Dragon Tales

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Information about assessment and curriculum links can be found at the end of these Teaching Notes.

Synopsis

In these stories we meet three very different types of dragon.

George and the Dragon: In this legend from Libya, a brave princess is prepared to sacrifice herself to a ferocious dragon to save her people – until a young, valiant knight hears about it.

Tchang and the Pearl Dragon: This Chinese myth is about a poor boy who sets off on a quest for answers, aided by a kind-hearted dragon.

The Bamburgh Dragon: In this legend from Northumbria, England, a widowed king becomes besotted with a beautiful stranger, until his intuitive daughter insults her by calling her a dragon.

Background information

Many cultures have dragon myths. In the West, we tend to think of dragons as ferocious and terrifying creatures to be slain by brave knights. The East Asian dragon is kind and wise, and a beautiful symbol of nobility and strength.

Despite the different cultural views of dragons, the dragons tend to be drawn to look quite similar – even though the stories grew up before mass communication.

Saint George’s tale was first put in to writing about 700 years ago. In this version he is English, but he was born in what is now Turkey.

In Tchang and the Pearl Dragon, the dragon takes a role rather like that of an angel in the western tradition – this is quite typical of Chinese myths.

The evil witch of the third tale is said to live on, in the form of a toad, in a cave beneath Bamburgh Castle.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

(Predicting) Look at the front cover together and ask the children to predict what the stories might be about.

(Questioning) Read the blurb on the back of the book together. Have the children read stories about dragons before? Are dragons always fire breathing with scales?

(Predicting, Questioning) Ask the children to read the contents page and predict the country of origin for each story.

Strategy check

Remind the children to use a combination of sound blending, words-within-words and sentence and story context to make sense of unfamiliar words. Some of the names may be hard to read, but this should not spoil the stories. Use the pronunciation guides (footnotes) and model their use if necessary.
Check the children’s decoding and comprehension of ‘anxiously’ on page 3, ‘maiden’ on page 5, ‘cobbler’ on page 6, ‘crag’ on page 7 and ‘slain’ on page 9.

During reading

- *(Summarising, Deducing)* Ask the children to read Chapters 1 and 2 of George and the Dragon, and to think about the style in which it is written.
- As the children read independently, listen to each of them in turn, noting and prompting decoding strategies.

Independent reading

**Objective:** Explore how writers use language for comic and dramatic effects.

*(Deducing, Clarifying, Predicting)*

- Once the children have read the first two chapters of George and the Dragon, ask them to pair up and briefly discuss their reactions to the author’s style.
- As a group, discuss the effect of the modern manner in which the characters speak. Which examples stand out? Do they find them funny?
- On pages 3 and 4, how does the author set the scene for a more serious story?
- Look together at the way the Sultan speaks on page 8 and the way he writes on page 11. Why does this seem particularly strange?
- How is George behaving at the beginning of Chapter 2?

**Assessment:** Check that the children:

- can identify the humour created by the use of modern language and personality types in a historical story.
- can see how a genuinely scary scene is created at the opening of the story.
- can infer the childish and impetuous character of George.

Returning and responding to the text

**Objective:** Use evidence from across a text to explain events or ideas.

*(Deducing, Clarifying, Summarising)*

- When the children have read to the end of George and the Dragon, discuss the action scene. Is it as they might have expected? How hard does George find it to slay the dragon?
- George and the dragon insult each other on page 18. What do these insults have in common?
- Once the children have read all three stories, ask them to summarise the characteristics of each of the dragons.
- Which characters in the three tales show great courage and selflessness? What are the outcomes for them?

**Assessment:** Check that the children:

- can see that the dragon is more easily defeated than might be expected.
- identify the effect of word choices in insults.
- can summarise the different types of dragon.
- identify bravery and associated rewards in stories.
Speaking and listening activities

Objective: Reflect on how working in role helps to explore complex issues.

- Hotseat the King, and then his daughter Margaret, after their argument on pages 52 and 53 and again at the end of the story.
- Ask the children to work in pairs to improvise an argument between George’s dragon and the Pearl Dragon, about their attitudes to humans.

Assessment:

- Can the children sustain roles to explore ideas and issues?

Writing activities

Objective: Adapt non-narrative forms and styles to write texts.

- Ask the children to create a page of instructions from George’s ‘How to Defeat Dragons Manual’.
- Create reports on dragons, with sections on different types (for example: ferocious western; kindly Asian; enchanted humans).

Assessment:

- Can the children produce instructions or reports appropriate to the task, reader and purpose?

Cross-curricular links

Art and Design

- Create 2- or 3-dimensional dragons using research into different cultures’ dragon traditions.

Religious Education

- Explore parables and other tales that have a similar moral to Tchang and the Pearl Dragon.
Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:

Reading
- Can read aloud with intonation and expression, taking into account presentational devices (e.g. capital letters or italics for emphasis) and a more sophisticated range of punctuation, including ... () – . (READ) [ORCS Standard 5, 1]
- Can use clues from action, description and dialogue to help establish meaning. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 8]
- Can read between the lines, using clues from action, dialogue and description to interpret meaning and/or explain what characters are thinking or feeling and the way they act. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 14]
- Can identify the effects of different words and phrases to create different images and atmosphere, e.g. powerful verbs, descriptive adjectives and adverbs. (E) [ORCS Standard 5, 17]
- Is beginning to identify differences between some different fiction genres. (A) [ORCS Standard 5, 21]

Comprehension strategies
- Comprehension strategies are taught throughout the Teaching Notes to enable pupils to understand what they are reading in books that they can read independently. In these Teaching Notes the following strategies are taught: Predicting, Questioning, Clarifying, Summarising, Deducing

### ENGLAND The National Curriculum in England: Years 3–4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken language</th>
<th>Pupils should be taught to use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas (SpokLang.7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading: Comprehension</td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by identifying main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarising these (Y3/4 ReadComp.2v)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing: Composition</td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to plan their writing by discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar (Y3/4 WritComp.1i)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SCOTLAND Curriculum for Excellence: Literacy and English experiences and outcomes: Second level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening and talking</th>
<th>When I engage with others, I can respond in ways appropriate to my role, show that I value others' contributions and use these to build on thinking (LIT 2-02a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>To show my understanding across different areas of learning, I can identify and consider the purpose and main ideas of a text and use supporting detail (LIT 2-16a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>I enjoy creating texts of my choice and I regularly select subject, purpose, format and resources to suit the needs of my audience (LIT 1-20a / LIT 2-20a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### WALES Programme of Study for English: Year 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oracy</th>
<th>Learners are able to explore different situations through role play (Y4_OracSpea.6)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners are able to contribute to group discussion […] (Y4_OracColl.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Learners are able to identify how texts differ in purpose, structure, layout (Y4_ReadStrat.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners are able to accurately identify the main points and supporting information in texts (Y4_ReadComp.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Learners are able to adapt what they write to the purpose and reader, choosing words appropriately, e.g. descriptive, persuasive language (Y4_WritMean.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### NORTHERN IRELAND
Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Level 3

| Talking and listening | Pupils can maintain a role (L3_com_talk.1ii)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pupils can follow the main points of discussions and make contributions which show understanding (L3_com_talk.2i)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Reading               | Pupils can recognise, understand and sequence main points (L3_com_read.1i)  
|                       | Pupils can recognise some forms and features of texts (L3_com_read.4) |
| Writing               | Pupils can write using a given form (L3_com_writ.3) |

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