



Rodentia: Mosela and the Three Kingdoms

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Publisher: Human and Rousseau

The Otto Foundation Children's Book Award
Chapter Book Shortlist

After Mosela's village is destroyed by pirate penguins, she embarks on a perilous journey to warn the Mouse King. She must find the Chosen One who is destined to save Rodentia. Khova, the powerful Mage Owl, fits the description perfectly. There is just one problem: Khova is the whiniest, most arrogant creature Mosela has ever met! Will they succeed in saving her family and convince the armies to stand together?

- NB Publishers

Teaching notes

These notes have been written by the Otto Foundation to provide teachers and caregivers with ideas to develop text comprehension and support literacy skills. They encourage deep reading of the text and illustrations, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, not just one sitting.

These notes have been written with Grade 4, 5, 6 and 7 readers in mind, but teachers and caregivers will need to adapt them to the age and experience of their readers.

Themes

- Determination
- Adventure
- Friendship
- Diversity
- War
- Supernatural magic

Before reading the story

- Open the discussion by allowing the children to share their initial responses to the front cover of the book. Encourage the children to discuss what they see and their responses to it.
 - *What do you notice about the cover illustration?*
 - *What does the cover illustration make you think about?*
 - *How does the cover illustration make you feel?*
 - *What do you like most about the cover illustration?*

- Explain that the title of the book is **Rodentia: Mosela and the Three Kingdoms**. Ask the children to share their thoughts on the book cover.
 - What kind of book do you think this is going to be, based on the title?
 - What do you think the word **Rodentia** means?
 - Who do you think **Mosela** is?
 - What do you think **The Three Kingdoms** might be?
 - What type of animals are on the cover? (meerkats) What is unusual about the meerkats on the cover?
 - What do you think might happen to the meerkats in this book?
 - Who might the meerkats meet during the story?
 - What do you think the meerkats are saying to each other on the cover?
 - Do you think one of the meerkats on the cover might be **Mosela**? Why or why not? Which meerkat do you think **Mosela** might be? Why?
- Read the back cover blurb to the children. Explore how they might change their ideas about the story now that they have more information.
 - How does reading the blurb change what you think might happen in the story?
 - What do these words from the blurb mean? **Squabbles** (a non-serious fight) **Cunning** (using your skill in a sly way) **Perilous** (dangerous, risky or unsafe) **Siege** (when an army surrounds a castle, trapping people inside and forcing them to surrender)

Reading aloud discussion points

Prologue

- What is a **Prologue**? (a short opening at the beginning of a book before the first chapter)
- Look at the illustration on page 1. Explore the map of **The Known World** with your children.
- What is the name of the boat the penguins are travelling on?
- The pirate captain is named **Scraw**. **Captain Scraw** is described as **menacing**, what does **menacing** mean?
- **Scraw** uses his **cutlass** to discipline a lazy penguin recruit on his crew. What is a **cutlass**? (a short curved sword with one sharp edge) Do you think it was fair for **Scraw** to treat the penguin recruit this way? Why or why not?
- What do you think the penguins might be transporting in the **large wooden shipping crates** on the ship?
- What type of animal is a **cobra**?
- **Scraw** shouted: **I bust my tail feathers devising the greatest siege ever**. What does **bust my tailfeathers** mean?
- If you had to choose between facing a cobra or jumping into the sea risking being eaten by a shark, which would you choose? Why?
- Describe the special power **Scraw** had over the cobra when using his **cutlass**.
- Which **Kingdom** is **Scraw** planning to conquer? How is he planning on doing this?

Book 1: Rodentia

Chapter 1

- Mosela is tired of having to **ration** water. What does it mean to ration water? Why do you think Mosela has to do this?
- Look at the illustration on page 9. What kind of animal is Mosela?
- Describe what Mosela imagined she could make happen with the clouds.
- Give a synonym for the word **relentless**, "...the relentless heat."
- What are **Mage Owls** masters of?
- What is Mosela's best friend's name?
- Why didn't **Lefika** want to play with Mosela?
- What reasons does **Lefika** give for not being worried about an attack from pirates?
- What is the meaning of Mosela's name in the ancient meerkat language?
- Why is Mosela not allowed to train to be good at fighting? Do you think this is fair? Why or why not?

Chapter 2

- Why did Mosela's father, **Moshesh**, set up the village of **Sireletsa**?
- What is an **invader**? What is the name of the **invaders**, who might take advantage of the shoreline?
- What is a **sentry**? How did **Moshesh** make use of the meerkats as **sentries**?
- Who has a history of trying to invade **Sireletsa**?
- What is a **kiwano**? (a type of green melon found in Southern Africa)
- What type of father do you think **Moshesh** is to Mosela? What makes you think this?
- Who rules Rodentia?
- What is a **monarchy**? What is unusual about the **dassie monarchy** who are coming to visit **Sireletsa**?
- What is the name of the meerkat who Mosela goes to assist in the kitchen?
- What does the expression "...stand there like a blind snail..." tell us about Dinawa's personality?
- Why do you think Mosela was disappointed that she was asked to make the **pap**?
- Mosela's mother teaches her an important lesson about relationships with different species. What is the lesson?
- What is **chainmail**? (a protective textile made of interlocking metal rings)
- Describe the meerkat soldiers who greeted the royal visitors.
- What does it mean to be **immune** to something? What are meerkats **immune** to?
- Describe the welcome ceremony for the **dassies**.
- Explain what the **dassie queen** did to make it rain.

Chapter 3

- What do you think was the most unusual food served at the feast? Why?
- Moshesh shared two pieces of advice he had received from other chiefs in Rodentia when he was younger. What were the two pieces of advice? Which piece of advice do you think is the most important: **kindness** or **not trusting a sangoma**? Why?
- Who saw the injured meerkat soldier first?
- Mosela is grateful that her mother has taught her **first aid**. What is **first aid**?
- Moshesh explains that there are **giant beasts** helping the invading pirates. How do you think Moshesh is feeling as he shares this information? Why do you think this?

- The **messenger birds** had all fled the village. What is the only other way for the meerkats to send messages?
- Why do you think Mosela tries not to cry as she tries to help her mother?
- Summarise the effects of the attack on **Sireletsa**.
- Mosela thinks: "**This is how we die**". Do you think everyone in the village is about to die? Why or why not?

Chapter 4

- Explain why Captain Scraw attacked Sireletsa? What is his bigger plan for Rodentia?
- Which meerkats did Captain Scraw ask the penguins to put onto the ship?
- Describe what a **Koala** looks like. Why were the **koalas** useful to Captain Scraw? How do you think Captain Scraw feels about the **koalas**? What makes you think this?
- Captain Scraw complains that his **headache** has moved to a **migraine**. What is the difference between a **headache** and a **migraine**?
- What does **bitter-sweet** mean? Why do you think it was a **bitter-sweet** moment for Mosela that Lefika had been captured with her?
- What is the name of the other young meerkat captured with Mosela and Lefika?
- What plan do Mosela and Lefika have to escape?
- What does **antagonise** mean? Do you think Lefika's **antagonistic** behaviour towards the penguins is a good idea? Why or why not?

Chapter 5

- Lefika has been beaten by a penguin. Do you think he is dead? Why or why not?
- What does Mosela feel is the meerkats' **only hope** in freeing themselves from their ropes? What would you do if you were in Mosela's position and needed to escape?
- Describe Mosela's bravery in fighting the penguins.
- Summarise how the meerkats escaped from the boat.

Chapter 6

- What is a **constellation**? Name one **constellation** Mosela uses to navigate?
- Mosela reflects that over the last few hours she has **lost her best friend, taken someone's life and has no idea when she would see her family again**. Which of these experiences would you find most challenging? Why?
- What is the first mission Mosela feels she needs to achieve?
- Give an example of how **Palesa** uses humour to cheer Mosela up.
- The meerkats have been rowing for two days. Do you think they will find land? Why or why not?
- **Dinawa** tells Mosela to take a break from rowing. What does Mosela's reaction tell you about her character?
- What is the name of the peak the meerkats first see on land?

Chapter 7

- Why do you think finding water was the meerkats' first priority when they reached land?
- Describe the unusual creature Mosela thought she imagined in the trees?
- The meerkats need **flint** to make a fire. What is **flint**?

- Why do you think Mosela says she would be happy to “...never set a paw near the ocean again...”?
- If you were Mosela, what would you choose between going to the village to check on your family or going to the watch point to send a distress signal to the Mouse King? Why?

Chapter 8

- What sound did the meerkats hear as they were about to settle for the night?
- Which unusual creature does Mosela think she sees again in the trees? Do you think this creature is in her imagination or not? Why?
- Describe what Mosela finds inside **The Bartoad's Tavern**.
- How do the guests in The Bartoad's Tavern react when Mosela shouts: “**SIRELESTA IS UNDER ATTACK!**”
- What type of bird is **Harold the messenger bird**?
- How do you think Mosela feels about having to fly on **Harold**?
- What advice does **Baneet** the toad give Mosela to keep Harold loyal?
- What is the name of the city Mosela needs to fly to to give the **mouse king** the message that Rodentia is under attack?
- What interesting information do **Palesa** and **Baneet** share with Mosela about the mice in **Ovidivo**?
- What qualities does **Baneet** describe the **Phibians** as having?
- **Baneet** believes “...you should treat your enemies with kindness...”. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Chapter 9

- Describe Mosela's dream.
- What was the name of the mountain range the Mosela and Harold were flying over?
- What is a **saddle bag**? Which animal was stealing treats from Mosela's **saddle bag**?
- What affirmation did Mosela repeat to herself when she was panicking?
- Mosela has a memory of a lesson her father taught her. What do you think the importance of this lesson was?
- Mosela realises she is not imagining the glowing chameleons in the trees. Why does Mosela feel she has stepped into a **secret garden filled with magic** as she follows them?
- Mosela meets a large fat rat called **Gundwane**. Do you think Mosela is safe with **Gundwane**? Why or why not?
- What special name does **Gundwane** have for the glowing chameleons?
- Are you surprised that Mosela cannot speak the language of her ancestors? Why or why not?
- Describe the prophecy that **Gundwane** shares with Mosela.
- What is Mosela's destiny?

Book 2: Navya

Chapter 10

- What is **Prof Futhi's** role at the academy?
- Name three qualities which **Prof Futhi** tells **Khova** that **Mage Owls** need in order to become great.

- During class **Mrs Zwene** says: “**I don’t give a hoot**” and **Khova** says: “**Oh, for feather’s sake**”. Explain the humor in these words being said by owls.
- Summarise what the effect of **ephemera spells** are.
- How do you think **Nandi** feels when **Khova** masters the spell easily? What makes you think this?
- What makes **Nandi** wonder whether **Khova** has been learning **fire magic**?
- What does **forbidden** mean? Why do you think **Khova** is interested in learning how to use **fire magic** even though it is **forbidden**?
- What is **Khova’s** mother called?
- Explain why **Khova** finds school so frustrating?
- How does **Nothando** respond to **Khova** showing her what he can do with fire?

Chapter 11

- Describe how **Khova** trains his fire magic skills in his free time.
- What is a **clearing**? Why is it important the **Khova** finds a **clearing** to practice fire magic in?
- What happens when **Khova** loses his temper?
- How does **Nothando** help **Khova** get help for his burnt wing? What does this say about what she is willing to do for her child?
- **Nothando** takes **Khova** to the **infirmary** to see a **healer**. What is an **infirmary**?
- Describe what the **healer** did to help **Khova**.

Chapter 12

- What does **Khova** realise gives him more power as he practices fire magic?
- Name the animal **Khova** enjoys making with fire magic?
- How often does **Khova** have to see the **healer**? What does he dislike most about these visits?
- Do you think **Nandi** is a good friend to **Khova**? Why or why not?
- Summarise what happens when **Khova** gets bullied by **Impethu** and **Bhungane**?

Chapter 13

- Why does **Khova** think **Prof Futhi** is at his home?
- Summarise why **Nothando** is in trouble.
- What does it mean to **calm your nerves**? Why does **Prof Futhi** think **Khova** might need to **calm his nerves**? What does **Prof Futhi** suggest will help with **calming Khova’s nerves**?
- What does it mean to **keep your cool**? Why is it important that **Khova** **keep_s his cool**?
- How does **Khova** react when he sees his mother cry?
- What lies has **Nothando** been telling **Khova**? Why did she feel she had to lie to him?
- What promise does **Khova** make to **Nothando**? Do you think he will be able to keep this promise? Why or why not?
- Why did the lanterns explode when **Impethu’s mother** yelled: “**He’s a worthless criminal – just like his THIEVING MOTHER**”?
- Describe what happens after **Khova** falls off the bridge.

Chapter 14

- Why did Khova want to find his way to **Ovidivo**?
- What is the name of the farmer who rescued Khova?
- What fake name does Khova give **Farmer Juan**? Why do you think Khova feels he has to use a fake name?
- What makes Khova jump from the wagon in terror?
- Khova falls into a cave and meets a **strange looking rat**. Where have you read about this character before in the story?

Book 3: Phibya

Chapter 15

- Read the illustration of the **prophecy** on page 161. What is a **prophecy**? What do you think **the giant beasts** refers to? Who do you think **the chosen one** is? Why do you think this?
- What is a **potjie**? What ingredients were in the **potjie** Mosela was making with Gundwane?
- What **facts** does Gundwane give to Mosela as to why Khova may be the **chosen one**?
- How did Mosela make sure she would not get lost when she left the cave?
- When Mosela found Harold **he was the picture of pure melancholy**. What does **melancholy** mean? Why was Harold feeling **melancholic**?
- What nickname does Harold have for Mosela?
- What does it mean to have a **one track mind**? What is the thing Harold has on his **one track mind**?
- Describe what Khova did which made Gundwane say **"The future king is here!"**
- Gundwane pours a potion into the pit. What **prophecy** does it reveal?
- What is the difference between Khova and Mosela's prophecies?

Chapter 16

- Describe how Khova and Mosa flew to **Ovidivo** on Harold?
- Name the **different creatures** Mosela saw while walking through **Ovidivo**?
- Why did Mosela find **Ovidivo** so **amazing**?
- **"I am the future king – I will see him now!"** What does saying this reveal about Khova's character?
- Why did Mosela **feel like punching something**?
- Why do you think Mosela felt like **she could burst into tears** when she got the letter from Palesa?
- What was the good news in Palesa's letter? What was the bad news in Palesa's letter?
- Describe the **mouse king**.
- What is the **mouse king** expecting Khova to do when he shouts: **"Genuflect!"**? How does Mosela respond to Khova's behaviour towards the **mouse king**?
- What warning does Mosela give the **mouse king**?
- Who is the **deranged old rat** that the **mouse king** refers to?
- What does it mean to **second guess** yourself? Why does Mosela start to **second guess** herself?
- What does Khova do to disrespect the **mouse king**?

- Why does the **mouse king** decide to spare Mosela and Khova's lives?

Chapter 17

- Why is Khova angry with Mosela?
- Which two kings does Mosela want to approach next for help?
- Why did Harold refuse to fly?
- What was special about where the city of **Bhakabhaka** was built?
- Why do Rodentians have to wear a badge to enter **Bhakabhaka**? How did Mosela feel wearing the badge? Why did she feel this way?
- Where did Mosela suggest a good first destination within **Bhakabhaka** would be? Do you agree or disagree with her suggestion? Why?
- What is a **perch**? Why does the room full of **perches** make Mosela think it is unusual for there to be non-flying visitors?
- Why does the **owl king** call Mosela's story a **fairy tale**?
- What assistance does the **owl king** offer Mosela?
- **Bhalo** has a missing wing. Describe the magic **Bhalo** uses to fly.
- Mosela and **Bhalo** find Khova sitting with **Nandi**. Where have you read about **Nandi** before in this story?
- Khova's mother is dead. Describe how he responds to this news.
- How does **Bhalo** protect Harold and Mosela from Khova?
- Do you think Mosela intended to kill Khova? Why or why not?

Chapter 18

- **Bhalo** tells Mosela: "**You should be proud**". Do you agree that Mosela should feel proud? Why or why not?
- Which city does **Bhalo** suggest Mosela go next in order to warn them about the upcoming battle?
- **Bhalo** reads the prophesy again. Do you think Mosela is **the chosen one**? Why or why not?
- **Bhalo** describes Gundwane as having a **beetle in his head**. What do you think this means?
- What does **Bhalo** want to teach Mosela?
- Describe **King Inesh**.
- What are the words **Bhalo** taught Mosela to channel her magic?
- What did Mosela try to tell the crowd who had come to see **the chosen one**?
- Why does **King Inesh** change his mind about Mosela being **the chosen one**?

Book 4: The Battle

Chapter 19

- **King Renner** was **biting his nails**. What does this imply about how **King Renner** was feeling?
- What is the name of **King Renner's** sister?
- Describe the strategy the penguins and snakes have used to capture villages they have attacked.
- What plan do **King Renner** and **Arora** have to defend **Rodentia**?

- What special powers do **Arora** and her friends plan to use to help protect **Rodentia**?

Chapter 20

- Why are Harold and Mosela sick on the ship?
- Why have Mosela and Bhalo been sent ahead of the army towards **Ovidivo**?
- Describe Mosela's **armour**. Do you think Mosela's **armour** is going to help her? Why or why not?
- Why was the **mouse captain** afraid?
- Name the different species fighting alongside one another against the snakes.
- Summarise the battle between Mosela and the snake.
- What important discovery did Mosela make about how the snakes are controlled? How did this help them win the battle?

Chapter 21

- Why does **Scraw** think the **mouse king** should save his life?
- What suggestion does Bhalo make which helps the mouse king feel more at ease about Mosela being the new queen?
- Do you think it is a good idea for the penguins to be released? Why or why not?
- Describe what Mosela saw as the rock was rolled away from the cave entrance.
- How do you think Mosela felt when she was reunited with her mother and father?

Epilogue

- What is an **epilogue**? (the concluding section at the end of a novel that brings a closing to the story)
- What powers does the **magical sword** have?
- Summarise what has happened over the last two years.
- What is the last threat remaining to Rodentia?

Topics for discussion after reading the story

- Explore with your children:
 - Who would you rather be in this story, Mosela or Bhalo? Why?
 - What do you think will happen next for Mosela?
 - Is there anything you particularly liked or disliked about this story?
 - Has anything that happened in this book ever happened to you?
 - What is something you have learnt from this story?
 - If the author asked you what could be improved in the book, what would you say?
 - What would you tell your friends about this book?

Activity ideas for after reading the story

- Draw characters from the story with your class using the [Rodentia drawing tutorial with Luke Calder](#)

- Summarise the plot of Rodentia creating mind maps in small groups.

Group 1: Book 1 – Rodentia

Group 2: Book 2 – Navya

Group 3: Book 3 – Phibya

Group 4: Book 4 – The Battle

- Ask your children to work in small groups to discuss how Rodentia would have been different if there had been a different main character. Give each group one character to discuss: Lefika, Khova, Gundwane or Nandi. Ask each group to present their ideas to the class.
- Ask your children what other adventure stories they might recommend to a friend?

Please see the following pages for Grade specific CAPS aligned skills covered in these teaching notes.

CAPS skills covered in teaching notes

Listening and speaking

Grade 4

- Predict what a text could be about
- Identify characters
- Name characters correctly
- Listen for main message and specific details
- Describe events
- Identify specific details
- Discuss main ideas and specific details
- Express feelings in relation to events
- Express thoughts and feelings about a story/characters/setting or theme of a text
- Relate to own life experiences
- Answer oral questions based on the text
- Participate in group discussions
- Take turns to speak
- Share ideas, opinions and participate in the discussion
- Ask relevant questions
- Keep to the topic
- Maintain discussions
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

Reading and viewing

Grade 4

- Pre reading: Make predictions for the title and cover of the text
- Predict from title and discuss related themes/content
- Make predictions
- Identify and explain central events
- Identify and comment on the plot, setting and characters
- Discuss characters
- Give reasons for the actions of characters
- Give and explain own feelings about the text
- Express emotional response to text read
- Identify and discuss values in the text
- Use reading strategies: Make predictions and use contextual cues
- Use contextual cues to make meaning
- Discuss message/moral of the story
- Reflect on text read
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Use reading comprehension strategies: Visualisation and making connections
- Determine the impact of visual techniques
- Discuss new vocabulary from the text
- Understand vocabulary

Listening and speaking

Grade 5

- Make predictions
- Describe events
- Identify and explain cause and effect
- Comment on social, moral and cultural values
- Ask critical questions
- Express and justify own opinion with reasons
- Use information from the text in response to questions
- Identify main ideas and specific details
- Identify central idea, plot, setting and characters
- Relate text content to own life
- Discuss and give own opinion
- Express thoughts and feelings about the storyline
- Participate in group discussions
- Ask relevant questions
- Justify own opinion
- Maintain discussion
- Take turns to speak
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

Reading and viewing

Grade 5

- Pre reading: Predict from title and pictures and discuss related themes/content
- Comment on choice of pictures in text
- Share ideas and offers opinion using speculation
- Use reading strategies: Contextual clues and prior knowledge
- Discuss characters
- Give reason for actions of characters
- Discuss the central idea, plot, characters and setting
- Discuss cause and effect in the story
- Identify and discuss feelings expressed in text
- Express own feelings and opinion
- Identify and explain how central events and characters relate to own life
- Infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Discuss new vocabulary from text

Listening and speaking

Grade 6

- Predict what will happen in a story
- Discuss main ideas and specific details
- Identify themes
- Discuss characters
- Discuss plot, conflict and setting
- Discuss messages in text
- Discuss responses to text
- Discuss social, moral and cultural values in text
- Relate ideas to own life experiences
- Ask relevant questions and respond appropriately
- Stay on topic
- Explain logically
- Interact positively during group discussions
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

Reading and viewing

Grade 6

- Pre reading: Make predictions based on title and/or graphics and related themes/content
- Make predictions about the text
- Ask questions about the text
- Make inferences about the text
- Visualise parts of the text
- Identify and explain the central idea
- Interpret and discuss the text
- Discuss plot, theme, setting and characters
- Discuss suspense and twist
- Critically discusses cultural and social values in the text
- Relate events and characters to own life
- Show understanding of the text and relationship to own life
- Identify and discuss feelings expressed in text
- Express emotional response to texts read
- Identify different perspectives
- Give own perspective based on evidence in the text
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Invent or describe preferred results or endings

Listening and speaking

Grade 7

- Make predictions from cover page and blurb

Reading and viewing

Grade 7

- Make predictions

- Confirm predictions
 - Identify main and supporting ideas
 - Make inferences
 - Share ideas and experiences to show understanding of concepts
 - Share ideas and opinions
 - Identify characters
 - Identify main and supporting ideas
 - Use appropriate language
 - Answer questions
- Make connections
 - Identify key features of a text such as characters, plot, setting, conflict, theme and message
 - Discuss main ideas and themes
 - Discuss fact or opinion in text
 - Infer meaning of unfamiliar words
 - Infer meaning and conclusions
 - Visualise parts of the text
 - Identify formal/informal language in the text
 - Answer questions based on text