

ALLEN & UNWIN NEW ZEALAND | TEACHER RESOURCE



RACHAEL KING

Stunningly original. I loved it!
BREN MACDIBBLE

The
GRIMMELINGS

THE GRIMMELINGS

BY RACHAEL KING

9781991006646

Recommended for

Years 8 – 10

Key ideas in the novel

Family, friendship, community, culture, relationships, grief, loneliness, love, sacrifice, courage, loyalty

Contents

- Introduction to the resource
- Plot summary
- About the author
- Chapter questions and activities
- Post-reading activities

Resource Introduction

This resource is designed to be used while a class or individual student reads through the novel. There are comprehension and inference questions, vocab, and activities for sections of the novel as well. Each task is linked to Phase 4 of the New Zealand Curriculum.

Plot Summary

The Grimmelings by Rachael King unfolds as a captivating narrative centered around Ella, a young girl embarking on a remarkable adventure to rescue her hometown. Myth and magic interweave as Ella delves into the heart of her family's history, unravelling mysteries surrounding the enigmatic disappearances at a nearby lake. As Ella navigates through a world where reality and fantasy blur, she uncovers truths about her family that hold the key to understanding the peculiar events plaguing her community.

About the Author

Rachael King is a writer, reviewer, former literary festival director and ex-bass player living in Ōtautahi Christchurch. She's the author of two novels for children: *Red Rocks*, which won the Esther Glen Medal, and *The Grimmelings*, published in 2024. Her adult novels, *The Sound of Butterflies* and *Magpie Hall*, were published in nine languages altogether. *Red Rocks* is currently in development for Sky TV by Libertine Pictures.

CHAPTER QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

SECTION 1: CHAPTERS 1 – 2

CHAPTER 1

Chapter Questions

1. What is the name of Ella's horse?
2. What has Ella lost?
3. What does Ella wish for?
4. What do other people suspect about Ella's family?

Vocabulary

Gleams
Piebald
Contentedly

CHAPTER 2

Chapter Questions

1. Who is Fiona?
2. What country does Ella's family whakapapa to?
3. How does Ella feel about Josh Underhill going missing?
4. Why do you think Ella hasn't cuddled up in bed with Grizzly in a long time?

Vocabulary

Cacophonous
Calamity
Malignant
Plaguing
Bairn (Scottish)

Comprehension & Inference Task: Finding Evidence

Comprehending and creating texts

Authors give readers clues about their characters through their descriptions. From these clues, we can infer things about the characters. The students' task is to find quotes from chapters 1 – 2 to support these inferences about Ella and her family. The first one is done as an example.

Ella is lonely.	<i>"She'd like a friend for the school holidays, so she didn't have to be alone."</i>
Ella is scared.	
Ella's grandmother is superstitious.	
Ella's grandmother loves language and words.	
Ella's family might be witches.	
Grizzly is sick.	

CHAPTER 3

Chapter Questions

1. When and where was Josh last seen?
2. What does Ella imagine while they are searching?
3. What do we learn about the mysterious boy in this chapter?

Vocabulary

Solstice
Petulant
Impish
Insincere

CHAPTER 4

Chapter Questions

1. What is interesting about Magpie?
2. How would you describe the relationship between Magpie and Ella?
3. Why do you think Ella dreamt about her father last night?

Vocabulary

Iridescent
Flotsam
Taut
Sprig
Daundered

Setting Task

Communication depends on shared codes and conventions

Authors use descriptive language to help their readers imagine the world the characters are in. This is the setting. A good writer uses a range of sensory details to make their world feel three dimensional. The students' task is to find quotes that describe different aspects of the setting while the search party is looking for Josh. The first one is done as an example.

A line that describes the size of the lake. Page 25.	<i>"They said the lake was so deep nobody had ever been able to dive to the bottom."</i>
A line that describes the coldness of the night. Page 25.	
A line that describes the night sky.	
A line that describes what the water looks like. Page 26.	

Students can draw a picture based on the quotes you identified.

CHAPTER 5**Chapter Questions**

1. Who is Hana?
2. How do you know Ella cares more about Magpie than herself?
3. What does Ella start daydreaming about as she rides Magpie?
4. What do we learn about Ella's father's disappearance in this chapter?

Vocabulary

Mercurial
Apt
Timidity

CHAPTER 6**Chapter Questions**

1. What is the Scottish boy's name?
2. What did Ella see Grizzly doing by the lake a few years ago?
3. What does the boy think killed the sheep?

Vocabulary

Lament
Membrane

Research Task

Different cultures around the world have stories about magical and mythical creatures like the faeries and kelpies Ella learns about in chapter 6. The students' task is to research Scottish folklore about these creatures and compare it to Māori stories about faeries. They may use the prompts below to help guide their investigation.

1. Find images of Scottish faeries and kelpies.
2. What makes a kelpie different from another type of faerie?
3. Where do faeries live in Scotland?
4. What do faeries and kelpies do? What are some of their traits?
5. What is the faerie realm?
6. What are patupaiarehe?
7. Find images of patupaiarehe.
8. What do the patupaiarehe do? What are some of their traits?

Reading Myths

Connecting through storytelling

Teachers, you may want to take some time to explore myths that feature faerie folk from both Scottish and indigenous cultures. From this, you could have students select a myth from any culture that features faerie folk and have them create:

- A podcast that re-tells a myth from the faerie perspective
- A mural that visually depicts the myth
- A short film of the myth
- A children's book based on the myth

For students who enjoy writing, you could offer the option to write their own myth with faeries.

When selecting the myths to read with your students, try to select one that is important to the area and local indigenous cultures.

Here are some Scottish faerie stories to get you started:

[The Faerie Flag of Dunvegan](#)

[Fairy Well](#)

[The Kelpie's Last Battle](#)

SECTION 4: CHAPTER 7

CHAPTER 7

This chapter has a pre-reading task for students to do before you read the chapter.

Pre-reading task

In this chapter, students can look at the value that adjectives add to a description. You may need to do some pre-teaching of what an adjective is.

Before reading the chapter, read aloud the adapted excerpt below with the adjectives removed. Have them visualise or draw based on this excerpt:

Ella shrugged, but an image appeared, unbidden in her mind. At first it was of a figure in the boat on the lake. Then the vision shifted, and she was inside the dinghy, rowing, the wind in her ears. Rowing away from the waters and into the keld. The wind stopped and the boat stopped rocking.

There was no sound but the water against the sides of the boat. A fishing rod appeared in her hand - but it wasn't her hand. The rod flicked a line over the side of the boat, and the sinker dropped with a plop.

...

She closed her eyes, and she was back on the boat on the lake. And in the depths, below the boat, a shadow passed under her.

Chapter Questions

1. What does Ella start to believe happened to her father?
2. What gift does Ella have?
3. What difference does Ella see in the image of the kelpie from the book?

Vocabulary

Keld
Unbidden
Serene
Placate
Idyllic

Descriptive Writing & Adjectives Task

Comprehending and creating texts

On pages 74 - 75 (chapter 7), the author describes a vision that Ella has after Gus asks about her father's death. The excerpt below is copied from the book, this time with the adjectives and some other descriptive language in it.

Teachers, you may wish to re-read the excerpt without the adjectives or have them on a page next to the complete description. Students could create a second image using the complete description and compare it to their initial drawing without adjectives.

Ella shrugged, but an image appeared, unbidden in her mind. At first it was of a figure in the boat, far away, on the lake. The water was dark and choppy. Then the vision shifted, and she was inside the little dinghy, rowing, the Nor'wester singing in her ears. Rowing away from the rough waters and into the smooth emerald surface of the keld. The wind died away and the boat ceased its rocking to drift calmly. There was no sound but the gentle slap of water against the sides of the boat. A fishing rod appeared in her hand - but it wasn't her hand. It was weathered and brown, with stubby fingers and broken nails. The rod flicked a line over the side of the boat, and the sinker dropped with a plop.

...

She closed her eyes, and she was back on the boat, in the serene, still patch on the lake, while the rest of it was jabbly and shirred. And in the green depths, below the boat, a great shadow passed under her.

Teachers, some other potential tasks that could come out of this are:

- Students identifying the adjectives in the extract
- Students re-writing the extract using opposite adjectives (this would lead nicely into teaching mood in writing)
- Students writing their own description using adjectives.

CHAPTER 8

Chapter Questions

1. What do we learn about Fiona in this chapter?
2. What does Ella think is strange about her mother's behaviour?
3. Why did Josh's father want Ella's family to leave their land?
4. What does Susan think has happened to her son?

Vocabulary

Turmoil
Venture

CHAPTER 9

Chapter Questions

1. What was Fiona's charm meant to do?
2. Why does Grizzly want to protect the land?

Vocabulary

Overwrought
Pall
Sentiment

Art Task

Connecting through storytelling

On page 100-101, the characters talk about painting their feelings as pictures. Fiona describes what her feelings would look like as a painting. As a class, discuss what you think Fiona might be feeling based on her description. The students' task is to create a drawing or a painting of what you think Ella feels like in this chapter.

CHAPTER 10

Chapter Questions

1. What do you think Fiona put on Ella's bedside table?

Vocabulary

Rambunctious
Protocols
Vigilant

CHAPTER 11

Chapter Questions

1. What clues are there that Ella thinks she might be in trouble for going off to look for Josh in the morning?
2. How do you think Ella feels about Gus in this chapter? What clues does the writer give to show this?
3. What do you think Ella and Magpie saw in the lake at the end of the chapter?

Vocabulary

Dissipate
Undulate
Mirage
Synchronicity

CHAPTER 12

Chapter Questions

1. What clues does the author give that help the reader understand that Ella and Magpie are frightened of the horse?
2. What type of creature do you think the horse is? Justify your answer.

Vocabulary

Lustrous
Mangled

Language Features Task

Comprehending and creating texts

Like adjectives, authors can use language features to develop imagery in their writing, helping their readers visualise what is happening in the story.

Teachers, this task may require pre-teaching of simile, metaphor, alliteration, hyperbole, and listing. Below is an excerpt from the beginning of chapter 12 describing what Ella sees standing in the lake that uses a variety of language features. Depending on the level of the class, you could use this first extract to model identifying and explaining the effect of language features.

A horse stood in the water, drinking. It was as black as night, its sheen reflecting the colours of the streaked sky and the dark, impenetrable water. The Ben had turned grey, its shadowy shape mirrored in the lake, along with fat, lustrous clouds.

There was power in its limbs, in its solid body, in its broad chest – Ella could sense it pulsing. It was massive, a mountain, built for battle. Its long, untamed mane and tail dripped with water, glossy green weeds from the lake caught in its tangles.

Students could apply this to a short piece of descriptive writing of their own. An example task could be providing visual prompts like images of other mythological creatures and having the

students write a paragraph describing one of the creatures. For differentiation, students could self-select the level they work at. For example:

Level One - the paragraph must include alliteration and listing

Level Two - the paragraph must include alliteration, listing, simile, and metaphor

Level Three - the paragraph must include alliteration, listing, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, and colour

Level Four - the paragraph must include alliteration, listing, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, colour, and use at least three senses

CHAPTER 13

Vocabulary

Peripheral

Paramount

Language Features Task

As you read through Chapter 13, students can practice identifying language features. This could be run as a scavenger hunt in groups or an independent task.

Here are some examples used in the chapter:

Alliteration	“The flitting of finches played in her peripheral vision”
Listing	“Your mother’s a witch, your gran’s a witch”
Hyperbole	“The world had turned white overnight”
Simile	“The air cut like a knife”
Personification	“Flames were leaping high...crackling a warm welcome”
Onomatopoeia	“One or two riders whooped in delight”

CHAPTER 14

Chapter Questions

1. What similarities does Grizzly’s story of Aonghas have with what Ella has experienced?
2. What does Ella learn about Magpie?
3. Why do you think Ella doesn’t tell Grizzly about Gus?

Vocabulary

Befuddled
Noxious
Delirious

CHAPTER 15

Chapter Questions

1. What does Ella take with her on the ride and why does she take it?
2. Ella felt uncomfortable around Gus last time she saw him and she has just been warned about a stranger by her grandmother. Why do you think she smiles at Gus when she sees him?
3. Why does Gus keep repeating Ella’s name?

Vocabulary

Relinquishing
Resolute
Tenacity
Solemn
Undulated

Vivid Verbs and Adverbs Task

Comprehending and creating texts

Students can compare the two paragraphs below and discuss what makes them different.

Ella stayed close to Peedie and Fiona, keeping an eye on them. The Shetland pony walked with his head high like he was on the runway, moving his long black forelock out of his eyes. Fifi stared ahead of her, reins in both hands, and every now and then, when Peedie couldn’t help but give a joyous wee buck, she held his mane.

Ella stayed close to Peedie and Fiona, keeping an eye on them. The Shetland pony strutted with his head high like he was on the runway, tossing his long black forelock out of his eyes. Fifi stared intently ahead of her, reins in both hands, and every now and then, when Peedie couldn’t help but give a joyous wee buck, she gripped his mane.

Discussion should center around the different verbs and the missing adverb. Some prompting questions could be:

- What extra information does the verb “strutted” give compared to “walked”? Why might someone strut?
- What about “tossing” compared to “throwing”?
- How does the adverb “intently” improve our visualisation of Fiona’s action of staring?

A follow up task could be getting the students to apply this learning to a piece of writing of their own or a simple paragraph written by the teacher.

CHAPTER 16**Chapter Questions**

1. Why does Fiona tell Ella not to wipe Gus' tears?
2. Why was it not a difficult decision for Ella to make to go after her mother?

Vocabulary

Devised
Malevolence
Fortified
Sedate

CHAPTER 17**Chapter Questions**

1. How does the dynamic between Ella and her mother change in this chapter?
2. Why do you think Morag goes into the lake after Olive?

Character Discussion Questions**Critical analysis**

- How has Ella changed since the beginning of the novel?
- What have been the most important events that led to this change?
- What events have most shaped Ella's character? This could be during the setting of the novel or before.
- What do we learn about Ella through her interactions with other characters?
- Which character do you think has the most influence on Ella and why?

CHAPTER 18-19**Chapter Questions**

1. What does Ella start to realise about her mother?
2. Why do you think Morag isn't willing to accept that a kelpie took Olive?
3. What does Grizzly think about the keld?

CHAPTER 20-23

Chapter Questions

1. Why does Grizzly tell Ella to take the iron shears?
2. Why do you think the kelpie took Fiona?
3. Why does the kelpie take so many children?
4. What does Ella realise about the kelpie after seeing it with Grizzly?

CHAPTER 24 - THE END

Chapter Questions

1. Why do you think only Ella and her family can remember what really happened at the lake?
2. How do they honour Grizzly?
3. Why do you think the Underhill family show up for Grizzly's funeral and then the rest of the families?
4. How has the relationship between the other families and Ella's changed by the end of the novel?
5. What does Ella learn to accept about herself?

POST-READING ACTIVITY IDEAS

Character

Students could create an interview with Ella after the children and her father are rescued from the lake. This could be done in the form of a magazine or newspaper article, visual news segment, or a podcast.

Structure & Genre

A lesson could be prepared around the Freytag's pyramid structure or Bildungsroman. Students can arrange key events from the novel into a Freytag's pyramid structure or a Bildungsroman three-part structure.

Environmental Awareness

Something that the novel reflects on is the way we interact with our environment and the connectedness we have with our land and home.

In Chapter 19, Grizzly says, *"It's me he wants. He's followed me here. Ach, this country. We've ruined it in so many ways. Cleared all that forest, destroyed all those native birds and plants just so we can make it look like home. Putting dairy farms where they have no business, destroying the land and the beautiful waterways. And yes, I've not helped, planting my rowan. But now I've also brought this monster. It doesn't belong here, and though I'm not sure we belong here either, I love this country like it was my own and would do anything to save it."*

This paragraph provides a great foundation for some research into environmental issues and has great potential for some project-based learning.

ABOUT THE WRITER OF THE NOTES

Melissa Flett is a high school teacher with a passion for literature and the power of stories. She studied English literature and Music at the University of Otago which led her down the path of writing reviews and teaching children how to play the piano. That side hustle became her Call to Adventure to take on the role of teacher. Crossing the Threshold, she journeyed to Massey University to complete her teaching qualification.

Melissa has been based in the Bay of Plenty for some years now, working as the Head of English at a local school. Centering literature is an essential part of her teaching and sharing her love of literature and stories with her students.