Something Special
By Emily Rodda

Book Summary:
In the spare room, the room with the stained-glass windows, the second-hand clothes hang in rows, stirring sunlight. Sam walks through the rows, brushing velvety sleeves, touching lace. The clothes are to be sold at the school fete on Saturday. They all carry neat price tags. Everything is ready. Sam knows that some of the clothes are special. Her mother has told her so. But soon she is going to find out just how special they really are. Yes, something very strange is going to happen to Sam this afternoon. Afterwards, she may be very tempted to think it has all been a dream.

Key Learning Areas
English, Drama, Visual Art, Media Arts, Digital Technologies

Themes
Etiquette, Imagination,

Australian Curriculum

English
ACELA1478, ACELA1479, ACELA1481, ACELA1482, ACELA1483, ACETL159, ACETL1596, ACETL1599, ACELY1676, ACELY1679, ACELY1680, ACELY1694, ACELY1695

Drama
ACADRM031, ACADRM032, ACADRM033

Visual Art
ACAVAM111, ACAVAM112

Media Arts
ACAMAM059, ACAMAM060

Digital Technologies
ACTDIP012, ACTDIP012
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Summary

Fete day has surprises in store for Sam, but are they all a dream! Something very strange is going to happen to Sam. In the spare room, the room with the stained-glass windows, the second-hand clothes hang in rows, stirring sunlight. Sam walks through the rows, brushing velvety sleeves, touching lace. The clothes are to be sold at the school fete on Saturday. They all carry neat price tags. Everything is ready. Sam knows that some of the clothes are Special. Her mother has told her so. But she is soon to find out just how Special they really are. Yes, something very strange is going to happen to Sam this afternoon. Afterwards, she may be very tempted to think it all has been a dream.
National Curriculum Learning Areas and Content Descriptions

**English**

Understand how different types of texts vary in use of language choices, depending on their purpose and context (for example, tense and types of sentences) (ACELA1478)

Understand that paragraphs are a key organisational feature of written texts (ACELA1479)

Understand that a clause is a unit of grammar usually containing a subject and a verb and that these need to be in agreement (ACELA1481)

Understand that verbs represent different processes, for example doing, thinking, saying, and relating and that these processes are anchored in time through tense (ACELA1482)

Identify the effect on audiences of techniques, for example shot size, vertical camera angle and lay out in picture books, advertisements and film segments (ACELA1483)

Discuss texts in which characters, events and settings are portrayed in different ways, and speculate on the authors’ reasons (ACELT1594)

Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others (ACELT1596)

Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative (ACELT1599)

Listen to and contribute to conversations and discussions to share information and ideas and negotiate in collaborative situations (ACELY1676)

Read an increasing range of different types of texts by combining contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge, using text processing strategies, for example monitoring, predicting, confirming, rereading, reading on and self-correcting (ACELY1679)

Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features (ACELY1680)

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts containing key information and supporting details for a widening range of audiences, demonstrating increasing control over text structures and language features (ACELY1694)

Re-read and edit for meaning by adding, deleting or moving words or word groups to improve content and structure (ACELY1695)

**Drama**

Explore ideas and narrative structures through roles and situations and use empathy in their own improvisations and devised drama (ACADRM031)

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Use voice, body, movement and language to sustain role and relationships and create dramatic action with a sense of time and place (ACADRM032)

Shape and perform dramatic action using narrative structures and tension in devised and scripted drama, including exploration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drama (ACADRM033)

**Visual Art**

Use materials, techniques and processes to explore visual conventions when making artworks (ACAVAM111)

Present artworks and describe how they have used visual conventions to represent their ideas (ACAVAM112)

**Media Arts**

Use media technologies to create time and space through the manipulation of images, sounds and text to tell stories (ACAMAM059)

Plan, create and present media artworks for specific purposes with awareness of responsible media practice (ACAMAM060)

**Digital Technologies**

Explain how student solutions and existing information systems meet common personal, school or community needs (ACTDIP012)

Explain how student solutions and existing information systems meet common personal, school or community needs (ACTDIP012)

**Themes**

**Etiquette**

Use the computer, or a dictionary, to look up what ‘etiquette’ means.

In Chapter Four and when Sam is selling clothes at the fete stall, Sam becomes concerned at times when certain people do not behave the way she thinks they should. But what makes someone’s behaviour wrong or right? Explore etiquette around the dinner table, for blowing your nose, and other forms of behaviour that might be different for different cultures. Do you have different behaviours at your home that might not be acceptable in another person’s home?

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What makes something special?

The book focuses on items of clothing that are so special they cause magical night to happen for Sam. But can things other than clothing be just as special? What makes something special? Can you make a list of items that are special to different people in your class. Even though the items might be different, is there something common to all of them which makes them special? Perhaps it is a feeling, or a memory, or what was happening when you received the item?

Learning Experiences – Chapter Study

Chapter One – Getting Ready

Page 3

‘Come back, you little devil, shouted Lizzie. ‘Oh, I’ll give you such a thrashing!’ A triumphant crow taunted her from the box-maze. Sam laughed. These chase began, and the sunbeams went wild as the dust flew.

Look at the emotive words in this passage – devil, shouted, thrashing, taunted. What emotions are these words usually associated with? Does this emotion accurately reflect the mood of the passage? Why are they different? What tells us that the interplay in this passage is more playful?

Chapter Two – The Spare Room

Page 9

‘I think it must have been a Special.’

‘What’s a special?’ asked Sam.

‘Well, it’s always seemed to me,’ said Lizzie, ‘that most clothes you wear are just clothes. You know. But every now and then you get something that you feel so good in, that suits you so well that – ‘

‘It’s a Special.’

Q. What about the word ‘Special’ indicates in is a noun, rather than an adjective?

Q. What is a Special? Describe in your own words.

Q. Do you have a Special? What makes it special?
Chapter Three - Dreaming

Q. What is happening in this chapter?
Q. Is it real? Give evidence from the chapter to support your decision.

Extension:

Find evidence in the passage to support Sam’s idea that each of these outfits was a Special.

Text from the passage to help answer these questions;

Page 13

She knew it the way you often find you know things in dreams – without anyone telling you or explaining anything.

Page 13

I must be dreaming, I suppose. (Miss King)

Page 14

‘I think I’m dreaming too,’ said Sam, suddenly finding her tongue.

‘We can’t both be dreaming the same dream, lass,’ said Miss King firmly.

‘I think the clothes have done it,’ Sam said hesitantly. ‘I think you dress … must be a Special.’

Page 16

‘I’m afraid I can’t enlighten you,’ said Miss King primly. ‘I think I’m having a dream.’

‘You’re having a dream – that’s rich!’ drawled the old man. ‘Here I am in some place I’ve never seen before, wearing me old gown I haven’t seen for ages, and you tell me you’re dreaming.’

Page 23

She put her hand up to her forehead. ‘This must be a dream, mustn’t it?’ she said. ‘I’ve been going on and one and no-ones interrupted. I suppose the White Rabbit will turn up any moment now.’
**Chapter Four - Riders: Mrs Houndstooth**

Q. Is Mrs. Houndstooth nice? How do you know? Give evidence from the chapter to support your answer.

**Chapter Five – Whispers in the Dark**

Q. How did Sam know she wasn’t dreaming anymore?

Q. A lot of time is spent discussing the shoes in the chapter. Why are they so significant? Why do you think Sam wants to buy them?

**Chapter Six – The Fair Begins**

Q. Whose dress did Mrs. Wilkinson buy?

Q. Why did Sam think the previous owner of the dress would approve? (Think about the qualities of Mrs. Wilkinson and the qualities of the previous owner.)

**Chapter Seven – Sold**

Q. List all the different things Sam did at the fair, in the order that she did them. Out of all those activities, which one would you like to do? Why?

Q. Why do you think Lizzie let the woman buy the dress, even though she didn’t have enough money?

Q. How does Lizzie react to the Mrs Hall? (see page 56-7) What effect did this have on Mrs Hall? Why was Mrs Hall offended? How do you know Mrs Hall was offended? Why would offering for someone to pay what they can afford offend some people?

**Chapter Eight – The Tartan Gown**

Q. Had Sam and Mrs Maxwell’s father met before?

Q. Was Mrs Maxwell’s father pleased to get his dressing-gown back? How do you know? What did he refer to it as? (Page 65 – his ‘second skin’)

**Chapter Nine – Something Special**

Q. Why do you think Sam wanted to wait for another day to tell them about how she knew it was Mrs Maxwell’s father’s dressing-gown?
Q. What did Lizzie buy Sam? How do we know they are special to Sam? What are the other items that are special to Sam?

**Research Task**

**Biography**

For this task you will be using a computer to find information on the internet.

Open discussion: How do you know if a website is a trustworthy website?

Research who Emily Rodda is. As a class, or in small groups, brainstorm what sort of information you should find when writing a short biography on someone.

Q. Why do you think she chose to write adult fiction under her own name, but children’s fiction under a pseudonym?
Subject Specific Tasks

Visual Literacy

Look at the picture on page 31 and answer the following questions.

Q. What is Sam doing in the picture? Where are her hands? Pay particular attention to her eyes and mouth, and where she is looking.

Q. How is movement shown in the picture?

Q. Notice the shading on the wall. Do you think the wallpaper is painted like that? Or is the illustrator trying to show emotion through the use of light and dark, and the lines?
Look at the picture on page 46-7. List all the different activities that are taking place in this picture. Does your school have a fete? Have you ever been to a fete? What activities are happening in this picture that you seen at fetes you’ve been to?

**Media Arts**

Create a poster advertising a fete for your school. Consider the following questions:

Q. What information would need to be displayed on the poster?

Q. If the poster is made to be viewed from afar, what size does the main text need to be? Will all text be the same size? Will all text be the same font and colour? What are the advantages to changing the size, colour and font of the text?

Q. What images and how many images would you include on your poster? Give a rationale for your decision.

Q. What colours will you use? Are certain colours better to use than others?

Q. How will you arrange the various elements in your poster?

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Drama

Imagine you have a Special.

Q. Explain the history of your Special, how did you come to have it? What makes it a Special?

Q. What does it look like?

Q. How do you feel when you are wearing your Special?

Now combine your answers into a monologue. Think about the actions that would go with it. Perform your monologue for the class.

Think about;

How will you move around the space you have?

Where will you look? Will you look directly at the audience? Or stare into space?

How will you convey emotion through your voice, movement and posture?

Digital Technology

Twitter can be great ways to connect with other readers. Together with your teacher, or your parents, create a conversation about what you’ve read or follow the thread that others have generated, by using the hastags #emilyrodda #harpercollinsaustralia or the tags @EmilyRodda @harpercolinsau.

NOTES PREPARED BY

Nadia McCallum completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Psychology and Sociology, before going on to complete a Masters of Teaching which she finished with Honours. She has taught in the Catholic, Government and Independent school systems at a Primary School level. Nadia has a special interest in the explicit teaching of thinking skills in order to develop critical thinkers who actively explore, engage with and learn about the world around them and themselves. Nadia works as an education consultant advising schools and speaking at conferences on curriculum differentiation and assessment.