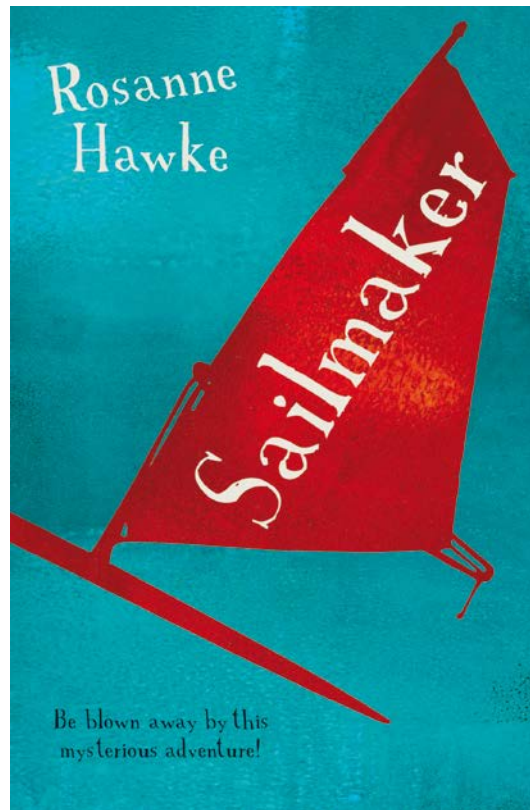


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# SAILMAKER

## Rosanne Hawke



### Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian  
in context with the Australian curriculum  
(English)

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**SYNOPSIS**

When Joel buys a second hand windsurfer with a torn sail, he decides to visit the old sailmaker who lives on a nearby island. Intrigued by stories of a ghost who haunts the sailmaker's house, Joel decides to investigate for himself.

*Sailmaker* is the second book in Rosanne Hawke's adventurous The Keeper series. It follows Joel's relationship with his new foster dad, Dev, and his new friendship with the sailmaker.

**THEMES**

Relationships:

- Joel's relationship with his foster dad, Dev, continues to grow
- Gran is more relaxed as she lets Dev into hers and Joel's lives
- Joel's relationship with Mei is changing as they mature
- Joel forms a new friendship with the sailmaker

Attention Deficit Disorder:

- Joel has ADD. He begins takes medication for this disorder, which helps him to manage his impulsivity

Ghosts:

- The sailmaker claims that his house is haunted
- Mei is scared of staying at the sailmaker's house

Lighthouses:

- The old lighthouse on the island features in the text

Environment:

- The small sand island is sinking and its degradation threatens many native species

**WRITING STYLE**

*Sailmaker* is told in first person, present tense. Joel's voice is sincere and honest. As he learns to control his impulses and temper, he listens closely to Dev's advice. The audience can see Joel maturing. The narrative is realistic and tangible. Rosanne Hawke's use of dialogue and figurative language give the text a literary quality that is both gripping and compelling.

**AUTHOR MOTIVATION**

After I wrote *The Keeper*, a teacher said I had to write a sequel. 'Joel's still alive.' And she was right – every time I'd think about Joel he was out there on a boat in the gulf or on a windsurfer, fishing, hoping Dev would stay, getting help for his disorder.

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I did research in the Edithburgh museum and read an article by Max Fatchen about the lighthouse ghost. I read the keeper's log. I met local people to get facts right – and got ideas from the Year 6s at the school. I took all these notes to a writing fellowship at Varuna Writing House in the Blue Mountains where I wrote the draft of *Sailmaker*. Another writer there suggested the sailmaker should have one eye. I don't know why I didn't think of it as my dad only had one eye.

There is even a Cornish tale in the book that the old sailmaker tells Joel and Mei during a storm, the storm that brings the mystery to its exciting climax. And through it all Joel's learning not to worry so much, to have rock, not sand in his head, a lighthouse not a sandcastle that the tide can eat away.

### STUDY NOTES

- The first chapter opens with a reference to Shawn, the school bully. Why did Rosanne Hawke open with this aspect of Joel's story? Discuss the description of Joel's vulnerability. Why is this an effective way to get inside Joel's mind?
- Joel is learning to control his thoughts and his temper. He's also learning how to joke. How important are these strategies to Joel's progress? What can you learn from Joel's experiences?
- Joel is now taking medication that makes his head 'quieter'. To help explore and foster an understanding of different disorders, consider reading Kathy Hoopman's *All Dogs Have ADHD* and *All Cats Have Asperger Syndrome* to the class.
- Joel finds an upturned dinghy and believes the person from the boat is dead. Do you have any different thoughts from Joel about this scene? Discuss what else may have happened to the person. Discuss how as readers, we have to think and question as we read.
- Discuss the analogy of Joel as the survivor of a shipwreck with Dev throwing him a lifebelt. (p7) What does this analogy tell us about both Joel's and Dev's characters?
- Joel describes riding on Dev's bike as, 'the real thing – if you could bottle a thousand horses and feel their power at the flick of a wrist – that's what riding behind Dev feels like.' (11) As a class, brainstorm some other activities such as riding on a roller coaster or using a boogie board. Experiment with describing these activities by using comparisons.
- Rosanne Hawke uses figurative language such as metaphors, similes and personification in her text. Discuss how and why she has used this technique to help develop Joel's character. Examples include:
  - "I'm an injured tern flying too close to the rocks" (p1)
  - "Seagull at a picnic – that's you – eyes wide open" (p2)
  - "His eyes look like a cloud's gone across them" (p2)
  - "She and Gran hit it off like two lit matches" (p18)

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- “The sea was like glass” (p22)
- “This is a chocolate island you know. It’s melting by the day” (p31)
- “Mr Pengelly’s tourists are... bobbing their heads up and down just like a flock of nesting cormorants” (p32)
- “Driving the boat is sometimes like walking on a plank over a waterfall – keeping that balance between the speed and staying afloat” (p36)
- “It keeps dissolving into the sea like a giant sugar cube” (p45)
- “The excavator is a giant insect pushing sand into these huge nylon cloth bags” (p45)
- “I feel like... a player in a footy team that kicked a goal for the opposite team” (p55)
- “I watch them like a terrier outside a ferret hole” (p62)
- “I feel as if I’m attached, like a newborn joey in the pouch” (p75)
- “His mouth goes small like the wide-mouth frog when it comes across the cat that eats them” (p77)
- “The clouds are building up behind us like a fast-forwarding movie” (p83)
- “I’m as wet as a dog that’s fallen into the surf” (p109)
- “He’s like a bike wheel stuck in a rut” (p114)
- “My legs fold up like a paper fan” (p116)

As you read the text, keep a journal of the figurative language used. Which are your favourites? Why? Try experimenting with some of these techniques in your own writing.

- Joel says that he has a ‘sandcastle kind of life.’ This metaphor runs throughout *Sailmaker*. Track the use of this metaphor throughout the text. Explain in your own words what he means by this. Link episodes of the text with Joel’s ‘sandcastle’ life.
- Re-read the description of Vern Solomon on p24. Analyse the language features in this passage such as sentence structure, vocabulary and imagery. Project a range of close-ups of faces on the whiteboard. Describe these faces using descriptive language.
- On p26, Vern shares with Joel a little about the history of sails. Research sails in more detail. Write an information report that shares your findings.
- What does the sailmaker mean when he says, ‘this is a chocolate island, you know. It’s melting by the day.’ (p31)
- Re-read the description of the colony of terns on p32. Highlight your favourite parts of this passage and discuss with a partner.
- Why does Vern seem to like Joel’s company? Why is Joel surprised by this?
- In what way is Vern a mentor to Joel? How is Joel’s relationship with Vern different from his relationship with Dev? How is it similar?
- Project a photo of an island similar to that in *Sailmaker* on the board. Use an x-chart to brainstorm the sights, sounds, tastes and emotions

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associated with the scene. Use these words and phrases to help describe the island.

- Why does Joel feel, 'like a deadbeat, like a player in a footy team that kicked a goal for the opposite team'? (p55)
- Re-read the ghost story on p57. Discuss the features of the 'ghost story' genre. What do you like/dislike about ghost stories? Try writing your own ghost story or adapt one that you've heard before.
- How are Joel and Vern similar?
- How is Joel like the island? (p62)
- Why does Vern think that the island is his friend? (p64)
- The island is facing environmental issues due to erosion. Investigate the causes and consequences of erosion. In small groups, present your findings to the class. Use visual aids to help with your explanation.
- Ms Bosse tells her class not to use clichés. What is a cliché? Why does Ms Bosse advise against using them?
- Joel decides to be a lighthouse, not a sandcastle. Write a reflection on this decision. What does Joel mean? How might he achieve this?
- How does Ms Bosse help Joel manage his disorder? What does she mean when she says, 'it's only small-minded people that make you feel different'? (p74)
- Explain Joel's description of feeling like a newborn joey in a pouch when he rides with Dev. (p75)
- Discuss Dev's advice that, 'if you tell yourself something often enough you'll end up believing it so you may as well tell yourself true things.' (p76)
- Why does Joel find ignoring Shawn such hard work?
- Explain what Joel means when he refers to Zoe as his ghost. (p86)
- Vern tells Mei that, 'there'll always be storms ... you just have to ride them through.' (p89) Write a reflection of a time when you've had to ride through a 'storm'. Is he speaking literally about storms or is he using an analogy? Discuss.
- Discuss the term 'self-efficacy'. How does Joel demonstrate this? How can you demonstrate this in your own life?
- On p124, Joel says that Vern has, 'done more for me than fix my windsurfer. He's made me a sail that I can use to tack before any wind.' What is Joel really saying about Vern's help?
- Write a book review of *Sailmaker*, using examples from publications such as *Magpies* as models.
- Construct a story graph to outline the main structure and plotline of *Sailmaker*.
- Create a book trailer for *Sailmaker*.
- Write an additional chapter suitable for inclusion in *Sailmaker*.

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- In small groups, devise an anti-bullying campaign for your school. Include posters, advertising and speeches.
- Create a brochure to promote Joel's hometown, including the island where Vern lives.
- Read the 'Sneak Peak' of *Killer Ute*. Make predictions about how this series may end.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Rosanne Hawke is an award-winning South Australian author. She lived in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates as an aid worker for ten years. Her books include *The Messenger Bird*; *Soraya, the Storyteller*; *Mustara*; and *Taj and the Great Camel Trek*, which won the 2012 Adelaide Festival Awards for Literature and was shortlisted for the 2012 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. She is a Carclew, Asialink, Varuna and May Gibbs Fellow, and a Bard of Cornwall. She teaches Creative Writing at Tabor Adelaide, and writes in an old Cornish farmhouse with underground rooms near Kapunda.