



# Teachers' Notes

## The Three Doors Trilogy

### The Silver Door

EMILY RODDA

Teachers' Notes written by Kate Rowe

#### OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Junior Fiction
	The Three Doors
Title	Book 2: The Silver Door
Author	Emily Rodda
Extent	288 pp
Age	8+
Australian RRP	\$16.99
Binding	Paperback
ISBN	978 1 86291 913 6
Format	198 x 128 mm

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## INTRODUCTION

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*The Silver Door* is the second book in Emily Rodda's Three Doors Trilogy. The story follows on directly from the first book, *The Golden Door*. It is not necessary to have read *The Golden Door* to enjoy this book. However, teachers who have not read *The Golden Door* may be interested in reading the following brief summary of the story so far.

### **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 wooden. 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 brothers 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 serpent scale that enables him to swim like a fish.

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.

### **INTRODUCTION TO *THE SILVER DOOR***

Rye, Sonia, Dirk and Faene journey back to Weld, planning to leave Faene in safety there while they set off on their second adventure. 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 true also.

The silver Door will lead Rye, Sonia and Dirk to bare, desolate places—the Saltings, the Scour—and strange, often desperate people locked in a struggle for survival. It will provide answers to some mysteries, while also giving them new ones to think about. And it will lead them into terrible danger, as the wider ramifications of Olt’s downfall become clear and an even more dangerous enemy rises to challenge them.

## 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 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. 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 others 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. In 1995 Emily Rodda won the prestigious Dromkeen Medal. 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.emilyrodda.com>.

## WRITING STYLE

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*The Silver 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 Silver Door* include quest, journey, science versus magic, friendship, trust, family ties, self-confidence, persistence, loyalty, the nature of truth, and the nature of dictatorships.

## BEFORE READING THE TEXT

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The fantasy genre is a rich one in literature, television and film. Before reading *The Silver 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 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

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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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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.

## Chapter 1

- *The Silver Door* begins straight after *The Golden Door* ends. What major event has just occurred when the story starts?  
A) Rye has overthrown the tyrant Olt, freeing the people of Dorne from his control. He has also rescued his friend Sonia, his brother Dirk, and Dirk's sweetheart, Faene.
- Where do the people of Oltan think Rye must be going? Where is he actually going?  
A) They think he must be going to the camp of the exiles, which they believe to be in the east. In fact, he and his friends are going back to their home, Weld, an ancient walled city in the centre of Dorne hidden within the forbidden Fell Zone.
- Why do Rye and the others stop at Fleet, even though it is now deserted?  
A) Faene wants to visit her parents' grave and say goodbye to her home.
- For how many years have the skimmers been attacking Weld? What did the Warden finally do to solve the problem?  
A) The skimmers have been attacking Weld for seven years. The Warden challenged volunteers to leave the city of Weld to find and destroy the Enemy who was sending the skimmers.
- How many volunteers have returned to Weld?  
A) None so far. Rye and Dirk will be the first.
- Who is still missing from Rye's family?  
A) Rye's brother Sholto is still missing.
- In *The Golden Door* Rye was given a bag full of magic objects by mysterious people called the Fellan. Which objects has he already worked out how to use?  
A) The light crystal, the speed ring, the invisibility hood, and the sea serpent scale that helps him swim.
- Why can't Rye and Dirk tell Faene about Weld? Why does Sonia insist on telling her?  
A) Rye and Dirk both swore an oath never to tell anyone that they come from Weld. Sonia never swore the oath and is free to say what she likes (N.B. In *The*

*Golden Door* Sonia was not an official Volunteer, but blackmailed Rye in order to sneak out with him). In addition, she believes it is ridiculous not to tell Faene about Weld since they are taking her there, and she will soon see it for herself anyway.

- Why don't Rye, Dirk and Sonia want anyone to know they have returned to Weld?

A) They believe the Warden will stop them leaving again in search of Sholto, and that he will react badly to the presence of Faene, since he thinks everyone outside Weld is a barbarian.

### **Chapters 2–3**

- Why does Faene decide not to stay with FitzFee and his family?  
A) Faene realises that Dirk may be prevented by the Warden from coming back to get her if she stays behind, and she doesn't know the way to Weld on her own. So she decides to come with him so they can stay together.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the magic of the red feather?  
A) The feather makes Rye float upwards into the air, but does not propel him forwards – he must pull himself along.
- What is Rye's mother's name, and where does she work?  
A) Rye's mother is called Lisbeth, and she works in the Keep kitchens.
- According to the workers in the kitchen, why is the Warden uncomfortable about his daughter?  
A) The kitchen workers believe the Warden is uncomfortable about his daughter because she should have been a boy, to rule Weld after him. Women apparently are not allowed to rule in Weld.

### **Chapters 4–6**

- Who does Rye overhear on his way up the chimney?  
A) Rye hears his mother talking to two other kitchen workers, and the Warden talking to an officer.
- Why has Annocki been worried about Sonia?  
A) Annocki knew that Sonia was trying to get through the Doors, and was worried about her safety outside Weld.



- Why does Rye think his dream about Sholto must be true?  
A) Rye's dreams of Dirk turned out to be true: they were visions of what Dirk was really doing. So Rye assumes his dreams of Sholto are also true.
- What is Tallus' new idea about how to stop the skimmers?  
A) Tallus believes the skimmers are sensitive to light, and that if the whole of Weld could be lit up like day at night-time, the skimmers would not approach.
- Why does the Warden disagree with Tallus' plan?  
A) The Warden is stubborn and reluctant to try something new. He feels that building all the columns would be too messy and time-consuming. He says that he cannot spare workers from the Wall, or soldiers to carry out the plan.
- What happens in the Chamber of the Doors that almost disrupts the companions' plan to find Sholto?  
A) Rye is very drawn to the wooden Door, and almost goes through it before Sonia stops him. They must go through the silver Door to find Sholto.

### **Chapters 7–9**

- When the companions go through the Door, where does Dirk think they have arrived? Why does Sonia disagree?  
A) Dirk believes they are on the eastern side of the island of Dorne. Sonia says it can't be Dorne, because everything there is dead.
- How does Rye prove to Sonia that they are in Dorne?  
A) Rye shows Sonia that the snail shell in his magic bag of objects matches the shells of the snails in this place exactly.
- Although the giant bird attacks them, the companions are not hurt. Why not?  
A) The magic shell has the power of protection, and armours Rye, Sonia and Dirk against the attack.
- What clue tells Sonia and Rye that they are arriving at the end of the mist and snails?  
A) They notice that the air has become a little fresher and easier to breathe, as if the mist is ending.

### **Chapters 10–13**

- Does Bones know how to read?

A) Bones can't read, but he knows the meaning of certain written words.

- What unpleasant discovery does Rye make about the bones that make Bones' sled?

A) Bones' sled is made from human bones.

- What three things, according to Cap, make escape impossible for the people of the Den?

A) They are watched continually, the borders are sealed, and they would die if they tried to cross the Saltings.

### **Chapters 14–17**

- Why do Dirk and Sonia want to put the ducks outside Four-Eyes' wagon?

A) They know that the ducks would be useful to the people of the Den.

- Why does Rye disagree with this plan?

A) Rye reminds Dirk and Sonia that finding the skimmers is their top priority, and that means travelling hidden in Four-Eyes' wagon. If they put the ducks outside, Four-Eyes will know that someone has been inside his wagon, and will search from top to bottom.

- What is jell used for in Weld?

A) Jell is used in Weld as a cheap red dye for cloth.

- What happened to Bean and Bird's brother? What are Bean and Bird going to do?

A) Bell was taken to the Diggings as a slave. Bean and Bird are going to try to get him back, along with other people taken from their village.

- What jobs do the slaves do at the Diggings?

A) They dig for jell in the tunnels, carry earth and rock out of the mining pits and into the carts, and lead the miniature bloodhogs that pull the carts to the waste pile.

### **Chapters 18–20**

- Who is Kyte, and whom does she work for?

A) Kyte is a slave-hunter who was responsible for capturing the people from Nanny's Pride Farm, and taking them to the Diggings as slaves. She works for the Master.

- What does Rye realise about the names of the people he has met (e.g. Lucky, Giggle, Bud etc.)  
A) The people in this place use nicknames instead of their real names, believing the old tale that if you know someone's true name you have power over them.
- What amazing discovery do Rye and Sonia make while captive in the wagon?  
A) Rye and Sonia discover that they can speak to each other in their minds.
- Describe briefly the appearance and feeling of the building at the Harbour.  
A) The building is extremely big, and has no windows or doors. It is grey, lit with bright white lights. There is a feeling of magic that is cold, and fills Rye with dread.
- What is the true identity of the Master?  
A) The Master is the sorcerer who was exiled from Dorne and became the Lord of Shadows. He is brother to the tyrant Olt, and to the third brother who was exiled.
- Why does Rye feel responsible for the Master's rise to power in Dorne?  
A) Rye caused Olt's death. This meant that Olt's protective spell over Dorne was broken, and the Master was able to swoop in, destroy the third brother in the East, and take control of his land.
- What is the difference between the skimmers Rye has seen in Weld, and the skimmers in the building at the Harbour?  
A) The skimmers in Weld are almost blind, with white eyes, and are not able to hunt in the light. The skimmers in the Harbour can see in the light, and have brown or murky grey eyes.

### **Chapters 21–26**

- Why are the captives trapped on the lower level of the building?  
A) The lifting chambers have been taken upstairs, and there is no other way out.
- Who arrives on the roof while Sholto, Rye and the others are talking?  
A) Dirk, Bones and Four-Eyes' clink.
- Why does Sonia stay behind in the cage?

- A) Sonia decides to disguise herself and pretend to be Rye, so that the guards do not suspect he has escaped.
- What is Sholto's plan for destroying the skimmers, and why does he think it won't work?  
A) Sholto knows that if he could open the round door on the wall of the skimmers' room, the sea would rush in and drown the skimmers. However, he has not been able to open this door, despite many attempts, so he believes it is impossible.
  - How does Rye solve this problem?  
A) Rye uses the magic golden key to open the door, and the sea serpent scale to keep him and Sholto afloat when the water rushes in.
  - How does Dirk's training as a worker on the Wall of Weld help him in Chapter 24?  
A) Dirk is able to jump through the grating on the roof and balance on the ledge next to Rye without help, thanks to his training.
  - Why does Brand's shouting almost ruin the escape?  
A) Brand's shouting gives Pepper a shock, causing him to fall. He grabs Rye, pulling the invisibility hood from him, and making the escapees visible. Rye then has trouble regaining his concentration in order to make the magic work.

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

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**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 Silver Door*.
- Draw or paint your favourite scene from the story.
- Draw a plan of the headquarters at the Harbour, using clues from the book.

- What do you think a clink looks like? Draw or paint a picture, and give your clink a name. Depending on your resources, you could also make a sculpture out of Fimo or clay, or even sew a puppet clink out of felt. (There are many instructional websites and videos available on the Internet by searching for ‘make a felt finger puppet’.)
- Make an illustrated map of the companions’ journey.
- With your art teacher, investigate all the ways you could create the landscape of the Saltings, for example painting, drawing, or collage (you could use pasta shells to represent the snails!), and choose the one that seems the most interesting to complete.

## 2. CREATIVE WRITING

- Imagine that you are Faene, and are anxiously waiting with Annocki for the others to return through the silver Door. Write a journal entry about what it is like to wait, and about your first impressions of Weld, using clues from Chapters 1–5.
- The Warden of Weld is very cautious, fussy and vain about his appearance. Imagine that you are the Warden of Weld, and write a journal entry talking about the events of the day Tallus comes to see you. (Reminder: there is a skimmer attack on the chimney the night before, which he would probably mention.)
- Imagine you are one of the captives from Nanny’s Pride Farm, who are rescued by Rye and the others. Write a letter to a friend on the other side of Dorne, telling them you escaped, and describing in your own words what happened in the Harbour headquarters.
- In *The Silver Door*, Rye learns how to use some more of the magic powers he has been given. But there are still two to be discovered. What do you think the wrapped honey sweet is for, and what is the ninth power? Write a paragraph about your theories.
- Which magic object is your favourite? What would you use it for? Write a story about your adventure with this magic power.

- 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 & 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 silver 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 wishes to participate, you would be best off choosing a crowd scene. For example, you could recreate the scene when the people of the Den climb out of the Mounds and challenge Rye, Dirk and Sonia, or you could even try the scene when Kyte takes the captives through the skimmer area!

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

- Choose a character from the book, and 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.
- *'Rye saw Faene rub the pane in front of her with her sleeve. She could not understand why everything looked so dim. She thought the window was clouded. Dirk was glancing at her uneasily. Perhaps he, too, was seeing his home with new eyes, and wondering if Faene of Fleet would ever be truly happy*

*shut away inside the Wall.*' (Chapter 4). What do you think are the positive and negative aspects of the protected life behind the Wall of Weld?

- How do you think Rye's view of Weld has changed since his adventures outside the Wall?
- Read again the discussion between Tallus and the Warden in Chapter 6. Who do you think is in the right? Does the other person have a point too? How do you think the personalities of these two characters might get in the way of them truly understanding each other?
- Many of the characters in *The Silver Door* have nicknames. Do you have a nickname? What are some common nicknames, and why do people get nicknames? (e.g. to shorten a long name, or to be friendly)
- 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?
- What are the consequences of Olt's downfall, both positive and negative? Was it good or bad that Rye and his companions removed Olt from power, or is it too early to tell?
- *'There are still too many mysteries,' Rye said. 'Too many things we do not understand. And from the very beginning, the wooden Door has—has beckoned to me. I think ... I am sure ... it holds the answer.'* (Chapter 26) What mysteries do you think Rye is talking about? What do you think the companions will find through the wooden Door?
- 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. 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, Dirk, Sonia and Sholto change during this journey? You might discuss things like confidence, the way they treat each other, or things that they learn about the world, or 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?
- In *The Silver Door*, Sholto is critical of Rye’s belief in magic, saying that all mysteries can be explained by scientific methods. Whether you agree with him or not, 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?
- In many of her talks around Australia, author Emily Rodda has mentioned that she considers her Deltora Quest, Rowan of Rin novels and the Three Doors Trilogy 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. Have you read any other of Emily Rodda’s books that seem to have links to *The Silver Door*? 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.
- If you liked *The Silver 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

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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

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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.scholastic.com.au>