



# Teachers' Notes THE BATTLE FOR RONDO

EMILY RODDA

Teachers' notes written by Kate Rowe

## OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Fiction
Title	The Battle for Rondo
Author	Emily Rodda
Extent	384
Age	9+
Australian RRP	\$34.99
Binding	Hardback
Printing	Mono
ISBN	978 1 8629 1 830 6
Format	234 x 153 mm

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## INTRODUCTION

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*The Battle for Rondo* is a fantasy story for readers aged 8–12. As the third and final book in Emily Rodda's Rondo trilogy, it brings many ongoing themes from the first two books to a climax, but it can also be read on its own.

Cautious, sensible Leo Zifkak and his impetuous, prickly cousin Mimi have now had two adventures in the magical world of Rondo. Rondo exists within an antique music box that has been in Leo's family for generations, and now belongs to Leo. The world is accessed with the aid of the Key, an oval pendant, which was also a family heirloom and belongs to Mimi. Rondo is full of unusual and fascinating people, many of whom bear a strong resemblance to the fairytale characters of our world. Leo and Mimi have discovered two of their ancestors living in Rondo. The first is their great-great-uncle Henry (Hal), a hero, who saved Rondo from the evil Blue Queen and ended the Dark Time. The second is Hal's brother George, who is known as Spoiler and has a very bad reputation, having helped the evil Blue Queen gain control of Rondo in the first place.

Leo, Mimi, Hal and their new Rondo friends have successfully foiled the plans of the Blue Queen twice. Now, the Quest team is forced to take on the Blue Queen again as she makes her biggest and most dangerous effort yet to control Rondo. An unlikely new member of the team forces Leo to confront the strengths and weaknesses of his own soft-hearted nature, while a daring plan to stop the Queen risks destroying everything and everyone that the people in Rondo hold dear.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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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 as a publisher at Angus & Robertson, before becoming the editor of the *Australian Women's Weekly* magazine in 1988. She is now a full-time writer.

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*.

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.

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.

*The Key to Rondo* was shortlisted for the Aurealis Awards, the NSW Premier's Award and the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award (Younger Readers). *The Wizard of Rondo* won the 2008 Aurealis Award for Best Children's Novel and was shortlisted for the 2009 CBCA Award (Younger Readers).

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**

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*The Battle for Rondo* is action packed and suspenseful, with light, humorous moments. The world and the characters of Rondo are richly described and vividly brought to life. The style melds the fast-paced narration of Deltora Quest with the finely crafted flavour of Rodda's earlier work and will therefore appeal to both dedicated and reluctant readers.

## **BEFORE READING THE TEXT**

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Before reading *The Battle for Rondo* it might be helpful for students to familiarise themselves with common fairy tales and nursery rhymes. This could be done as part of a library presentation or simply a class discussion based around the following questions:

- How many fairytales and nursery rhymes do you know?
- Do you know which countries these fairytales and nursery rhymes come from?
- Do you know who wrote them?
- What sorts of elements do fairytales have that other stories don't always have? (i.e. how do you know that what you're reading is a fairytale?)

Though the book can be enjoyed without any previous knowledge of the Rondo series, it may also be helpful to discuss the first two books before beginning. Find out who in the class has read *The Key to Rondo* or *The Wizard of Rondo*. How would they tell the story of what happened in just a few sentences? Other members of the class could ask questions if there is something they don't understand.

## READING THE TEXT

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The teacher might like to read the opening 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 finish reading the book on their own.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TEXT

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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 1-5:

- In what ways do Leo's parents think he and Mimi have changed since Mimi came to stay? What does Leo think is the real reason for these changes? What do you think?
- What is the Key to Rondo? Why do you think Leo and Mimi need to keep it a secret?
- Who or what is TUFFS? What do the initials T.U.F.F.S. stand for?
- Begin a character chart for the seven wizards and witches of Rondo. On the left of the chart list their names. Then create columns with the headings 'Appearance', 'Personality' and 'Special Talents'. You may not learn very much about some of

them until the end of the book, but every time you learn a small detail note it down.

- What are dots? What kind of pests do they remind you of in our world?
- How has Tye changed since Leo and Mimi first met her? Why do they think this is?
- Begin a list of the things in Rondo that are different in our world. Add to the list as the story continues. Compare your list with your classmates' when you have finished the book.

### **Chapters 6-10:**

- Why did the fairy godmother of the Crystal Palace retire (Chapter 7)? What fairytale does this remind you of?
- What are the names of the nine princesses of the Crystal Palace? What do their names have in common? If you were to name a tenth princess, what would her name be and why? (Note: she could be similar to her sisters or very different.)

### **Chapters 11-15:**

- The ogre's banned room brings to mind another fairytale, in which a man forbids his new bride from entering a certain locked room. Which fairytale is this?
- What are the three places where messenger mice will not deliver mail?

### **Chapters 16-20:**

- Who is Spark?
- What are the names given to Mimi and Leo by the dragon? If a dragon gave you a name, what would you like it to be?

### **Chapters 21-25:**

- In a few sentences, describe what happens at the press conference.
- What are Leo's hopes for Spoiler? Do you agree?

### **Chapters 26-34:**

- Describe Wizard Wurzle's first attempt to extinguish the fire.
- What idea does Mimi suggest to him, and why does it work?
- Remember to continue to update your chart of wizards and witches during these chapters.

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

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### 1. ART

- Draw a picture of your favourite characters from *The Battle for Rondo*, using clues from the book to make them look exactly how you think the author describes them.
- As a class, create the portrait wall in the Ogre's castle. Everyone should invent an ogre to draw and then name it and write a passage about its life underneath the portrait. Use your imagination to draw your ogre. Does it have fangs? How many eyes does it have? What does it wear? Where does it live? What is its true name?
- Pick your favourite witch or wizard from the character chart you created, and draw what you think he or she looks like, based on the clues you have gathered.
- Draw a 'Wanted!' poster for Officer Begood's police station. You might choose the enchanted squirrels, Princess Pretty, the dragon or invent your own dangerous Rondo character. There should be a picture of the character, a description of why he or she is wanted, and instructions for what to do if the character is seen.
- Imagine that you have a music box like Leo's, but with a totally different world inside. What would your imaginary world look like? What would it be called? Draw panels for each side of your music box.
- Everyone knows the most common names for colours: red, green and so on. But there are many names for the different shades of each (e.g. vermilion and cobalt). With the help of your teacher, can you find examples in magazines, or scrap paper, of the shades of blue that Leo thinks of in Chapter 33, and make a collage? Alternatively, can you mix the shades of blue yourself with paint? Or pick another colour you like and find out the names of some of its shades? The class could divide into groups, with each group in charge of one colour.

### 2. CREATIVE WRITING

- Write a message from one Rondo character to another, giving news of the events that have occurred in Rondo. You could write a letter from the queen of the Crystal Palace to her sister, a city messenger mouse to its friend in the country or the ogre to his brother. Remember the message has to be short so that it won't be too heavy for a mouse to deliver!

- Many of the characters in the world of Rondo are based on well-known fairytale characters. How many can you spot? Work in pairs to find as many as you can, and then work as a class to make a full list.
- Imagine that you are at the press conference in Chapter 23. Write a newspaper article reporting what occurred. Remember that a newspaper report should only describe exactly what happened, not give opinions.
- Invent your own magic potion made from strange ingredients. What does it do? Write a full recipe, with the ingredients listed first, and the method written out second, and draw a picture of the finished product.
- You may have noticed that many of the characters are named after their profession, for example Crumble the pie-seller and Posy the flower-seller. Make a list of all the characters in Rondo whose names match their jobs. Then invent your own list of names. What do you think the Rondo butcher is called? Or the firefighters?
- Leo inherits the music box from Aunt Bethany, and Mimi inherits the pendant. Does your family have precious things that have been handed down? Describe one of these things and explain why it is precious.
- Leo and Mimi have also inherited parts of their personality from their relatives. Who are they similar to in their families and why?
- Who are you similar to in your family, who are you different from, and why? It might be the way you look, something you're good at, the way you speak or something else entirely.
- Write about an adventure that happens in the world you created in the Art Activities. Remember to put in lots of details about your world. What kind of place is it – city, country, desert, outer space? What sounds would there be? What types of animals and plants? What would it smell like? Are there people? What do they look like and what do they do? There is no right answer; the aim is to describe a place so that it seems real to someone else reading your description.

### **3. MUSIC**

- What tune do you imagine the music box plays? Compose a melody using whichever instrument you like (a piano, recorder, xylophone or even your voice). See if you and a friend can make a duet using two instruments, and perform it for the class!
- Look up the word 'rondo' in the dictionary. What does it mean? How do you think the name applies in the book?

### **4. SCIENCE**

- How is a rainbow formed? Why are there seven colours in it? Are the colours always in the same order?

### **5. INTERNET**

- Names have a special significance in *Rondo*. Do a little research about your own name (first name, middle name if you have one and last name). Where does your name come from? What does it mean? Why did your parents choose your first name? Were you named after a family member? If you have a nickname, which name do you prefer and why?

## **EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

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- Many of the characters in *The Battle for Rondo* have changed and developed as a result of things they have experienced in their lives. The Tideseer is one example. Think of an example in your life, or in the life of someone you know, where an experience caused you to try something new, change your appearance or interests, or to think about things in a different way. Describe what happened as if it were a story.
- Part of the humour of *The Battle for Rondo* is caused by having traditional fairytale characters in a modern setting, all mixed up together. Pick two of your favourite fairytale characters (eg. Sleeping Beauty, the wolf from *Little Red Riding Hood*) and imagine what might happen if they met in a different situation, like a school or a shopping centre. What might happen if Chicken Little got a job in a fast food shop? Or Sleeping Beauty became a zookeeper after she woke up?
- The magic boots help the wearer to understand the feelings of the person who wore them last. Sometimes things can look very different from someone else's

point of view. Rewrite a well-known fairytale from the perspective of a minor character. For example, tell *Cinderella* from the point of view of the Ugly Sisters or *The Three Little Pigs* from the wolf's point of view.

- From the list of fairytales that you made in the Creative Writing Activities, pick one to research. Which country did it come from? Who wrote it? Find an example of a fairytale from your own family's country of origin and write it in your own words (if you don't know any fairytales from your own culture, ask your parents or grandparents for help).
- Sometimes the original version of a fairytale is a lot more frightening than its modern version. Compare, for example, the differences between Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* and the Disney animated version of *The Little Mermaid*. See if you can find other fairytales that were different in their original versions but be prepared: some of them are a little gory!
- If you liked *The Battle for Rondo*, 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**

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You might like to read other books by Emily Rodda, including the two previous Rondo books (*The Key to Rondo* and *The Wizard of Rondo*), books from the Deltora Quest series and from the Rowan of Rin series. How do they compare to *The Battle for Rondo* in your opinion?

If you enjoyed *The Battle for Rondo* you might also enjoy fantasy works by other Australian authors, such as the Monster Blood Tattoo trilogy by D.M. Cornish, *Dinosaur Knights* by Michael Gerard Bauer, the Wolf Kingdom books by Richard Harland, the Sorcerer's Tower quartet by Ian Irvine and Kim Wilkin's Sunken Kingdom series. And if you enjoy fairytales in general, you might enjoy *The Storyteller* TV series, available on DVD, or movies such as *The Princess Bride*, *Willow*, *Shrek*, *Ella Enchanted* and *Enchanted*.

## **WEBSITES**

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### **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>.

### **FAIRYTALES AND NURSERY RHYMES**

#### **General information:**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairy\\_tale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairy_tale)

#### **Fairytales and nursery rhymes:**

<http://www.ivyjoy.com/fables/index.shtml>

#### **Grimm brothers fairytales:**

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~spok/grimmtmp/> (plain text version)  
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm/>

#### **Grimm brothers info:**

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>

#### **Worksheets:**

[http://abcteach.com/directory/theme\\_units/literature/fairy\\_tales/](http://abcteach.com/directory/theme_units/literature/fairy_tales/),

#### **Links to games and resources:**

<http://webtech.kennesaw.edu/jcheek3/fairytales.htm>,  
[www.primaryschool.com.au](http://www.primaryschool.com.au) (do a search for fairy tales)

#### **Webquest:**

<http://www-ma.beth.k12.pa.us/jhoke/jhwebquest/jhwebquest.htm>

(N.B. the reading level of some of the stories may be too advanced for some students to follow).

#### **Quizzes:**

<http://www.abc.net.au/myfavouritebook/kids/quiz/default.htm>