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Teachers' Notes

The Three Doors Trilogy

The Third Door

EMILY RODDA

Teachers' Notes written by Kate Rowe

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INTRODUCTION

The Third Door is the third book in Emily Rodda's *Three Doors* trilogy. It follows on directly from the first two books, *The Golden Door* and *The Silver Door*. It is not necessary to have read the first two books to enjoy the story. However, teachers who have not read the first two books may be interested in reading the summaries at the end of these notes.

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 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 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

The Third 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 Third Door* include quest, journey, science versus magic, friendship, trust in others, trusting yourself, family ties, self-confidence, persistence, loyalty, the nature of truth, the value of history, cause and effect, and the nature of dictatorships.

BEFORE READING THE TEXT

The fantasy genre is a rich genre in literature, television and film. Before reading *The Third 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 Golden Door* and *The Silver Door* and could summarise the key parts of the story for the class. They may also have read *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

N.B. The questions will spoil the story. Hand them out only after everyone has finished the relevant chapters.

Students could answer these questions orally, alone or in pairs, or as a written task to be handed in. Encourage students to read the chapters attentively, then try to answer the questions in draft form based on what they remember. They can then go back and look carefully for the specific information, to check and enlarge their answers.

Chapter 1

- We meet the four main characters of the story in Chapter 1. What are their names, and which three of the four are related to each other?
A) The four main characters are Rye, Sonia, Dirk and Sholto. Rye, Dirk and Sholto are brothers.
- Start a list of the characters you will meet in *The Third Door*. You only need to list the ones that appear often (not, for example the Supervisor who only appears at the very beginning). Make five columns, with these five headings: Name, Job/Role, Appearance, Personality, Skills. For each character, write their name in the first column, then add notes in each other column on the same line as you learn things about them in the text (for example, for Rye, you can put 'red hair' into the Appearance column). Leave a few lines for each character so you have plenty of space to add things later. If the character doesn't have a job as such, just put something about what they do. For Sonia you might put things like 'Rye's friend', 'Annocki's friend', 'Volunteer' (she is trying to stop the skimmers, even though she was not officially allowed to go!)

- *The Third Door* begins straight after *The Silver Door* ends. What major event has just occurred when the story starts, and where are the four main characters going now?
A) Rye, Sonia, Sholto and Dirk have destroyed the skimmers at the Harbour, and have escaped captivity with the prisoners from Nanny's Pride Farm. Now they are going back to their home, the town of Weld.
- Which magic doors have Rye and his companions already been through, and which one will they go through next?
A) The companions have been through the golden Door (except for Sholto) and the silver Door. They plan now to go through the wooden Door.
- Who is Annocki?
A) Annocki is Sonia's friend, and the Warden of Weld's daughter.
- What does Sholto say happened to him in the Fell Zone? Who does Sonia think caused this to happen to him?
A) At first Sholto was in the Fell Zone, but then he found himself in the Saltings, with gaps in his memories and no idea what had happened. Sonia thinks the Fellan may have enchanted Sholto and driven him into the Saltings.
- Who are the Fellan, and what did they give Rye?
A) The Fellan are magic beings who live in the forest. They gave Rye a bag of magic powers.
- Why doesn't the magic feather work well in the Saltings?
A) The metal among the rocks in the Saltings affects magic, so the feather doesn't work as well as usual.

Chapters 2–3

- Why are the companions so surprised that there has been a bad skimmer attack in Weld?
A) They thought they had destroyed all but a few of the skimmers at the Harbour.
- Why is Sonia worried about Annocki?

A) Annocki lives in the Keep tower. Sonia is worried she may have been hurt by the skimmer attack.

- What damage did the skimmers cause? Which group of people is the worst affected?

A) Skimmers have brought down the tower of the Keep, injuring the Keep Orphans who sleep in the attic.

- Why is Faene surprised that Rye can't bandage serious wounds? Why can't Rye do this?

A) In his sheltered life in Weld, Rye has never been taught to do this kind of thing, and indeed has never needed to learn, whereas for Faene it is simply a necessity, a normal part of living in the more dangerous world outside the Wall.

Chapters 4–6

- What action do the people of Southwall wish to take to stop the skimmers?

A) The people of Southwall wish to build columns and put lanterns on the top to blind the skimmers and drive them away.

- What feels different to Rye this time when he goes through the wooden Door, compared to the silver and golden Doors?

A) When going through the golden Door and the silver Door, Rye was pulled off his feet and through the door, but this time he just walks straight through. And this time, the place where they arrive is dark.

- What is Sholto's theory about how Weld began, and was built?

A) Sholto believes Weld lies inside a hollow mountain, inside the crater of a dead volcano. The Wall of Weld began as a simple shell of rock, and more bricks were then added by the people who lived there: to repair holes and to keep things looking tidy.

- What do the Fellan tell Rye to do when they speak to him in his mind?

A) They tell him to go away and leave their place.

- Outside the Fell Zone, the companions arrive at a town they have never heard of. What is its name?

A) Fell End.

- Add Chieftain Farr, his family members and his councillors to your list of characters and fill in the details that you can find about them.

Chapters 7–9:

- What happened to Zak, and is he alright? How was Petronelle tricked into leaving Zak alone?

A) Zak was attacked by an unknown person or thing (a beast that spat white fire), but has almost recovered from his fright. Petronelle was tricked into leaving Zak alone by a fake messenger.

- Who is 'Keelin', and why has he been named this? What has happened to him?
A) 'Keelin' is Rye. He has lost his memory because of something to do with the attack on Zak. Petronelle, his nurse, named him Keelin, meaning 'young dragon' because she didn't know his name and had to call him something!

- (For those who have read *The Golden Door*): Who do you think threw the blue pebble into Rye/Keelin's room?

A) Sonia. She had a collection of blue pebbles in her pocket from their first adventure, and has previously used them to leave a trail for Rye to follow.

- What are the terrible problems that Farr's councillors talk about?

A) Slays, or skimmers, are attacking the people of Fell End, and people have been found dead in Riverside for no apparent reason. An enemy has burned a message—'Prepare to Die'—into a field.

- Why don't Councillors Manx and Sigrid trust Petronelle? Why does Janna believe Petronelle?

A) Manx and Sigrid don't trust Petronelle because she is part-Fellan, and they don't trust the Fellan. Janna has known Petronelle since she was a young girl, and knows she is a good person.

Chapters 10–13

- Why does Farr send Keelin/Rye to the museum with Zak?

A) Janna has been poisoned, and Farr and Petronelle are trying to save her life. Farr wants Zak away from the lodge so that the boy is not upset while this is happening. He wants to use Keelin as an excuse to get Zak to go to the Museum without wondering if something is wrong.

- Although the museum is a wreck, Keelin/Rye is looking forward to visit it. Why?
A) He is interested in meeting Carryl, the museum keeper and former chieftain, and hopes to hear what her important discovery is.
- How does Rye end up in the pit at the bottom of the Museum?
A) There is an explosion, and Rye falls through a hole in the ground floor into the pit in the foundations of the Museum.
- What amazing thing does Rye find when he is trying to get out of the Museum?
A) Rye finds a magic disc, which is a token of the pledge the Fellan made not to interfere in the affairs of the people of Dorne.
- How do Rye and Sonia get to Riverside from New Nerra?
A) They stow away on a barge travelling up the river.

Chapters 14–17

- Why is Dirk certain that Jett is not guilty of trying to kill Farr?
A) Because Dirk knows Jett, and knows that he is loyal to Weld. He can't believe Jett would hurt Farr, because Farr's enemy is also Weld's enemy—Farr and Jett are on the same side.
- What terrible thought about the pipeline occurs to Rye and Sonia while talking to Jett?
A) It occurs to them that the pipeline may in fact be used to transport skimmers to attack Weld.
- Which magic powers help Rye, Sonia, Dirk and Sholto escape from Riverside after Rye and Sonia leave Jett in the tower?
A) Rye uses the magic feather to swoop down and pick up Dirk and Sholto. He then lands in the river, and uses the serpent scale to help them swim all the way to Fell End.

- What does the word 'copperhead' mean? Is it a positive or negative word in this part of Dorne? Why?
A) A 'copperhead' is a person with red hair. It is a negative term. Red hair reminds people from this area of the Fellan, whom they distrust.

Chapters 18–20

- Why is Jett able to climb the pipeline so quickly?
A) Jett was a Wall worker in Weld, and so is good at climbing quickly, is very agile, and has no fear of heights.
- Why is Jett so upset when the skimmers do not come out of the pipeline, but from somewhere else in the sky?
A) Jett thought that Farr was going to send skimmers down the pipeline, but this has been shown to be wrong. He can't believe that he could have been mistaken.
- What terrible conclusion about the Fellan does Rye now believe?
A) Rye now believes the Fellan tricked him into destroying Olt, so that the Lord of Shadows could invade and clear the land of the people who were building settlements closer and closer to the Fellan's forest.
- What amazing thing does Rye learn about Sonia?
A) Rye learns that Sonia has magic powers. She has learned to use them since leaving Weld, and has been secretly responsible for many of the strange events that have helped them since then.

Chapters 21–26

- Whose story does Rye learn from looking into the magic pool?
A) Rye learns the story of the three sorcerer brothers, Annoltis, Malverlain and Eldannen.
- What is Eldannen's other identity, the name Rye knows him by?
A) Eldannen is the Sorcerer Dann, the founder of Weld.
- According to the magic pool, where did Eldannen lead his followers to, and why does this confuse Rye?

A) Eldannen led his followers to Weld. This confuses Rye because he and Sonia arrived in Oltan at the time of the second Gifting, which according to the pool was only seven years after Eldannen left Oltan and settled in Weld. However, the people of Weld believe Weld has existed for centuries.

- What is the true purpose of the pipeline, and what harm will this do?

A) The pipeline is meant to transport seawater from the sea to the forest. The salty water will destroy the magic of the Fellan forever, and leave Dorne vulnerable to attack.

- What is the truth about the three Doors of Weld?

A) The golden Door is a door to Dorne's past. The silver Door is a door to Dorne's future. And the wooden Door is a plain door that leads outside Weld into present-day Dorne.

- What is the power of the honey sweet, and what is the ninth power?

A) The honey sweet gives you the power of persuasive speech: people will listen to what you say and want to believe you. The ninth power is the cord of the bag the objects are held in—it makes people unable to move.

- Rye accuses the Warden of something awful in the final chapter of *The Third Door*. What is it, and how does the reader know it's true?

A) Rye accuses the Warden of plotting to send all the rebellious young men out of Weld on the pretext of stopping the skimmers, knowing that they would be unable to get back in without a bell tree stick. The Warden's first reaction is to say 'You cannot possibly know...' which means that Rye is right, and it is true.

- What is Sonia's true identity? Explain why she kept this a secret.

A) Sonia is in fact the Warden's daughter. At first she didn't want Volunteers to know who she was, when she tried to leave Weld with them. Then, once she had met Rye and his brothers, she didn't want to spoil things (i.e. she didn't want them to think differently of her).

- Where will the companions now make their homes?

A) The companions will all now settle in Riverside.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

N.B. The Creative Activities include questions that will spoil the story! Only give them out when all students are finished reading.

1. ART

- Draw or paint your favourite characters from *The Third Door*.
- Draw or paint your favourite scene from the story.
- Draw a plan of the maze of rooms beneath the Museum, making it as full of twists and turns as you imagine it to be.
- In *The Third Door* it is revealed that gradually over the centuries the clinks in the Wall of Weld have become skimmers, under the influence of jell. Draw or paint a timeline to show how these changes occurred gradually, with each generation becoming larger and more ferocious than the previous one. For example, in Olt's time, a clink was a clink: small, with tiny wings. One hundred years later, they might have been a bit bigger, and so on.
- Make an illustrated map of the companions' journey.
- Make an illustrated timeline of the world of Dorne from the past to the future. You might have a fork in your timeline to show two futures—one future in the Saltings where the Fell Zone has been destroyed, and the new future where the Fell Zone is saved (you'll have to use your imagination for this one!)

2. CREATIVE WRITING

- Which of Rye's magic objects is your favourite? What would you use it for? Write a story about your adventure with this magic power.
- Imagine that you are Tallus, recording everything that Sholto has told you about a) the development of the skimmers and b) the mystery of the three Doors. Write a historical record, explaining as best you can, to preserve this information for everyone who might read it later.
- Imagine you are Farr, and horrified to learn that you almost destroyed the Fellan's land, and the Fellan themselves, for the wrong reason. Write an official

apology letter to the Fellan explaining what happened, and your wishes for future peace.

- Imagine you are Lisbeth, living a new life in Riverside. Write a letter to your friend Bettina back in the Keep, telling her about the differences between life in Weld, and life outside the Wall.
- 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.
- Imagine you are Crell, and write the new edition of *The Lantern* mentioned in Chapter 25, reporting on what has happened to the Wall and what will happen in the future.
- In the book, Rye and Sonia visit the same places three times without realising it. Choose a place near your school and home. Describe it as it might have been 1000 years ago (for example). Describe it as it is at present. Then describe it as it might be in the future (in 70 years, for example).

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 Rye's adventure through the wooden Door. You can make up your own tune, or just use a tune you already know and put new words to it.
- In groups, choose a small part of the story to act out as a short play. Write a script for yourselves, using lines from the story. You might decide to have a narrator, who describes some of the setting as you go. Or, you might decide as a class to create your own scenery and costumes, and perform your play for another class. SUGGESTIONS: If the whole class wish to participate, you would be best off choosing a crowd scene. For example, you could recreate the first arrival of Farr at Riverside, or the rescue of the Keep Orphans from the attic.

4. DISCUSSION TOPICS, CLASS PROJECTS &/OR ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Choose a character from the book and, using the lists you began in Chapter 1, choose three adjectives that seem to describe him or her best (e.g. Faene: beautiful, gentle, loyal). Repeat for as many characters as you like, trying not to use the same adjective twice. This could be done individually, in pairs, or as a whole class.
- Interestingly, Rye, Sholto and Dirk are not the only set of three brothers who are important in this story. Who are these other brothers, and how would you say they are similar and different to Rye, Sholto and Dirk in the choices they have made?
- *'I daresay if he had not run away he would have been declared dead like all the others,' said Tallus calmly. 'And that would have been a pity, for me and for the whole of Weld. There are more ways than one to be a hero.'* (Chapter 4). Who is Tallus talking about, and why? What do you think it means to be a hero? List some characters from the book and the different ways in which they have been brave, e.g. Lisbeth, Tallus, the Keep healer, Crell.
- *'Caryl will be so glad to see us. She says more people should come to the museum. She says people don't realise how important it is ...'* (Chapter 10). Why is it important to learn about history? How would knowing more about the true history of their land have helped the people of Dorne?
- In our world today, we have incredible access to historical records, thanks to the Internet. But there are other important methods to rely on too, such as books, letters, stories, newspapers, and objects. It is always important to consider just how reliable your source is. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of studying history from published books versus learning from the Internet with sites like Wikipedia, for example.
- Name all the jobs you know that are related to history (e.g. archaeologist, researcher) and make a list of all the different museums you know of. You could even go and visit one as a class excursion!
- How do you think Rye's view of Weld has changed since his adventures outside the Wall?

- In what ways do you think Rye, Dirk, Sonia and Sholto change during this journey? You might discuss things like confidence, the way they treat each other, and things that they learn about the world, and about themselves. You can compare their behaviour at the beginning of the story, in the middle and at the end, if it helps—and if you have read *The Golden Door* you could even think about how they have changed since the very beginning of the story.
- 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?
- How do you think Dirk and Sholto change their opinions about Rye, as a result of their adventures with him?
- Although Sholto becomes a little more accepting of Rye's belief in magic in *The Third Door*, he still much more interested in explaining all mysteries with scientific methods. In our world, it is certainly the case that modern technology can seem like magic if you don't know how it works. What modern objects in our world do you think would seem like magic to someone from the past who didn't know about the technology we have today?
- If you liked *The Third 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

5. **EXTENSION: FOR THOSE WHO HAVE READ ALL THREE BOOKS**

- In many of her talks around Australia, author Emily Rodda has mentioned that she considers her Deltora Quest, Rowan of Rin, and Three Doors series to all take place in the same world, on different islands in the same sea—in a layout rather like the Pacific Islands in our world. And the end of *The Third Door* provides a very important clue as to which of the islands in the books above is

nearby Dorne! Have you read any other of Emily Rodda's books that seem to have links to the Doors Trilogy? If your class has some time, or if individual students are interested, encourage them to look at other stories in these series and make links between them. If there is enough knowledge of the stories in the class, you could even work on a map of the whole area.

- In what ways does Sonia change throughout the trilogy? Compare what she is like at the beginning to the person she becomes.
- In what ways does Rye change throughout the trilogy? Compare what he knows, and what he is like at the beginning to the person he becomes.

FURTHER READING

Emily Rodda has written many other fantasy stories. If you liked *The Silver 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.emilyrodde.com> and

<http://www.scholastic.com.au>

PLOT SUMMARIES

PLOT SUMMARY OF *THE GOLDEN DOOR*:

Shy, good-natured Rye has lived his whole life behind the Wall, in the safe but confining city of Weld. His father died before the story began, and when we meet him he is living with his mother Lisbeth and two older brothers: adventurous and heroic

Dirk, who is a Wall worker, and clever, solitary Sholto who is studying with and working for the eccentric healer Tallus.

Like the other citizens of Weld, Rye 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, despite the best efforts of Wall workers to maintain the Wall, their city is no longer safe. Weld has been besieged in summer by savage, bat-like creatures called skimmers. These deadly creatures continue to fly in hordes over the Wall from an unknown source, looking for human and animal prey.

Slow to act, the Warden of Weld finally offers a large reward to any man over the age of 18 who can find and defeat the Enemy sending the skimmers. Volunteers are given the option to leave Weld through one of three secret magic Doors: golden, silver, and wood. Dirk is among the first to volunteer, and when he does not return and is declared dead, Sholto leaves in search of the source of the skimmer menace. Sholto does not return either, and is also declared dead.

Subsequently, Rye's home is destroyed by skimmers, and he and his mother leave to seek work in the Weld Keep. In despair, blaming himself for the loss of their home, and with a strange certainty that his brothers are in fact still alive, Rye decides to track down Dirk and Sholto. He has had visions about them both, and is encouraged by Tallus to go after them. Rye lies about his age to volunteer for the Warden's quest, and chooses the golden Door which he believes would have appealed to Dirk. Although he is afraid, Rye believes that he needs to find his older brothers so that they can set things right.

When the moment comes to choose a Door, Rye is surprised and blackmailed by a girl dressed in the clothes of a Keep orphan. She wishes him to take her through the door, as girls are not allowed to volunteer. He is forced to take her with him rather than risk his mother being shamed when his lie to the Warden is found out. Travelling with Sonia is at first very annoying for Rye, but as they tackle deadly creatures, mysteries,

and adventures together, they become firm friends. Sonia is determined to stop the skimmers herself, and this is her motivation for leaving Weld.

Soon after their arrival in the dangerous Fell Zone outside the Door, Rye is given a bag of magic objects, or 'nine powers' by the mysterious Fellan people who live in the forest. At first he believes he has been given the bag in error, and feels guilty about this. Sonia persuades him however to put his need to find his brother above such thoughts, and to be glad he has received such good fortune. Throughout the story, Rye discovers how to use four of the objects: a crystal that gives light when touched, and also allows him to see through walls, a speed ring, a hood of invisibility, and a sea scale that enables him to swim like a sea creature.

Rye and Sonia are surprised to learn that no one in the outside world seems to have any idea that Weld exists. They also realise that the land of Dorne is not peopled entirely by barbarians, as they have been taught, but by regular, kind-hearted people. They are saved from a bloodhog attack by a farmer called FitzFee, who takes them with him to the horse trading town of Fleet. Rye's oath to the Warden prevents him from telling anyone that he is from Weld, but he and Sonia soon discover that Dirk lived in Fleet for a time while injured, and they meet a young noblewoman, Faene, who it turns out is Dirk's sweetheart.

They learn that Dorne is ruled by a tyrant called Olt, who demands that human sacrifices be made every seven years on Midsummer Eve as part of a magic spell to give him renewed life. This ceremony is called 'the Gifting'. Olt claims it is necessary in order for him to continue to protect Dorne magically from foreign attack. Two of Olt's sorcerer brothers are possible threats: one has become the terrifying Lord of Shadows across the sea, the other has been exiled and is believed to be in the east of Dorne.

The people of Fleet are about to undertake a daring escape across the sea to the Land of Dragons, where they will be free of Olt's control. Faene plans on staying behind to be with Dirk, when he returns. However both Faene and Sonia are unexpectedly captured by Olt's soldiers for the Gifting, and Rye sets off to rescue them.

Rye discovers that his brother Dirk is working with a rebel group to overthrow Olt and stop the Gifting. However Dirk falls into a trap, and is captured. As the Gifting ceremony begins, he is chained to rocks on the coast along with Sonia, Faene and others, and sea serpents are summoned to kill and eat them. Rye uses the magic sea serpent scale and the invisibility hood to swim to the captives and release them with Sonia's help. He at last understands that it is he, not his brother, who has the means to save them all. At the crucial moment, Rye uses the power of the serpent scale to drive the serpents away. Olt tries to attack him, but is eaten by one of the serpents. The crowd strikes back against the remaining guards, and is successful in regaining control of their land.

PLOT SUMMARY OF *THE SILVER DOOR*:

Rye, Sonia, Dirk and Faene journey back to Weld, and leave Faene in safety there with the Warden's daughter—Sonia's friend, Annocki. They then set off on their second adventure, through the silver Door this time, to find Sholto, and hopefully the source of the skimmers. Although the tyrant Olt has been overthrown, he was not the source of the skimmers, and thus the threat to Weld remains. Rye has a strong feeling Sholto has chosen the silver Door, and that this is where the skimmers are, too. As his visions of Dirk turned out to be true, he believes his similar visions of Sholto and skimmers are also true.

The silver Door leads Rye, Sonia and Dirk to the Saltings, a hostile rocky environment inhabited by flesh-eating snails and filled with bits and pieces of old metal objects. They find bits of Sholto's diary, and follow his trail through the Saltings. At the edge they meet a strange, white-haired man called Bones who collects bones from the Saltings for trade. Bones believes the three companions are magic, and leads them to the Scour—a desert-like place—where they meet Cap, the leader of a desperate band of people struggling for survival.

Following a visit from a deceptive trader named Four-Eyes, Rye, Dirk and Sholto are forced to confront the likelihood that Sholto is dead—Four-Eyes has a lantern that Rye

knows was Sholto's, and claims to have found it next to a dead man. With heavy hearts, they stow away in Four-Eyes' steam-powered vehicle to shorten their trip to the Master's headquarters where they hope to find the skimmers and destroy them.

They are soon overpowered by a band of rebels who are also hiding in the vehicle and have their own plan: to go to the Diggings—a terrible jell mine which uses slave labour—and rescue their friends and family from there. The rebels abandon Dirk, Four-Eyes and Rye's bag of magic objects, in the desert. They blackmail Rye into helping them by threatening to kill Sonia, who they seem to believe is a witch—their belief has something to do with her red hair and her eyes.

At the Diggings, with the aid of a fake letter provided by the rebels, Rye pretends to be working for the Master on a mission to collect the slaves and take them to the Harbour in Four-Eyes' vehicle. The inhuman Grey Guards on duty at the Diggings believe him and round up the slaves. But the escape is ruined by the arrival of an actual servant of the Master: Kyte, a slave-hunter. She and her soldiers capture Rye, Sonia, the rebels, and the escaped prisoners and transport them all to the Harbour. On the way, to their astonishment, Rye and Sonia learn that they can speak to each other in their minds.

At the Harbour, Rye and the prisoners overhear a conversation between the Master, also known as the Lord of Shadows, and Brand, who is in charge at the Harbour. Rye is shocked to learn that Olt's death, which he caused, has allowed the Lord of Shadows to invade. The prisoners are then confronted by a cage full of skimmers, and told that they will be the skimmers' prey the next day. Rye is horrified to realise that these are new, more advanced skimmers, with eyes that can see in daylight as well as night. These skimmers will surely mean the end of Weld. To Rye's enormous shock, they then meet Sholto, who is alive and well, and appears to be working for the Master under the name Vrett. Later Sholto finds the prisoners and reveals the truth: he is working undercover, secretly trying to find a way to destroy the skimmers.

Dirk and Bones arrive and call through a vent in the roof, having found their way from the desert. Dirk returns Rye's bag of magic objects to him, having found it when he woke. The rebels, who have come to believe Rye and Sonia's story, cover for Rye as he and Sholto sneak away from the cage and try to carry out Sholto's plan to destroy the skimmers on this floor of the compound. Sholto shows Rye a wall with a section made of heavy fabric—on the other side is the sea. With the use of the magic key, Rye opens the wall, and the sea comes in and drowns all the skimmers.

Rye and Sholto then use the magic feather to fly up a high wall and through some bars into a giant hall where Sonia and the prisoners are about to be attacked by the remaining test skimmers. Dirk and Bones arrive at the same spot on the roof above, and Rye opens a vent for them with the magic key. Keeping himself invisible with the magic hood, Rye flies down to Sonia and the prisoners with a rope, and lifts them all out with the magic feather. The plan almost fails when one of the rebels slips and almost falls, pulling off Rye's invisibility hood in the process, and the escapees are spotted. But they reach the top and the rebels are lifted out by Dirk and Bones. Most of the skimmers are released while Rye, Sonia and Sholto are still inside, but the companions are protected first by Rye's magic armour shell, and then by a mysterious white smoke which appears from nowhere. Sholto is the last to escape, and taunts Kyte until she blasts her weapon at him. The weapon mysteriously misses its mark, and blows a hole in the wall, whereupon the Shadow Lord's gigantic birds burst through and kill her, and the skimmers. Brand is killed by the Shadow Lord for his failure. Only one cage of skimmers remain alive.

The prisoners are returned to their friends and families at Nanny's Pride Farm, and Rye, Sonia, Dirk and Sholto plan to return to Weld, and go through the wooden Door to learn the answers to the remaining mysteries.