



# Teachers' Notes FINDERS KEEPERS

EMILY RODDA

Teachers' Notes written by Kate Rowe

## OMNIBUS BOOKS

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Author	Emily Rodda
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## INTRODUCTION

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*Finders Keepers* is a fantasy story for readers aged nine to twelve. Patrick lives with his parents, his bossy older sister Claire and his annoying younger brother Danny. He sometimes finds his position as the middle child of the family frustrating. One day, he comes across a strange message on a computer screen in a local shop inviting him to compete in a TV program called Finders Keepers on Channel 8 that Saturday – but there is no such channel, and no one believes that his story is true, not even his kind babysitter Estelle. However, when Patrick turns to Channel 8 at the appropriate time he is transported to an alternate time stream, separated from our world by a shimmering wall called the Barrier, which we can't see from our side. When the Barrier breaks, items from each world slip into the other. Most of the items we lose are pushed back to us through the Barrier by the efficient Barrier Guards, but the things that slip through to our side stay lost. The contestants of the Finders Keepers game show, who are known as Seekers, rely on people from our side, known as Finders, to locate their lost things in exchange for prizes. Can Patrick, with the help of the flamboyant show co-host Boopie Cupid and computer expert Max, find all the lost things and win the computer he's been longing for? And more importantly, what is the dangerous TBE he keeps hearing about – and can he even get home at all? Through his adventures, Patrick learns about the importance of family and friends and learns to depend upon his own wits as well as the help of others.

*Finders Keepers* won an Australian Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award for Younger Readers and with its sequel, *The Timekeeper*, was made into a ten-part series for ABC TV.

## 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 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.

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**

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The themes of *Finders Keepers* 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**

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Emily Rodda says she thought of the idea for *Finders Keepers* when things like car keys and sunglasses kept getting lost in her family's house and when she noticed how many single socks there were!

Before reading *Finders Keepers*, students could think about and discuss things they've lost and what they did to find them. This could include:

- the biggest thing and the smallest thing they ever lost

- what they did to find it (e.g. retraced their steps, cleaned up, put up posters)
- whether it ever turned up.

## **READING THE TEXT**

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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**

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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 1-4:**

- Start a character chart with four columns. The 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.
- What are some of the problems Patrick faces being the middle child in his family?
- Patrick and Michael like to imagine what they would do if they had a million dollars. Whose idea do you prefer and why?
- Why doesn't anyone believe Patrick when he tries to tell them about Finders Keepers?

### **Chapters 5-8:**

- List five of the prizes Patrick could win on Finders Keepers.
- Add Boopie Cupid, Max and Lucky Lance Lamont to your character chart.
- What is the Barrier? Why, according to Boopie, can't we see it on our side?
- What does a Barrier Guard do?
- Whose clue will Patrick try to solve first? What do you think the item might be?

### **Chapters 9-12:**

- How does Patrick solve his problem of getting to Chestnut Tree Village?
- Where and how does Patrick find the object he is looking for?

- What is Patrick’s disappointing prize? What does Boopie suggest?
- What is the danger for people visiting the other side of the Barrier?
- What amazing sight does Patrick witness with Wendy Minelli?
- Add Eleanor Doon, Wendy Minelli and Ruby to your character chart.

### **Chapters 13-16:**

- The description of the Barrier Works Squad stitching the Barrier calls to mind a small event that happens in the very beginning of the book. What is it?
- Why does finding the second object create such a problem for Patrick?

### **Chapters 17-22:**

- What is the secret about Lucky Lance Lamont?
- How does Patrick find the final object?
- What is the great surprise waiting for Patrick at the end of the book?

## **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

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### **1. ART**

- Draw a picture of your favourite character from *Finders Keepers* using clues from the book to make them look exactly how you think the author describes them.
- Make a collage showing a Barrier Break. You’ll 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).
- Design your own shopping mall like Chestnut Tree Village imagining that these are the only shops in your town. It should have shops that are essential, such as supermarkets and food shops, but also shops that you would love to visit. Would it have a computer shop, a music shop, a shop that sold your favourite food or a jumping castle? Give it a name and make sure it has an interesting clock at the centre!
- Design some outfits for Boopie Cupid to wear on *Finders Keepers*.

## 2. CREATIVE WRITING

- Write a message from Patrick to Estelle after he has been home for one week. Include things that have been happening around the house and in his life. You could also write a reply from Estelle to Patrick and one from Boopie with news about Lucky.
- Have you ever lost anything really important to you? Write a letter to Finders Keepers saying why you should be chosen as a Seeker and why you would be good as a TV contestant. (If you haven't lost anything then make something up!)
- Invent your own rhyming riddle to describe your lost object. You can write a simple one, like Wendy's, or something more difficult, like Clyde's. Or you can use the riddle Eleanor Doon uses, where each line represents one letter of your lost thing. For example, if the lost thing is a cat, you might write 'My first is in CROW but not in BROW, my second is in SAT but not SIT, my third is in MAT but not HAM.' Can you solve all the riddles in the class?
- Patrick's attempts to find the lost things is made more challenging by the fact that he is a child and not able to get around on his own. List some of the good things and bad things about being a child and being an adult.
- Where are you in your family? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the eldest, the youngest, the middle child or an only child? Ask your friends for help with this one!

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

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- Do you watch game shows on TV or the Internet? Which show is your favourite? Discuss this as a class and then invent your own game show. You might like to do this in pairs or on your own. Does your show have a host(s)? What is the challenge for the contestants? What are the prizes? Describe the rules of the game.
- If you liked *Finders Keepers*, write and tell Emily Rodda why. 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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Emily Rodda has written several other books about fantasy worlds that exist alongside our own. If you enjoyed *Finders Keepers* you might like to read its sequel, *The Timekeeper*, and also *Pigs Might Fly*, *The Key to Rondo* and *The Wizard of Rondo*. In your opinion, how do they compare to *Finders Keepers*?

## **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>>