teachers' Notes written by Kate Rowe

OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Junior Fiction
Title	The Three Doors Book 1: The Golden Door
Author	Emily Rodda
Extent	272 pp
Age	8+
Australian RRP	\$16.99
Binding	Paperback
ISBN	978 1 86291 912 9
Format	198x 128 mm

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	2
The Author	2
From the Author: The Three Doors Trilogy	3
Writing Style.....	4
Before Reading the Text.....	4
Reading the Text.....	4
Questions About the Text.....	5
Creative Activities (After Reading the Text).....	8
Further Discussion/Activities.....	10
Further Reading.....	10
Websites.....	10

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

INTRODUCTION

The Golden Door is the first book in Emily Rodda's *Three Doors* trilogy.

Rye lives in a walled city called Weld, on the island of Dorne, with his mother and two older brothers. He and his family know very little of what is outside the Wall, only that it is a dangerous world from which they are wise to shelter. However, for several years their city has been besieged in summer by skimmers: savage, bat-like creatures that fly in hordes over the Wall from somewhere outside Weld, looking for human and animal prey.

The Warden of Weld offers a large reward to any young man who can find and defeat the Enemy sending the skimmers. Rye's adventurous eldest brother Dirk is among the first to volunteer. And when he does not return, Rye's second brother, solitary, studious Sholto, leaves in search of the source of the skimmer menace.

Rye is not old enough to volunteer. Little does he know that a very strange series of events will force his hand. He will have to lie about his age, and choose one of Weld's three secret magic doors to go through. He will have to put up with a companion he didn't bargain for. He will be flung into a fantastic and dangerous adventure in the quest to find his brothers and reunite his family. And he will learn that nothing he has believed, about his world, or about himself, is the truth.

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 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 (15 million copies worldwide), 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 nine 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.emilyrodde.com>.

FROM THE AUTHOR: THE THREE DOORS TRILOGY

I have always been fascinated by the idea that our choices lead us along different paths in life. Whenever we make a choice, even if it’s as simple as deciding between two tracks on a bushwalk, we may be changing our future. The left-hand track might have the hidden rock that is going to trip us and cause an injury that will affect us for

years to come. The right hand track might give us the chance to meet someone who is going to be our friend for life. Obviously many other people have felt the same, because many old legends and fairy tales are based on the theme of choice. I decided to use three doors as my central theme in this trilogy because, firstly, whenever I see a closed door I want to see behind it, and secondly because I have always thought of books as 'doors'—ways into other places, other worlds. The idea for the trilogy also gave me the opportunity to further explore the magic of the ocean in which Deltora lies—and that is something I've been wanting to do for a long time.

WRITING STYLE

The Golden Door is a fantasy novel in chapter form. The language is at a level aimed at readers 8-12, and most of the characters speak in the formal, old-fashioned way often associated with fantasy. The themes of *The Golden Door* include quest, journey, friendship, trust, family ties, self-confidence, the nature of truth, the illusions of propaganda, the nature of dictatorships.

BEFORE READING THE TEXT

NB: please check all websites and pages for suitability on the day of proposed use.

The fantasy genre is a rich genre in literature, television and film. Before reading *The Golden Door*, 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* or 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.

Chapters 1–7:

- Who are the members of Rye’s family? How do they earn their living?
A) Rye lives with his mother, Lisbeth, and two older brothers, Dirk and Sholto. Lisbeth is a bee-keeper. Dirk works on the Wall, as did their father, Kaz, before his death. Sholto works for Tallus, the healer, and is learning to be a healer himself. Rye is still at school.
- What is the challenge for Rye in being the youngest child in his family?
A) Rye’s brothers love him but don’t take him very seriously. He feels he is not a hero like Dirk or clever like Sholto. This affects his self-confidence.
- Sholto has invented two things to protect against skimmers—what are they?
A) Sholto invented skimmer repellent, and also a skimmer trap, where goat meat is suspended over a tub of water.
- Why can’t Rye and Lisbeth stay together when they get to the Keep?
A) The Keep requires people to work in exchange for shelter. There is work for Lisbeth in the kitchens, but no work for Rye—they want him to go to the Centre of Weld, to work in the fields.
- How does the girl in the Chamber of the Doors persuade Rye to take her with him?
A) The girl blackmails Rye by saying that if he doesn’t take her with him through the Door, she will tell the Warden that he has lied about his age. This will bring shame to his mother and might even get them thrown out of the Keep.

- Which Door would you have chosen? Which weapon would you have taken with you?
- Why does Rye choose the Golden Door?
A) Although Rye prefers the Wooden Door, he chooses the Golden Door because he thinks this is the one Dirk would have chosen, and he wants to find Dirk. Dirk is the oldest, and he feels Dirk will be able to save them all.

Chapter 8–13:

- Name two features of the natural world that Rye experiences for the first time outside Weld (Chapter 8).
A) Any two of the following: the wind, hills, fallen trees left lying on the ground, trees of great size.
- What is Sonia’s true reason for wanting to leave Weld?
A) Sonia wants to find the Enemy seeking the Skimmers and destroy him, and become the Warden’s heir.
- What does Rye learn about the geography of his land? How does it contradict his existing understanding?
A) Rye learns that there are wide plains beyond the Fell Zone. He has always been taught that the city and the sea are straight outside the Fell Zone—i.e. that Weld is a much more important part of Dorne than it really is.
- Why doesn’t Rye feel he should keep the magic bag? How does Sonia talk him out of returning it?
A) Rye feels that the magic bag has been given to him by mistake, that he is not the proper owner, and that he should return it to the Fellan. Sonia tells him it would be foolish to go back into the dangerous Fell Zone to return the bag, especially since its magic could really help them save Dirk.
- What is Magnus FitzFee’s job?
A) He is a goat farmer.
- What small mistake does Sonia make that causes FitzFee to realise they are not locals?

A) Fitzfee mentions an animal called a clink, and Sonia asks what it is. The animals are common in the area, so Fitzfee knows they can't possibly be locals.

Chapters 14–18:

- What is Nerra?
A) Nerra is the old name for the city of Oltan. The Chieftain Olt changed its name.
- What is the main business in Fleet?
A) The people of Fleet breed horses for sale, and have a reputation for the finest horses in the land.
- Why can't the people of Fleet just hide from Olt?
A) Because they can't hide their horses, and don't wish to give them up.
- What have the people of Fleet decided to do to escape Olt?
A) They will sail west across the sea to the Land of Dragons with their horses, and settle in a new place.
- What is the Gifting?
A) The Gifting is the sacrifice of seven young people on Midsummer Eve, so that the leader of the land, the sorcerer Olt, can live for another seven years.

Chapters 19–26:

- Who and where are Olt's brothers?
A) Olt has two younger brothers. One is called Verlain, and left Dorne centuries ago when the people chose Olt as a leader instead of him. He may have become the Lord of Shadows in the west. Olt and Verlain's youngest brother, who is not named in this story, was exiled from Oltan but may still be hiding in the land of Dorne somewhere.
- What does Rye's magic hood do?
A) The magic hood makes its wearer invisible.
- What sign does Sonia leave Rye to show him where she has been taken in the Fortress?

A) Sonia drops blue pebbles from her pocket to mark a trail for Rye. They were the pebbles she found in the Fell Zone stream.

- Why is the Kobb grease a form of protection from serpents?

A) A Kobb is a sea monster that eats serpents. Kobb grease gives off a smell that makes the serpents afraid, so they are less likely to attack.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES (AFTER READING THE TEXT)

N.B. The Creative Activities include questions that will spoil the story, and should only be given out when students are finished reading.

1. ART

- Draw or paint your favourite characters from *The Golden Door*.
- Draw or paint your favourite scene from the story.
- Draw a map of Weld, using Rye's map and description from the book.
- Make an illustrated map of Rye and Sonia's journey.
- Create a true map of the Island of Dorne, using the information Rye and Sonia gathered on their journey.
- Draw a bloodhog, based on the descriptions in Chapters 11 and 13.
- With your art teacher, investigate all the ways you could create sea serpents, for example collage with glittery pieces of fabric and foil, sculpture, painting, foil/copper tooling, and choose the one that seems the most interesting to complete.

2. CREATIVE WRITING

- Imagine you are one of the hostages who is freed by Rye. Write a letter to a friend telling them you escaped, and describing in your own words what happened on the rocks.
- In *The Golden Door*, Rye gradually learns how to use some of the magic powers he has been given. But there are still some to be discovered. What do you think the other magic objects might be for? Write a paragraph about your theories.
- Which magic object is your favourite? If you had it right now, what would you use it for? Write a story about your adventure.

- If you had a magic door, where might it take you? Or where would you like to go? It could be anywhere, from a field filled with unicorns to a spaceship, or somewhere in the real world. Describe it, and if you want to, describe what you do there.

3. MUSIC and 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 Rye's adventure. You can make up your own tune, or just use a tune you already know and put new words to it.

4. DISCUSSION TOPICS and CLASS PROJECTS

- *"A wall that cannot be climbed, and which has no gates, is all very well when it keeps dangers out. But it works two ways. It also makes prisoners of those who are inside it."* (Sholto, chapter 1). Discuss the positive and negative aspects of the protected life behind the Wall of Weld. Make a list of how it helps the citizens, and how it hinders them.
- As a class, brainstorm all the possible ways that you could protect yourself from skimmers, or destroy them. Invent your own skimmer trap like Sholto's and draw a diagram of it, explaining how it works. You could even build a small model!
- It is clear from the hints in the story that it means something important to have red hair, but this is not completely explained. Use your detective abilities to collect as many clues as you can, from things people say (like Tallus, for example). Note down the page numbers, and what is said. Then, looking at all the clues, make your best guess as to what it all means, and write it down in about a paragraph.
- In what ways do you think Rye changes during his journey? Do you think he changes by himself, or does his journey change him? You can describe Rye's personality and behaviour at the beginning of the story, in the middle and at the end, to explain what you mean.

- Rye is the youngest in his family. Are you the youngest, the oldest, a middle child or an only child? What are the advantages and disadvantages of “place” in a family?

FURTHER DISCUSSION/ EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- ‘*The Warden has taken years to do things that a good leader would have done at once!*’ (Dirk, chapter 1). What do you think makes someone a good leader? Discuss the Warden of Weld and Olt’s leadership styles in view of this.
- If you liked *The Golden Door*, 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 *The Golden Door* you might like to read the Deltora Quest series, the Rowan of Rin series, or the Rondo trilogy. 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>