Ronia the Robber’s Daughter
by Astrid Lindgren

A Literature Guide for 4th Grade
by Mollie Zanoni

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Summary

*Ronia the Robber’s Daughter* is a coming-of-age adventure story, the protagonist of which is a young girl. The only daughter of a feared robber chieftain, Ronia spends her earliest years in the safety of her father’s fortress high in the mountains. Born on the night of a raging storm that splits her family’s fort in two, Ronia is raised by her adoring father Matt, strong mother Lovis, and a ragtag band of robbers -- we can see from the outset that she will be a strong-willed and courageous character. Once she is old enough to understand her father’s livelihood, she rejects the idea of succeeding him as the next robber chieftain. As soon as she is able, her parents allow her to spend her days in the wild, primeval forest that surrounds the fort in all directions. Through her daring explorations which bring successes, failures, and some near misses, Ronia becomes increasingly strong and fearless, learns the ways of the magic-filled woods, and makes the forest her second home. The beauty and danger of the forest shape Ronia as she tests herself and grows, but as she celebrates her increasing independence, she also begins to feel lonely.

One day while exploring Hell’s Gap, the chasm formed between the two halves of Matt’s Fort on the night of her birth, Ronia encounters a boy her age. He turns out to be Birk Borkason, son of Matt’s archenemy and rival robber chieftain, Borka. Driven out of their own stronghold by the sheriff’s men, this enemy clan secretly moved into the abandoned side of the fort. As much as Ronia craves a companion, she attempts to reject Birk outright based on the two clans’ age-old hatred for one another and her father’s deep rage at their occupation of his territory. However, a series of dramatic events draws the two together and they develop a beautiful friendship. Both realize the incredibly high stakes of their relationship given the rivalry, and vow to never let their families know of their insoluble bond.

When Matt captures Birk and uses him as ransom to try to force Borka out of his fort, Ronia can no longer keep her feelings hidden. She gives herself over to Borka to force Matt’s hand in releasing the boy she has come to call her brother. Matt returns Birk to Borka, and Ronia is given back to her family. Matt then disowns his own daughter for what he sees as a supreme betrayal -- yet another rejection of what he stands for -- and falls into a fierce, black rage. At their wits’ end with their families ceaseless and senseless
antagonism, Birk and Ronia seek shelter away from their clans’ forts and find peace in their second home – the lush, magical forest. Living together in Bear’s Cave, playing and working in the deep woods, the two find freedom and harmony outside of the tribal turmoil at the fort. In all the beauty and wonder of this time together, Ronia deeply misses her people and her home. At the same time, she cannot consider ever living apart from the new family she has formed with Birk. Together they contemplate the futility of their families’ hatred for one another and the senseless dangers of the robbing life.

Eventually, and through great strife, the two clans reconcile and accept their children’s friendship. The two great chiefs realize that their ability to survive against the sheriff’s men lies in their unifying forces, and they begin to work together as a stronger, united power. We eventually learn that Borka and Matt, blood enemies, were once friends when they were children – an important fact that was hinted at in the beginning of the story. Matt and Borka’s friendship was discovered by Matt’s father and ripped apart, thereby ensuring another generation of useless rivalry, hatred, and pain. Thanks to their own children's forbidden friendship, the two men are able to realize their mistakes (and the mistakes of their parents), reconcile, and overcome their false hatred in order to stay strong.

**Rationale**

*Ronia the Robber’s Daughter* is a coming-of-age adventure set in a wild, magic-filled forest. This book is particularly well suited to children in the fourth grade as at this time they, like the young protagonist, are beginning to consider the world beyond their immediate homes (Wood 111). Ronia’s increasingly daring forays from her family’s hearth are central to the story and I believe children reading this book would be able to relate to her mishaps, fears, and victories as she makes the forest her home away from home. A strong female protagonist, Ronia is a loveable combination of fierce and vulnerable, fearless and fallible – infinitely recognizable to children who are exploring the boundaries of their expanding worldview, sense of self, and their places in a larger context. Lindgren’s beautiful, lush descriptions of the primeval forest and of Ronia’s days spent exploring its mysteries would appeal to children’s love of descriptive language at this age and there is also plenty of rich vocabulary to work with (Wood 110).

As the daughter of a loving but fearsome robber chieftain, Ronia experiences heart-
wrenching emotional turmoil when she befriends Birk, the son of her father’s archrival. Old enough to form her own negative judgments of her father’s livelihood and to disobey her clan’s age-old injunction against interacting with the enemy, Ronia is forced to reckon with her understandings of loyalty, justice, and love. Her friendship with Birk causes her to question the sanity of mindlessly hating an entire group of people based on historical precedent, and the cost of her independent thinking is unthinkably high. What a wonderful dilemma to present to children who are beginning to think about the world at large and their places within it. In his book *Yardsticks*, Chip Wood discusses how 9-year olds can experience “an internal emotional rollercoaster” at this time in their development and may grapple with the larger issues of fairness, right and wrong. I imagine that in the character of Ronia, students might be able to see something of themselves and in this way experience how literature enriches our ability to understand ourselves and to reflect upon our own experiences.

In the story, there are a number of complex characters, relationships, and themes that would be perfect for in-depth studies. Such exercises would meet two of the Common Core Reading Standards for Literature in grade 4 while encouraging the students to dig deep into the story. I think this book would work best if introduced as a read-aloud. Once the students are situated and invested in the story (I see an ideal segue between chapters five and six) we would shift into independent reading supplemented with group conferences. Mini-lessons in this literature guide provide scaffolding to support the students’ independent reading skills such as using evidence in the text to support their thinking and using context to help understand the meaning of unknown words (Sibberson 128, 131). Overall, this book provides many opportunities for students to improve and grow as readers and as critical thinkers. And how timely to engage them in the authentic adventure of a young girl as she joins the big world in all its pain and infinite beauty, as they are likely doing just the same.

*Initiating Activities for Fourth Graders*

I chose this book because I fell in love with it as a young reader and I felt that my deep connection to the writing and to Ronia as a character would allow me to authentically present it to 4th graders. My approach would be to introduce the book by sharing my own
relationship to the story. I plan to read aloud the first five chapters of the book aloud to the class and then have them read the rest of the book independently, once they have had a chance to connect with the characters and develop some strategies for pulling meaning from the text. In this particular introduction of the book, I want to make clear the fact that the story has very rich characters and themes. We will be using these for character and theme studies down the road, so it is necessary for them to be aware of their importance when we begin reading.

Intro, Examining the Cover, Making Predictions and Asking Questions

To introduce the book, a teacher might say:

“*We are going to start a new book called Ronia the Robber’s Daughter* by Astrid Lindgren. *This was one of my all time favorite books when I was about your age and I really want to share it with all of you. I recently re-read this book to see if I thought you would like it. I had no idea if I still liked it, as I haven’t read it for years. And do you know what was a wonderful surprise for me? I found the story to be just as wonderful as I remembered! The characters and the themes are so rich! They would be perfect for more in-depth study later on.. I’d like to take a few moments with you to think about the title and really look closely at the beautiful picture on the cover of the book. We know that as readers we often make predictions and have questions about a book before we even start reading. Let’s look at this book’s cover and then take about five minutes to write in our reading notebooks any questions or predictions we have. Then we will meet back here on the rug and share some thoughts with each other and I will read you the first chapter.”*

Copies of the book will be passed around the classroom, and students will take time to examine the image on the cover. At this point in the year, the class will likely have established reading notebooks similar to those described in *Still Learning to Read* (Sibberson 36-41). The students will have ones devoted to this novel and will use these to keep track of vocabulary, characters, questions, and other related exercises – this notebook will be where they write their observations of the image of Ronia, along with their predictions for the story.

Once we re-group as a class, write the students’ questions and predictions on chart paper in one column labeled “Our predictions and questions before reading chapter 1”.
Then, read the first chapter aloud to the class. Afterward, revisit the class' chart to see which predictions were correct and which we might expect to come later (or not at all). Then, go over the characters who have been introduced so far and spend a few minutes discussing them. Have students keep notes along with their character lists in their notebooks. There is a lot of new vocabulary in the first chapter, and this introductory activity will segue into the first mini-lesson on problem solving to determine the meanings of unknown words using the context of a sentence or paragraph (Mini-lesson #1).

**Mini Lesson #1: Problem Solving the Meanings of Unknown Words, Using Context of a Sentence or Paragraph (Sibberson 131-132)**

**CCSS: English Language Arts and Literacy:** Language standards: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: Grade 4: (4a) Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase

The first chapter of *Ronia the Robber's Daughter* is filled with a lot of potentially unfamiliar vocabulary. Since the book is a translation from the original Swedish, the characters’ names may also present a challenge to fourth grade readers. By presenting to the students early on the powerful strategy of using the context of a sentence or paragraph to determine the meaning of unknown words, readers are then empowered to meet these new words and improve their understanding of the text.

For teacher to say out loud:

“Yesterday we began a new book, *Ronia the Robber’s Daughter*. I read the first chapter aloud to you and then we did some thinking together about the book. As you know, we will be reading this entire book as a class, starting with me reading aloud the first four chapters and eventually moving into you reading it on your own. We discovered quite a bit of new vocabulary in that first chapter, made a list together of these words on this big chart, and then talked about how when we are reading, we can figure out words we don’t know by using clues in the text. Can someone tell me how this might be a good tool for us
as readers and as problem solvers?”

(Allow student to explain their thinking)

“Yes, you make a great point. When we are reading and do not understand a word, we might get stuck. By understanding the rest of the sentence or sentences around the unknown word — the context — we are like detectives. By using all the available clues, we can make a very good guess as to what the word means. We know how to get unstuck and can continue enjoying our story. Today we are going to practice this strategy using our word list from yesterday and doing some good detective work by looking closely at the context of these words in the story.”

After discussing the activity, we will work through the first few vocabulary words on the chart (see next page) as a group, modeling the small group work to follow. First we will share some ideas as to what the word might mean and then we will look in our books to see how the context provided us with evidence (or didn’t) to make a good guess as to the word’s meaning. Then, the class will break into groups of 2-4 students with smaller versions of the chart we have been working with. They will each get a few of the words from the list to work on together, recording the specific context they used to gain understanding of the vocabulary word. We will then regroup and share what the small groups came up with.

**Assessment**

The chart will provide evidence of students’ lines of thinking in tackling unfamiliar words using context. If the connection between their projected definition of the word and the surrounding text is logical, then I can conclude that the students are understanding how to use context to understand new vocabulary. By having them then complete the charts for homework and fill out the last section, I can allow them a chance to practice these skills independently and try out another technique for verifying the meaning of unknown words.

**Problem Solving the Meanings of Unknown Words Using Context of a Sentence/Paragraph**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unknown word (page #)</th>
<th>What do you think it means?</th>
<th>What in the text makes you think that?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>harpies (3)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>stronghold (3)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>witless (4)</td>
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<td>hags (4)</td>
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<td>jeered (4)</td>
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<td>quelled (4)</td>
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<td>chieftain (5)</td>
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<td>tankards (6)</td>
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<td>gnashing (6)</td>
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<td>snigger (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>piteous (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>battlements (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cleft (7)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>chasm (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>astray (7)</td>
<td>moderation (8)</td>
<td>archenemy (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loggerheads (9)</td>
<td>immemorial (9)</td>
<td>ditties (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matchless (10)</td>
<td>supple (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pick one word from the chart you have worked through. Look it up in the dictionary and see how close you were. Make an original sentence using that word. Try to make it a sentence where we can get a clue about the meaning of the word from the context. We will share these in class tomorrow.

Mini Lesson #2: Using Evidence in the Text to Support Your Thinking (Sibberson 128, 148)

CCSS: English Language Arts and Literacy: Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details: Grade 4: (3) Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g. a character’s thoughts, words, or actions.)

By the end of chapter 5, students will most likely be very engrossed in the story and invested in the characters, particularly the protagonist Ronia. This is also the last chapter that we work with as a read-aloud. Of course, we continue to work on the book as a class, but this is the turning point where students will be doing the lion’s share of the reading
independently. This transition of greater responsibility onto the students coincides with a pivotal juncture in the story; Ronia and Birk’s friendship is solidified and Ronia learns of her father’s true livelihood. As students begin to read independently, they need to be prepared for coming together as a group to discuss the story and their thoughts, using textual evidence to support their predictions and opinions.

Teacher may say aloud:

“We have come to a very interesting point in this story, haven’t we? A lot is changing and getting more complicated! And just as we are getting ready to switch over from me reading the book to you to your reading it on your own. Yesterday when we got to the end of chapter 5, we made a list of our thoughts about the story so far and some predictions as to what might happen in chapter 6 and beyond. Today we are going to find evidence in the text that supports these thoughts and predictions. Can anybody suggest why this is an important skill? Why might we be learning how to do this now?”

(Allow student to share their thinking)

“Good thinking! If we are all reading on our own, we need to be able to come back together as a group and share our thoughts, opinions, and predictions. We won’t all always agree, but if we can find proof in the text that supports something we think, everybody can understand where we are coming from. And you are right, one person’s evidence for her thinking might be totally different than another’s and that is just fine. The key is to find evidence in the text to support your own thoughts. We will practice this as a class using an example from the list we made yesterday.”

As a group, we will work through an item off the list, finding a few examples in the text to support that thought. The students will then be divided into groups of 2-3 and given a chart to use, writing at the top a thought, opinion, or prediction of their choice from the group-generated list and supplying supporting textual evidence. We will then share back as a large group.

Assessment

The chart will indicate to me whether or not the students are able to anchor their
thoughts with evidence from the text. To further assess individual mastery of this concept, I will give them each another copy of this same chart to work on individually either during class time or at home. If they are not able to provide textual evidence to support their thinking, I will know we need to work on this concept. In this chart, I will choose the thought that goes on the top and ask them to find evidence in the text. In choosing the statement they need to look for evidence to support, I hope to set them up for looking deeper into the relationships between characters.

**Evidence in the Text That Supports Your Thinking**

Record some of your thoughts after reading. In the second column, note the parts of the story that made you think that (including page numbers).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THOUGHTS</th>
<th>TEXTUAL EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ronia's friendship with Birk would really upset her father.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Focusing Questions

#### Chapter 1
1. Who lives at Matt’s Fort?
2. How does Ronia’s birth change the mood of Matt and his band of robbers?
3. Why do you think Matt struggles to let Ronia explore beyond their fortress? Why does he realize it is necessary?
4. Can you think of a time in your life when your parents allowed you more freedom? Was it hard for you? Was it hard for them?

#### Chapter 2
1. Why do the grey dwarves try to attack Ronia? What does she learn from this scary experience?
2. Do you think Ronia understands what her father does for a living?
3. What are some ways Ronia practices being unafraid in Matt’s forest?
4. Choose one aspect of Matt’s forest (a creature, a place) and describe why you find it interesting.

#### Chapter 3
1. After Ronia meets Birk, she has this thought to herself, “Now Matt’s Fort was going to split in two all over again.” (p.24) What might she mean by this?
2. Do you think Ronia actually hates the Borka robber clan?
3. Why does Ronia help Birk?
4. What might Birk mean when he says, “I’m tied to you all the same. Without a rope”? (p.27)
5. How does Matt’s reaction to the news that his rival has a young son make Ronia feel?
6. Is Ronia lonely? What evidence in the text (chapters 2 and 3) can you find to support your opinion?

#### Chapter 4
1. What clues are in this chapter about Matt and Borka’s relationship in the past?
2. How would you describe Matt’s personality so far?

#### Chapter 5
1. Why do you think Matt struggles telling Ronia what he does for a living? How does that compare to how he feels about his livelihood otherwise?
2. What are Matt’s motives for bending the truth about what he does?
3. Why do you think Ronia might not want to be a robber chieftain like her father?
4. Can you imagine how Matt might react if he knew that Ronia had saved Birk’s life and vice versa?
5. Why does Ronia want Birk to be her brother? How have her perspective and her feelings changed?
6. What events lead to Ronia and Birk becoming friends?

#### Chapter 6
1. Compare and contrast the reactions of Lovis and Matt to Ronia’s getting a fever. What does this show us about their personalities?
2. What reasons might Ronia have for not telling anyone about her friendship with Birk? Do you think these are good reasons? Why?
3. How might Ronia’s opening up a passage to Borka’s Keep change the situation between the two? Can you imagine one possible scenario?

#### Chapter 7
1. Why does Ronia feel guilty that Birk and his clan are starving?
2. Is Ronia stealing from her family to feed Birk? Do you believe it is right or wrong? What does she think?
3. What would you do if you were in her situation?

#### Chapter 8
1. How does the springtime make Ronia feel? Please provide 2 examples of evidence from the text to support your answer.
2. Do you feel different in different seasons? Give an example.
3. How does the tone change between the shift in seasons? Make one comparison between chapter 7 and chapter 8 that you think shows this change.
4. What do you think the last line of the chapter means? “She shed no tears, but in her heart she was weeping grievously.” (p.84)

#### Chapter 9
1. Why does Ronia’s criticism and questioning hurt Matt so deeply?
2. How does the growing tension affect Birk and Ronia’s friendship?
3. Can you compare the hatred between Matt and Borka’s clans to any historical or present-day situation between two groups of people?
4. How is Matt capturing Birk a turning point in the story? Use examples from the text to support your ideas.
5. How has Ronia’s relationship with Matt changed by the events in this chapter? Can you find any evidence before this chapter that hints that this big change is coming?
6. What do you think Matt means when he says, “I have no child.” (p.95)

#### Chapter 10 and 11
1. What are some of the feelings Ronia has as she leaves her home to go live in the woods with Birk?
2. Can you think of a time when you had a lot of different feelings all at the same time? What was that like?
3. Where do Birk and Ronia get their food and supplies?

#### Chapter 12
1. Do you think that Ronia misses her home and family? Why?
2. How does Birk and Ronia’s argument make them feel?
3. When Ronia says, “I’ve been thinking how easily everything can be ruined, quite unnecessarily,” on page 122, what do you think she means? Can you think of several situations she might be thinking about?
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2. How does Birk and Ronia’s argument make them feel?
3. When Ronia says, “I’ve been thinking how easily everything can be ruined, quite unnecessarily,” on page 122, what do you think she means? Can you think of several situations she might be thinking about?

### Chapter 13
1. Looking in chapters 12 and 13, find one example of Birk and Ronia cooperating and another example of the two characters competing with one another.
2. Do you think Birk and Ronia feel at home in the forest? Why or why not?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 14</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How does Ronia’s mother Lovis sending her bread and salt make</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ronia feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Can you infer from the text how Little Snip’s visit affects</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ronia? How does it affect Birk?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Why are Birk and Ronia unafraid when it seems like they will go</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>over Greedy Falls?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Why might Lovis pay Ronia at visit at Bear Cave?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What do you think Ronia and Birk feel about the coming of winter?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you find evidence in the text to support your ideas?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>How are their feelings similar? How are they different?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How does Matt show Ronia how much he wants her back in his life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>How does Ronia explain to Birk how important he is to her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>How does Birk show Ronia how much he wants to stay together?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>What do you think of Noddle-Pete’s advice to Matt on page 156?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Do you have any predictions for what Matt’s accepting the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>friendship of Ronia and Birk might mean for the two rival clans?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What do we learn about Matt and Borka’s relationship during the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>feast?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What are some of the reasons they decided to cooperate?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>How might Birk and Ronia’s choices change the future of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clans?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Why might they be choosing paths different from their fathers’?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Are the two clans very different from one another? Please</td>
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<td></td>
<td>explain your thinking?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How is Matt’s Forest in the springtime? How does it change the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mood of all the characters?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Can you imagine what might happen next if the story didn’t end</td>
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<td></td>
<td>with this last chapter? What in the story supports these</td>
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<td>thoughts?</td>
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Critical Thinking Activities

Related Activity #1: Theme/Character Study

Students may choose from one of the central themes that we have identified as a class:

- Loyalty/betrayal
- Friendship
- Family ties/independence
- Expectations of others/personal beliefs

Or a main character they find especially compelling:

- Ronia
- Birk
- Lovis (Ronia’s mother)
- Matt (Ronia’s father)
- Noddle-Pete (the oldest robber in Matt’s clan)

Students can choose to approach their theme/character study in two ways:

Option 1: Write 2-3 journal entries of a day in the life of one of the characters, from her/his point of view.

Option 2: Write about a theme you see strongly in the book, why you find it important in the story, and how it might relate to your own life.

During brainstorming sessions for these two activities, students can work in their reading notebooks to get down their thoughts and find evidence in the text to strengthen their chosen topics. I can see sharing in small groups working well here. We would work through a first draft and peer editing as part of these activities.

Rationale: Students can choose to look at a theme or character of their choice. This story has a number of strong themes running through it that would appeal to children at this age. Chip Wood identifies examining literary characters or themes from a certain book as ideal activities for students in this age group (115). Children between 9 and 10 years old are
concerned with issues of fairness and justice and may well relate to Ronia’s rejection of her father’s livelihood as a robber. They are also ready and able to grapple with darker themes such as betrayal, rejection, and moving away (Wood 114). This book is such an ideal choice for this age group as it presents believable, weighty interpersonal dramas, but leavened with a good deal of genuinely humorous situations.

Related Activity #2: Mapmaking

Think aloud to class:

“So if I am making my map, I will definitely include Greedy Falls. But I need to go further. I need to add to my drawing WHY these choices are meaningful to my understanding of the story. So on a chart like this one, I would write on one side “Greedy Falls” and in the column next to it write: “Greedy Falls is where the harpies tried to attack Ronia and Birk. The two friends almost drowned. After they survived, they realized their bond was for life.” I will give you a copy of a chart like this if you want one and you can use that or you can make your own to go with your map. If you would like to write on your map, that is fine too, as long as we can all read it easily and appreciate your thoughts.

Remember you can put places and people and magical creatures on your maps!”

“All of our maps will be different, although I am sure there will be a lot of similarities too. There is no right way to do this as long as you are able to explain your choices. This will be a really fun way to notice and share what we see as important in this story. We will have time now to make some lists of important features we want to put on our maps and why we think these choices are meaningful. Then tomorrow we will each get big pieces of paper and other art supplies and make our beautiful maps. You can choose to work on this project with a partner or you can work alone if you like.”

Rationale: Ronia’s world spans the fortress of her family, the wild woods, and all who inhabit these realms. The forest is filled with danger and beauty; mystical creatures abound. The woods provide the magical medium in which Ronia grows independent and in which her friendship with Birk is forged. Students will enjoy delving into another way of digging
into the text and expressing their findings. In addition to asking students to draw large maps of Ronia’s terrain, using details from the book, I would ask the children to present a very brief rationale as to why they deemed each of their choices significant. By tying the external geography to the characters’ inner landscapes, we can simultaneously examine how the characters and we as readers make meaning. The option to work with a partner speaks to Chip Wood’s observation that children at this age can enjoy working with a partner of their choosing (Wood 113).

**Related Activity #3: Rewriting the Ending or Writing the Next Chapter**

In chapters 17 and 18 (the last two chapters of the book), the two robber chieftains face off to decide who will be the sole ruler of the fort and all who reside there. Matt roundly beats Borka, who agrees to live in peace and collaboration for the rest of their days. In the presence of their newly joined families, Ronia and Birk reaffirm their friendship and their rejection of following in their fathers’ footsteps. All ends in harmony. However, after we've finished the book, students could rewrite their own versions of an ending to this story or write another chapter that would come after the last one of this book. Students could do this in comic book form, in writing, or by creating and performing a dialogue between two of the book’s characters. A collaborative approach may be taken to any of these options, as long as it is clear that everyone is contributing to the final project.

**Rationale:** This final activity seems like an ideal way for the students, who have invested so much time and energy in this book, to produce a satisfying culminating project of their own making. At this age, students are ready to work on the draft and revision process and can “absorb teaching about descriptive writing, character development, plot, cohesiveness, and believability” (Wood 114). Chip Wood also points out that they can struggle with writer’s block, so by introducing a variety of paths to a final I hope to mitigate some of that feeling of getting stuck. By making several options available – writing, drawing, and performing -- I am hoping to provide multiple entry points to appeal to various types of learners. My hope in this is to encourage feelings of ownership of and connection with the story. If students want to take a collaborative approach, this is also an option.