



# THE BRAINWAVES CLUB

Semester 1: The Tolkiens – Grades 4 and 5



## “THE WRITER’S QUEST”

Tolkien’s stories tell of epic quests and extraordinary heroes’ journeys. So let’s follow his lead. Do you have what it takes to complete an exciting mission: TO WRITE? The mission will require us to read, discuss, think and do some careful planning. And we’ll need to have great fun experimenting so that we have the tools and techniques, the skills and structures to be successful on this mission. You will be writing in different ways each week, using games and all sorts of stimulating activities to help you generate ideas and craft a range of short, imaginative pieces. We might even use some of our time to create a longer story, an epic of your own!

### Meeting 1 From Investigation To Creation!

(Focus: the hero and his/her path in literature)

Emily Rodda’s novels make wonderful models for exploring ‘The Hero’s Journey’. Once you find out about the classic ‘path’ or direction a plot follows, you will be able to recognise it in film, all sorts of literature, TV shows and of course, computer games! This week we take a look at the elements of the hero’s journey - *the call to adventure, the mentor, crossing the threshold, the tests and enemies, the ordeal and the reward, the return* – to map out how a quest unfolds and to explore how the central character fulfills the role of hero. We take a look at some categories or ‘types’ of heroes. All this will fuel your imagination so you too can create a host of potential heroes! Whether you develop one fascinating character or a gallery of possibles, your ideas will come in handy in the weeks to come! Any of the novels you have read can be used in this session - the more heroic characters, the better!

(\* although strictly speaking, the female term is heroine, hero is taken to be male and/or female here.)

### Meeting Two Precious, Peculiar or Popular Products!

(Focus: the purpose and setting of a quest)

The magic belt of Deltora contains seven gems of great value, power and importance. What mysterious property does each gem hold? The quest to restore them all to the famous belt and save the people of Deltora provides the framework for 8 novels in this first series by Emily Rodda. The fictional setting she has created, and the cleverly captivating titles for each story, serve as amazing inspiration for our writing pieces this week. Brainstorm about possible “collections” or “things” that **you** think would make for a fabulous story – or even a series. What special items do the other novels in our list revolve around? Are pieces wanted for good or evil purposes? Searched for by human or strange creatures? To be found via happy coincidence or diabolically difficult means? Create a visual image, like Rodda’s “Shadowlands” to enhance your words - a whole new world from within your imagination is just a few pencil strokes away, and today you have time to bring it to the beginnings of life!

### Meeting Three Revealing Rhymes!

(Focus: composing poetry)

This week ‘verse’ is our focus. In Rowan of Rin, the clues which reveal each stage of the journey are written in rhyme that is quite cryptic. They often refer to the senses, warning or enlightening Rowan about things that may be seen, heard or felt as he tries to recognise signs and to negotiate the dangers which may confound him on his quest. In contrast, the stories in verse we read from Roald Dahl, rely on humour, wit and some nonsensical vocabulary to paint a picture of unusual characters and odd situations! All of this will be read, performed, discussed and dissected to inform our writing today, as it takes the form of poetry. You might be creating a path of clues in verse, rewriting some classic tales in rhyming form or aiming very high and composing original stories in poetry!

### Meeting Four: Mission IM-possible?

(Focus: shaping the quest)

Rowan and Leif both undertake extraordinary and challenging missions. This week we attempt to answer the question: what do you need to do as an author (or film maker or game designer for that matter) to *really* captivate the reader (or viewer or player) so that they *really* want to follow the character through his or her mission? We look at a ‘mish-mash’ of missions from film, TV, books and computer games. Once we’ve decided on key elements, we work on creating (individually or in small groups) the most irresistible, gripping and edge-of-your-seat-heart-thumping missions possible! These will be presented to the group – maybe in an anonymous way (through writing) or in the form of drama. You know that famous saying, “Your Mission, should you choose to accept it”..? Well someone’s mission **will** be chosen - as the winner!

### Meeting Five: Super Structures!

(Focus: structuring our writing – the graphic organizer)

By now we’ve looked at many aspects of writing and reading that highlight the power and importance of expression and description - for both writer and reader. In the sessions ahead, more time is allowed for individual writing projects and it will be vital to plan these in detail before launching into them. Today we have enormous fun with a range of writing topics, making use of graphic organisers to experiment with ways of arranging and ordering our thinking. Everyone is different, so find out what might help **you** to generate ideas

and vocabulary to describe characters, plots, setting and action. As a result of these stimulating activities, you will have mapped out a plan (eg: beginning, setting, action, characters, quest undertaken, possible ending) and can get started on developing your chosen story in more detail. You will be set a homework task that asks you to collect items and place them in a box of some sort – these too will be helpful tools that you will use to expand your story further (eg: a map, cut out words, an object, an image of a character, an excerpt from a book...)

### **Meeting Six Writing - Individual projects (Focus: working on a major piece or shorter one-off challenges)**

We warm up with hilarious and hairy challenges - lipograms, anagrams, transmogrifications! Then it is down to business. Using our special 'boxes' and planning outlines from last week, you will be working on your own project. You may choose to develop your story idea from last session even further - and the options are endless in terms of what this can be (eg: poetry, play script, article, narrative, graphic novel). OR, you may decide to write shorter pieces in response to other given challenges (such as build a better beginning, add depth and dimension to characters, choose your own adventure action plots). Each author will have time to discuss his/her piece with me so that the task has a good level of challenge and is purposeful. This is where you are totally immersed in your mission of writing!

### **Meeting Seven Knuckling down and Tying Up! (Focus: generating ideas and reviewing work)**

Take the "Alphabet Soup" challenge to fire up your thinking and sharpen your skills. This requires you to use a string of letter clues to figure out book titles, famous pieces, classic authors and other questions which all have their answers in literature. We start with this and some hilarious, warm up tasks from my all-time favourite book of ideas for getting stuck into the business of writing! (You'll have to wait and find out!) Wordsmiths will be hard at work today. Depending on your chosen project, your time today might be spent finalising a longer story – in which case we'll be running through some important editing skills. Or, if you've opted for experimenting with a range of styles and writing techniques, you'll have time to write in response to the "Creativity Cards". These offer all sorts of questions that might be answered in very different ways through writing (eg: lists, articles, interviews, dialogue, graphics, speeches...). Maybe all great authors end up on their missions simply as a result of asking "what if...?" Let's try it!

### **Meeting Eight Mission Accomplished**

While you've been so busy and absorbed in achieving your mission's goal, what has everyone else been doing? Well, exactly the same! Giving and receiving feedback is an important part of the writing process, so we spend a short time sharing and appreciating each other's work. We also talk about how you can keep writing and challenging yourself in different ways - some amazing websites, competitions and writing opportunities are out there for you to keep an eye on, or enter into, so I'll share these with you. We wrap things up with a great combination of drama, reading and teamwork. Using some multi-voice poetry, selections from the novels read – or your original work if you're still in a writing mood – we create entertaining performance pieces to look at the lighter side of being a hero! If you're to be a writer, your quest will go on and on, but let's celebrate what we have learned so far!

#### **What students need:**

- Folder with lined folder paper (better than exercise book as, if I may need to take work home between sessions to edit.)
- Plastic pockets (5 should do)
- Well-stocked pencil case – scissors, glue stick, pencil, rubber, sharpener, pen, coloured pencils/textas
- Black fine liner
- Blank Jotter or exercise book for scribbling/ drawing

#### **Set texts**

*Members must have read the first two novels prior to the program as the club leader/ activities assume knowledge of the texts.*

#### **Set Novels:**

Rowan of Rin by Emily Rodda

Deltora Quest Series 1 (any of the books in this series ) by Emily Rodda

#### **Set Poetry Book:**

Songs and Verse by Roald Dahl

#### *Other optional texts:*

*The Golden Door* by Emily Rodda

*Wizard of EarthSea* by Ursula Le Guin

*Eragon* by Christopher Paolini

*The Hobbit* by J.R.Tolkien

*The Dark is Rising* by Susan Cooper

#### **About Our Club Leader**

Andrea Blake is an experienced teacher and writer currently working in the field of Gifted Education. She loves interacting with creative writers who enjoy the process of generating ideas and using language to share the riches of their imaginations! Andrea's favourite way to spend time is with a book – or talking with children about books and reading, so this club is a perfect place to be on a Saturday afternoon! As a life-long learner herself, Andrea continues to find that students teach her so much through their thoughtful and diverse responses to real challenge.

