

RANDOM HOUSE TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

Red Rocks

Rachael King

While holidaying at his father's house, Jake explores Wellington's wild south coast, with its high cliffs, biting winds, and its fierce seals.

When he stumbles upon a perfectly preserved sealskin, hidden in a crevice at Red Rocks, he's compelled to take it home and hide it under his bed, setting off a chain of events that threatens to destroy his family.

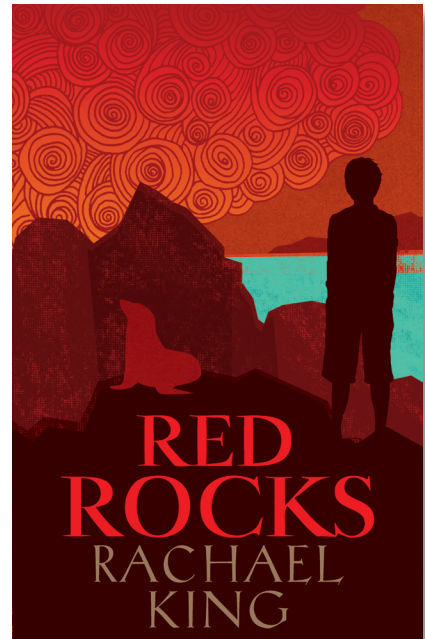
Red Rocks takes the Celtic myth of the selkies, or seal people, and transplants it into the New Zealand landscape, throwing an ordinary boy into an adventure tinged with magic.

With its beautiful writing and eerie atmosphere, junior readers will be thrilled and moved by this captivating story.



Rachael King is the author of two novels for adults: *Maggie Hall* and *The Sound of Butterflies*, which won the award for the best first novel at the 2007 Montana Book Awards and has been published in ten languages. In 2008 Rachael was the Ursula Bethell Writer in residence at Canterbury University, and she has lived in Christchurch ever

since. The idea for *Red Rocks* came to her as she walked her first baby son around Wellington's wild south coast and thought it a place where magic could happen. It is her first novel for children.



SPECIFICATIONS:

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Classification: NZ YA Fiction

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Format: Paperback

Extent: 254pp

Readership: 10+

RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

- Before reading
- Language
- Characters
- Themes
- Creative responses

Price (GST inclusive) and author details are correct at the time of writing but are subject to change without notice. Visit www.randomhouse.co.nz for up-to-date information.

Before reading

1. What does the cover picture indicate that the book is about?
2. When and where might the story be set?
3. What does the title suggest to you?

Language

1. What do you think the genre of this book is? List the aspects that are indicative of this genre.
2. The story is told in the third person. Why do you think the author chose to do this? Was it effective? Choose a passage in the book and rewrite it in the first person narrative.
3. Figurative language is used to convey ideas that might otherwise be difficult to express. Two examples of figurative language are similes and metaphors. An example of a simile is 'a row of seals . . . watched him, like a row of sentries guarding the sea' (p. 99). An example of a metaphor is 'Her eyes were black coals throbbing in her face' (p. 196). Find more examples of each type of figurative language from the book.
4. The author uses symbolism in the book. Explain what the following phrases might symbolise:
 - 'made him see red' (p. 15)
 - 'danced like a whirling dervish' (p. 110)
 - 'her voice made a beeline for my heart' (p. 179)
 - 'as happy as a clam' (p. 242)
5. The author uses personification to describe elements of nature. For example, 'Waves battered the beach, chattering to the stones as they receded' (p. 7) and 'the wind, and the cliffs behind the house, which stretched and leaned in and moaned' (p. 69). Write a poem or descriptive paragraph using personification about other forces of nature.
6. The author uses animal imagery in some similes. For example, 'only its little face poked out, like a marsupial in a pouch' (p. 32) and 'the island emerged like a giant crouching turtle' (p. 118). Think of ten other animals and create a simile for each.
7. Jake uses a simile from nature to describe Cara when he says 'she shone like the sun' (p. 70). Find some love poetry and list the types of similes used. Write your own love poem.
8. What figure of speech are the words 'bump and lurch' (p. 32) examples of? Find five more examples of this figure of speech from the book. Write a poem or descriptive paragraph which includes these words.
9. Find definitions for the following words from the novel and write one sentence using each:
 - tentatively (p. 11)
 - fissure (p. 13)
 - taunting (p. 32)
 - emanated (p. 77)
 - incredulous (p. 78)
 - impediment (p. 87)
 - sombre (p. 89)
 - abated (p. 94)
 - diluting (p. 193)
 - mesmerised (p. 194)

Characters

1. Think of three adjectives to describe Jake.
2. List the qualities of Jake's personality and find examples of when he displays each of these qualities.
3. Choose an important event from the novel and describe Jake's reaction to it.
4. What do you think Jake learns in this book? How do you think he has changed by the end of the book? How do you think his view of himself has changed?
5. How does the relationship between Jake and his dad develop through the book? What are the main events which contribute to the development?
6. Draw a picture of one of the characters based on their physical descriptions. For example:
 - Ted (p. 11)
 - Jessie (p. 61)
 - Dan (p. 149)
7. Write a character summary of Jake, Ted, Dad, Cara or Jessie.
8. Which character did you particularly like or dislike? Why?

Themes

1. Discuss the following themes and find examples from the book which illustrate each one:
 - animal cruelty
 - bullying
 - helping others
 - the definition and importance of family relationships
 - fairytales and mythology
 - betrayal and power

Creative responses

1. Jake thinks about his family in Auckland and what they might be doing (pp. 8–9). Write a description of what the members of your family might be doing right now.
2. Jake mentions the places where his family live in New Zealand (pp. 8–9). Find other New Zealand places that are mentioned in the book. Locate these places on a map of New Zealand. Choose one of the places mentioned. Create and design an entry for a travel book for your chosen place. Include information such as population, geography, history, sites of interest, weather, etc.
3. Jake talks about having a half-brother (p. 8). Draw his family tree. Draw your own family tree.

4. Jake imagines what he will be like as a grown-up (p. 10). Write a description of what you think you will look like as a grown-up and then draw a picture based on this description.
5. Because Jake had been enjoying science at school he thinks he could be a conservationist and work for Forest and Bird or Greenpeace (p. 10). What are these organisations? Where are they based? What do they do? What is their mission? Where would you like to work when you grow up? Which subjects will you need? What would your work entail? See if you can arrange to be an intern or shadow a worker at the company of your choice. Write a report of your experience and present it to your class.
6. Jake feels the tug of living near the sea even though he lives in the city (p. 10). Where would you like to live and why?
7. The author includes many descriptions of exteriors and interiors throughout the book, including:
 - Ted's shack (p. 10 and p. 41)
 - Dad's house (p. 16)
 - The cottage with the windmills (pp. 28–29)
 - Dad's writing shed (p. 54)
 - Mum's house in Auckland (p. 91)
 Draw one of these places based on their descriptions in the book, then describe and draw an interior and exterior space of your choice.
8. Jake stops to watch fish, starfish and sea anemones in a rock pool (p. 13). Write a descriptive paragraph or poem about another animal you might find in a rock pool.
9. Jake finds the seal skin in 'a mini cave, perfect for hiding pirate's treasure!' (p. 13.) Find a book about pirates, such as *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson. Write a book/author study about the book you have chosen.
10. The cruelty of the people who club baby seals to death makes Jake ashamed to be human (p. 15). What makes you ashamed to be human? Find out about an organisation that relates to this. Write a letter, create a campaign or design a website to help make your cause known.
11. Dad writes books about New Zealand wildlife (p. 17). Use a publishing company's website to find out about how to write a book proposal. Choose some wildlife found in your local area and write a book proposal on your chosen subject.
12. Jake imagines stories of 'mermaids and sailing ships, of sharp-toothed fish and whales the size of houses' (p. 33). Find a traditional tale or story about the sea which includes one of the items from Jake's imaginings. Re-write the tale then make it into an illustrated children's book or graphic comic.
13. Jake would like to find a boat then 'jump in it and let the sea carry him wherever it liked' (p. 33). Look at a map of the world. Where would you like to travel to? Find out if you can get there by boat and how long it would take. Chart your route and write an imaginary travel log or journal of your nautical adventure.
14. Jake imagines the woman from the fish and chip shop floating away (pp. 33–34). Draw or paint this scene.
15. Ted compares his cottage to Grand Central Station (p. 42). What is this building? Where is it located? What other famous buildings and landmarks are in this city? Choose one to study. What famous buildings and landmarks are there in your local area or country? What is their purpose?
16. Jake expects that Ted may have 'some crazy cake that if he ate it would make him grow as tall as a house, or maybe shrink down to the size of a garden gnome' (p. 42). What famous story does this refer to? Find the story and read it.

17. There are a lot of crossword puzzle books in Ted's house (p. 45). Make up your own crossword using answers and clues taken from the book.
18. Dad and Ted talk about seals and little blue penguins (p. 62–63). Find other animals mentioned in the book and research them. For example, what do they look like, what are their habitats, calls, etc? Write an illustrated report of your findings.
19. Jake teaches Jessie how to play card games, such as poker (p. 73) and Snap (p. 92). Design an instruction manual describing the rules of one of your favourite card games. Teach the game to your classmates.
20. The book is full of dramatic, suspense-filled action sequences, for example:
 - a. when Jake is attacked by the seal (pp. 76–77)
 - b. Cara's frenzied search for the skin (pp. 195–197)
 - c. Jake returning the skin (pp. 208–214)
 - d. Write a dramatic action scene about something that has happened to you.
21. Jessie tells Jake about selkies or seal people (p. 81). What other mythical creatures can you think of? If you were a mythical creature what would you look like and which magical powers would you choose to possess? Briefly describe how you came to have these powers.
22. Jake's ancestors come from Ireland (p. 81). Research where your ancestors came from.
23. Listening to the rain falling on the corrugated iron roof is usually a comforting sound for Jake because it reminds him of holidays with his father (p. 89). Sounds can evoke memories. Think of a sound and the memories it evokes for you. Write a poem about it.
24. The author describes Jake and Dad's fishing trip (pp. 106–111). Write an extended description of something you like doing.
25. Jake wonders if the seal is really showing him and his dad the way home (p. 117). Find an example of when animals have helped people. Write your findings up as either as newspaper article or a news broadcast.
26. Jake feels truly happy sitting with his father by the fire (p. 121). Write a descriptive paragraph about a time or situation when you have felt or do feel truly happy.
27. Dad tells Jake that the selkie story comes from Celtic cultures (p. 122). Find another traditional Celtic story. Write it out and then tell it to your class.
28. If he could be transformed into another creature Jake would like to be a bird or a dolphin (p. 125). Imagine you could turn into an animal for a day. Which would you choose and why? Write about your transformation and your day as the animal of your choice.
29. In the car park at the beginning of the beach is an unmanned information centre (p. 148). Design and create an information centre booth for your local area. Include information on the local wildlife, geology and myths, etc.
30. There is so much Jake wants to ask Jessie about being a selkie (p. 224). Divide into pairs. Imagine one of you is Jake and write a questionnaire as him, and imagine the other of you is Jessie and answer Jake's questions as she might.
31. Jake will always remember the road out to Red Rocks as 'windswept and sullen' (p. 244). Write a haiku about a place in nature that is special to you.
32. Design a health and safety pamphlet on the issues below that are mentioned in the book:
 - a. stranger danger (p. 12 and p. 50)
 - b. bullying (p. 31 and p. 166)
 - c. outdoor education and survival (p. 38 and p. 113)
 - d. water safety (p. 37 and p. 105)

33. Without speaking, act out a character doing something from the book. See how quickly the class can guess who you are and what you are doing.
34. Design your own cover for the novel.
35. Imagine the novel is going to be turned into a stage play. Design the costumes for each character and one or two stage sets.
36. Imagine the novel is going to be turned into a film. Look at some movie posters. Notice the pictures and the words. Design a movie poster to advertise the film of this novel.
37. Get into groups of two or three. Choose a scene from the novel. Write a script and act it out in front of the class.
38. Write a review of the book, aiming it at the readership of your favourite magazine, newspaper or website.
39. Write your own version of the back cover blurb.
40. Choose one of the descriptive passages in the novel which you find particularly effective and use it to set the scene or the mood for your own piece of descriptive writing. Quote the passage as the epigraph for your work and clearly state the source (title, author, publisher, date, chapter and page number).