



TEACHING NOTES

Prepared by
CHRISTINE SARANDIS

BOOK 1: THE CHANGELING: ISBN:9780732284749

BOOK 2: THE DUST DEVILS: ISBN:9780732284756

BOOK 3: THE SCARECROW: ISBN:9780732284763

written by SEAN WILLIAMS

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Introduction

In an unyielding world where a deep ravine divides the coastal strip known as the Strand from the vast desert Interior, this trilogy follows Ros as he makes a life-changing journey from his remote farm to the sea. On his way he'll encounter friends and enemies, and, in learning to use the strange power known as the Change, discover a lot about himself.

The Changeling

In the first of the series, we meet Ros, who is in real danger. His family are so desperate to save their drought-stricken farm that they'll sacrifice anything – even him – for rain. His only friend is Escher, an unseen entity with a voice that whispers in Ros's head, continuously warning him to leave before it's too late.

Escaping from his vengeful family astride a stolen camel, Ros decides to try his luck in the desert, discovering along the way a power he never knew he had. Through Escher, Ros learns to control the Change, a magical force that taps into the land, the water, fire and the air. He also meets Adi, a girl from a travelling clan of nomads, who asks him to save her from a future she's desperate to avoid.

When tragedy strikes, Ros seeks help from a powerful Stone Mage,

but when even she can't save him, he starts to question everything that has happened on his journey. He must decide who is telling the truth, and who his real friends are.

The Dust Devils

Continuing Ros's extraordinary adventures in the Broken Lands..

Adi's body has been borne away across the desert by her Clan, but her spirit remains Ros's constant companion. If he can't find the travellers in time, Adi will be presumed dead and her body cremated, leaving her a ghost forever.

But Ros is not prepared for the dangers lurking in the shifting sands. Rescued from bandits and Dust Devils by a boy named Yury, he takes refuge in Yury's home – an extensive network of tunnels known as Dunetown – and learns that Yury in turn needs Ros's help. His family has been kidnapped by the sand bandits, a ruthless gang led by a psychopath obsessed with treasure and power.

Ros must learn to trust again, and to overcome those who cannot ever be trusted. Darker things lurk in the desert than Dust Devils and sand bandits. And, all the while, Adi's voice is a constant reminder that time is running out ...

The Scarecrow

In this, the final book in the series, Ros, Adi and their guardian Varis arrive at the small town of Samimi. Along the way, they encounter a mysterious stranger, who disappears soon after - along with Varis.

Tracking them by use of the Change, the friends are confronted by a powerful charm impeding further discovery. But a brush with the spirit world has given one of them the power to see the island fort where Varis has been taken, and helped by Pukje, an imp-like stranger, they plan a rescue.

Inside the fort, though, lurks the Scarecrow, a sinister amalgamation of man and material. He wants the incredibly powerful Golem of Omus, imprisoned in crystal by Ros – and he'll do anything to get his hands on it.

The Scarecrow offers Ros a deal; Pukje offers him hope of escape. Once again, Ros has to decide who to trust.

About the author

New York Times bestselling author Sean Williams has written over thirty books and numerous short stories for adults and younger readers. He is a multiple recipient of both the Ditmar and Aurealis Awards. Sean lives in Adelaide and DJs in his spare time. His *Books of the Change* series for young adult readers and *Books of the Cataclysm* series for adults are set in the same world as these books and feature some of the characters. A novella continuing Ro's adventures is forthcoming. For more information about the author and his books, including, visit: <http://www.seanwilliams.com/>

Setting

Ros and his friends live in a vast and barren landscape as shown in the maps in the front of each book. Unlike many fantasy novels, the setting is deliberately based on the South Australian landscape.

- Using the maps at the front of each book and create a linking map, which shows Ros's journey throughout the series.
- Compare and contrast the setting in each of the books and discuss the tone it creates throughout. What aspects of the setting seem familiar to you? What aspects seem strange/alien? Indicate how the sense of place impacts on the reading and how it adds to the general mood of the novels.

Include any or all of the following places: Mount Geheb, Barker, Yidna, Jakati, the Swooping Magpie Inn, Dunetown, the Broken

Lands, Trevin, the Strand, the Divide, the Interior, Chemaly, Smerdon, Samimi, Moombin, the Haunted City, Bohm, Showell, the well of Yunda, the Proclamation Tree, Ulum, Myr, the Void.

Themes for discussion

Search for identity, betrayal, bravery, friendship, quests, fear, trust, supernatural powers.

- There are a number of major themes that recur throughout the novels, such as those listed above. All are concerned with family relationships, friendships and the individual's search for identity and a sense of belonging and acceptance.
- Choose one of the themes in the novels (e.g. trust) and write a short summary of instances in which that theme is evident. You could also draw up a table to compare two or three of the themes, showing how they are described, and how effectively they are realised.
- List each of the tasks facing Ros as part of his quest throughout the novels.

Characters

- In each of the novels, the characters are drawn with great care. Before reading, select one of the characters to build up a character profile as you read.
- Alternatively, you may wish to contrast two of the characters or creatures listed below.
- Make a list of, or draw a diagram showing the main character relationships in the novels, explaining the impact the characters have upon one another as well as the nature of their relationship e.g. Adi and Ros, Ros and Pukje.
- Name each of the unusual creatures named in the books and illustrate at least one of them to show what you believe they look like. Escher (or the Golem of Omus), the Scarecrow, Pukje the dragon, Bronhill the man'kin, Vasoph the man'kin, a crabbler.

List of Characters

Note: some characters are referred to by more than one name – extra names in brackets. Those characters who appear in all three books are in **bold**, below.

Ros (Roslyn - heart-name Paril)
Escher (Golem of Omus, Sherec),
Know-It-All, the camel (Oska)
Adi (Aditi – heart name, Jelena)

The Changeling

Ros's family
Geno Canzini
Kuller
the landlord and his wife
the tea-trader
Ulick, her father and Clan Sabatino leader
Akil, from Clan Distrario
Dylis Shurven, the Stone Mage
Vasoph the man's kin

The Dust Devils

Shiggins, Drass, Scarlo – sand bandits
Yury (heir of the Desert Queen)
Bozidar, the Bee Witch (formerly Yury's mother, Hannah)
Mistress Vanda
Milosh, Yury's father
Mister Alembic the Change-worker and other Sky Wardens
Radee, Adi's aunt
Keagan (previous leader of the sand bandits)
Tomali, Bastin

The Scarecrow

Varis

Tally Wiskins
Adren Quirk
the Scarecrow
Ged Yunda
Manton
Members of Clan Kourakis
Pukje the dragon
Bronhill the man'kin

Activities and questions

Teachers may decide how best to approach the use of the following activities and questions. Suggested uses include having children work in pairs to answer a range of questions from one of the novels and then sharing their responses with the class. Or sample questions could be chosen as discussion starters.

Main points – Books 1-3

- List the main events that occur in each of the novels and describe how each book is linked to the next, including the resolution in Book 3.
- Create a new scenario or quest for Ros as if there was a sequel to the series.

Discuss some of Ros's achievements. Which of these do you think is most important?

- The defeat of the golem hunter, Kuller
- The battle with the crabbler coven
- The entrapment and disposal of the Golem of Omus
- The formation of a new lake in the northern desert
- The defeat of the Bee Witch
- The reunion of Adi's body and mind
- The navigation of the Weird
- The defeat of the Scarecrow

Can you think of any others?

Discuss the origins and significance of the following in the trilogy:

- heart names and their association with identity
- the Change
- charms

Plot and Narrative - Specifics

Discuss the following issues and or write a response to them.

Book 1: *The Changeling*

Escher

- Describe Ros's first encounter with Escher and what it was about him that Ros recognized in himself?
- From the description of golems on pp. 138-39, give a brief summary of what you understand about the Golem of Omus? What makes him different and more dangerous than most golem?
- Describe how Ros defeated Escher, 'the best friend he'd ever had' and what else did he achieve through his victory?
- What did Ros find difficult to comprehend in relation to the golem's motivation for its actions?

Ros's family life and Kuller

- How would you describe Ros's family life, and in particular, his family's feelings towards him?
- Why did Ros's parents plan to trade him for rain?
- What two versions of himself were at war in Ros's mind?
- Ros is essentially a loner, seeking friendship, and he seems to exist on the margins of life. Is it personality or circumstance that makes him like this? To what degree does this make him and

observer? What forces him to act or engage directly with the other characters in the novels?

- According to Kuller, what had Ros done and why did he need to be stopped?
- How was Ros able to escape despite being trapped by Kuller's containment charm?
- When Kuller and Ros finally faced each other again, why did Ros try and bargain with him and what was the outcome?
- What did Ros see in his father's eyes after his defeat of the golem? Explain your answer.
- According to Kuller, what made the Golem of Omus so powerful?

Know-it-All

- How did Ros come to acquire Know-it-All, and who was his original owner?
- Why did Ros consider Know-it-All to be his most certain ally in the whole world?

The Change

- Describe the Change, and how having the gift could improve Ros's life and family circumstances? And, according to Escher, how did the Change work best?

Adi

- How did Ros meet Adi and why did she plead desperately with him to allow her to join him on his journey?
- What happened to Adi? How did Ros revive her, and what was the consequence of his bringing her back to life?
- According to Escher, what caused Adi to run from the cave in fear, and what was the tragic result?
- How did Ros cope with the presence of what he believed to be Adi's ghost, and was he justified in blaming himself for her death?

The Stone Mage and Vasoph, the man'kin

- Why did Ros need to visit the Stone Mage in Jakati and why was it critical he do so without Escher?
- Before she was able to perform the exorcism, what did Dylis Shurven require Ros to do? Describe the events surrounding Ros's initial inability to get the rock, and then his feelings once he achieved his objective?
- How did the mage say she would choose Ros's heart-name?
- Describe the events that took place as the golem destroyed the mage and what had the golem said he would do if he successfully defeated her?
- What had been the mage's parting gift to Ros and why had she also summoned Kuller?
- When the man' kin was summoned to help Ros, what did he reveal as the next and greatest challenge facing Ros?
- Following the dramatic events of the day, how did Ros suddenly reinterpret and understand Mage Shurven's words as she lay dying?

Book 2: The Dust Devils

Ros's plans

- At the commencement of this novel, what was Ros's plan? How was it temporarily put on hold when he encountered the sand bandits', Shiggins and Drass, and what did Ros lose as a result of their assault on him?

Yury, a new friend, and the quest ahead

- According to Yury, what were dust devils?
- What had happened to Yury's family and the other Dunetowners and how had the sand bandits betrayed them?
- What did Ros retrieve from the Vault before he, Scarlo and Yury set out on their quest?

Rescuing the slaves and reuniting Adi's body and mind

- Describe Ros's plan to save both the Clan Sabatino and the Dunetowners from the sand bandits, and why was this a priority?
- How would Adi's presence assist in the success of the quest? Could you think of an alternative plan that would successfully trick the sand bandits?
- What part was Yury and the pouch entombing the golem to play in rescuing the prisoners from the sand bandits?
- What disappointing news did Ros learn from Bozidar in relation to Adi and why was her fate still firmly in the balance?
- Once the slaves had been rescued, which important item needed to be retrieved before leaving the camp?
- What did Ros learn about the glass rod from Mister Alembic?
- Apart from fulfilling his promise, what other reason did Ros have for trying to reunite Adi's body and mind?
- When Bozidar arrived at Dunetown the day after the slaves' release, what plan did Ros agree to?
- What did Ros believe to be the reason behind Ulick's disquiet?
- Why did Ros fail repeatedly in his quest to save Adi and what was it that eventually allowed the union of her mind and body to occur?
- Which important secret did Ros share with Adi?
- In Adi's opinion, under what circumstances might Ros become a proper member of the Clan Sabatino?

Negotiating the Weird

- As confirmation of Adi's two previous warnings, once past the Broken Lands' border, what caused the travellers' dizziness and disorientation?
- While Ros and his companions became lost in the Weird, what enabled Bozidar to betray the others and lead his allies safely out of the Weird?
- Why was Adi able to see a clear path through the Weird while her companions could not?

The Bee Witch

- How did the Bee Witch announce her presence and what occurred as she and the travellers came face-to-face?
- How were Yury and Milosh oddly connected to the Bee Witch and what was the truth behind the Bee Witch's identity?
- Which two women had their own minds restored?
- Why did Ros break the glass cylinder and what was the result?
- According to Mister Alembic, what was the positive outcome of the deluge?
- Explain the outcome of the fight between Ros's group and the Bee Witch, disguised as Bozidar.
- How did the Bee Witch die?

What lies ahead

- Apart from the defeat of the Bee Witch, why else did the Dunetowners and the Clan Sabatino hold a huge party?
- After fulfilling his promise to Adi, what was Ros's next challenge?
- Which three things had Ros done for the Clan Sabatino and what did they offer him in return?

Book 3: *The Scarecrow*

Focus on the future

- What was the first major task facing Ros in *The Scarecrow*?
- How did Ros create the false names he and Adi adopted for their forthcoming journey?
- At the Coach and Camel Inn, what did Aden Quirk list as the attributes of the heroic Roslin of Geheb, and how did this information make Ros feel, especially in relation to his friend, Yury?
- What question hung between Adi and Ros and what were the possible alternatives Ros pondered for his future after his planned disposal of the Golem of Omus?

Accepting Manton's help

- Which information from Manton encouraged Adi to trust him and accept his advice and assistance?
- What were Ros's priorities after the planned rescue of Varis?
- How did Ros track Varis and describe the circumstances that lead to the formulation of a plan? Include reference to Bronhill, the female man'kin?
- Once at the ocean's edge, why was Ros unable to see the island, while Adi and Bronhill could and why was Ros blocked from tracking Varis completely?
- Which information from Pukje enabled the travellers to make the sea crossing to the island?
- Discuss the significance of the lullaby Adi overheard Ros humming and why was he determined to avoid discussion and truth about it?

On the island

- When Ros and Adi first found Varis, how was he incarcerated and what state was he in?
- Which strange ritual did Ros and Adi watch Quirk perform on Varis, what was its purpose and how did the rescuers hope to outsmart Quirk?
- According to Quirk, how were charms made on the island?

The Scarecrow

- List the Scarecrow's attributes and do a pen and ink drawing to show its appearance.
- Why did Ros's charm fail on the Scarecrow and what was the consequence?
- What did the Scarecrow want from Ros in exchange for Ros's freedom?
- Why did Ros have reservations about the Scarecrow eating the golem?
- Why did the Scarecrow make a new proposition to Ros and what was it?

- How did the Scarecrow respond when Ros refused to be apprenticed to him?
- When the damaged Scarecrow again captured Ros, how was he saved from certain death and what part did Quirk play in the unfolding drama?

Pukje

- When Ros became aware of the Scarecrow's plans for the golem, what decision did he make and why?
- Describe how Pukje was able to help Ros but what promise was Ros forced to make prior to accepting that help?
- What frightening connection did Pukje bring to Ros's attention regarding the Scarecrow's plans for the Golem of Omus and why were the potential repercussions so worrying?
- Which significant difference did Ros note between Escher and Pukje?
- How did Ros extract the crystal from the Scarecrow's laboratory and to whom did he entrust it?
- With what assurance did Pukje confirm his intention to return the crystal to Ros?

An attempted escape

- Which hurdle prevents Ros and Varis leaving the island?
- What did Ros learn from Quirk in relation to the golem's actions while it had been entombed in the crystal?
- How did Varis die?
- Following Ros's recapture and the death of Varis, why did Pukje say it was now vital that Ros destroy the Scarecrow?
- How did Ros, Adi, Manton, Bronhill and Pukje plan to outwit the Scarecrow and Quirk?
- What promise did Ros and Adi make to one another as Adi wept over Varis's body?
- Why did Pukje tell Ros to smash the Scarecrow's machine?

The dragon and a future

- Under what circumstances did Adi say Ros could become a member of her Clan and how did Ros feel about this prospect?
- After the Scarecrow and Quirk were dead, what did Pukje give to Ros?
- From the dragon, Ros learnt the real reason that Manton had helped him – what was it?
- How did the dragon help Ros finally rid himself of the burden of the Golem of Omus?
- According to Pukje, why did Ros need a teacher and under what conditions did he agree to take on that role? What did Ros say he must do before commencing that challenge?
- Which final promise did Ros and Adi make to one another?
- With thoughts of the next quest, how would Adi keep track of Ros and thus gain some comfort at their separation?

Quotes

- Find two quotes from the novels that you think are important and say why you think so.
- Discuss the following from *The Changeling*:
 - p. 18 *'The change couldn't create something from nothing, it can only guide the existing forms and forces of nature from one into another.'*
 - p. 19 *'Where there's life, there's hope... But now I have you - a friend who needs me - and that makes all the difference.'*
 - Pp. 113-114 *'Words and names have power' the man' kin had said. 'By changing the word, we change the thing itself. This was much the same thing, only around the other way, keeping things the same instead of changing them.'*

Activities

Art and Craft

- Draw the world of the crabblers, their cave and the larder where Ros found Adi. Alternatively, sketch the sand bandits' camp (*The Dust Devils*, Chapter 3) or the scene in which the Clan Sabatino, the Dunetowners and the sand bandits set off on their quest to find the Bee Witch and Adi. (*The Dust Devils*, Chapter 5).
- What might a man' kin look like? Describe or draw one and compare its features with that of a human. Use charcoal or pen and ink to draw the horned man' kin, Vasoph, using the description on Pp. 99 and 107 (*The Changeling*) to help. Use an A3 sheet of paper and when finished, apply a watercolour wash or draw in the background as you imagine it might look. You might also include the rock setting in which Ros encountered the man'kin.
- Illustrate the environment as seen through Ros's eyes as he travels far from his home.
- Make a storyboard or collage to convey the themes of 'bravery' or a 'quest'.
- Illustrate an alternative cover for one of the stories or for a bind-up trilogy that combines all three books.
- Create a collage from the description of the Jakati marketplace on Pp.92, 98 of *The Changeling*.

Research

- Research one of the following topics or choose one of your own and create a project to present to the class:

Strandbeasts: <http://www.strandbeest.com/mGallery/>

the golem <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golem>

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Golem.html>

- What is speculative fiction? (Describe what it is and list some of its attributes as well as some titles in this genre suitable for your age group.) Present your information in the form of an ad. <http://www.aussiereviews.com/article2023.html> <http://sf.penguin.com.au/>

Writing

- Imagine you are Ros. Write about what might have occurred if you had escaped with Adi before the crabblers attack.
- For someone so young, Ros is forced to act with great bravery. Throughout the story, he faces many challenges and has life-or-death decisions to make, complex issues to understand, and different degrees of loss and tragedy to contend with. Can you think of a situation in which you might require bravery of this degree and how might you feel and behave? Write about a real or imaginary situation in which you are challenged and outline your response.
- Is there one message behind these stories that you think is more important than any other? Describe and analyse it.
- Form groups of two or three. Script and perform an interview between Ros and the Golem of Omus and present each character's reasons for their actions.
- Pretend you are living in another world. Recreate that world through writing or illustration. Then say how your life may be similar or different to the way it is currently?
- Choose a passage from one of the novels to share that you found interesting or enjoyable. Read it to the rest of the class, stating your reasons for choosing it, and then analyse how the author made this scene effective.

- Write a brief description of the appearance or attributes, role and tools of trade of the following three characters from the novels. You could also sketch them.

The Golem of Omus
The man'kin, Vasoph
The Scarecrow

Further Resources

Other books by the author

<http://www.seanwilliams.com/works.htm>
<http://www.harpercollins.com.au/search/index.aspx?kw=sean%20williams>

Other speculative fiction titles

Fantasy and science fiction for children and teens
<http://www.wandsandworlds.com/>

Follow this link for a list of books from the NSW Premiers Reading Challenge in the science fiction genre.

<https://products.schools.nsw.edu.au/prc/booklist/listBooksByGenre.html?genreId=17&levelId=3>

Also:

- Various titles by Ursula Le Guin
<http://www.ursulakleguin.com/>
- *Killer Virus: An Anthology of Short Stories* by Goldie Alexander. (includes a number of science fiction stories.)

- *Galax-Arena* by Gillian Rubenstein.
- *Astronet* by Goldie Alexander
- Various titles by Phillip Pullman: http://books.google.com.au/books?as_auth=Philip+Pullman&source=an&ei=cGTQSeigMZ7utQOc-9WhAw&sa=X&oi=book_group&resnum=4&ct=title&cad=author-navigational
- Various titles by Garth Nix: <http://www.infinitas.com.au/ProductsByAuthor.php?autid=23384>
- Phillip Reeve's *Mortal Engines* series
www.mortalengines.co.uk/

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25 RYDE ROAD
PYMBLE NSW 2073



TELEPHONE: (02) 9952 5000

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