

# OUR FASCINATION WITH DRAGONS

## Mark It on the Map

**Lake Champlain, Massachusetts** (Cape May), **Ethiopia, Israel** (Jerusalem), **Iraq** (Tigris River, Euphrates River), **Iran, Turkey, Canary Islands, Guinea, China** (Shanghai), **Taiwan, China Sea, Himalaya Mountains, Australia, Greece** (Rhodes, Delphi), **Italy** (Rome), **Scotland** (Inverness, Loch Ness)

## Introduction

Instruct students to read “Editor’s Note” on page 4, then preview the articles and illustrations in this issue. Discuss the two predominant views of dragons. Ask students to write three questions that they hope to answer by reading this issue. Tell them to record the answers as they find them.

## Questions for Discussion

- What forces of nature did people use dragons to explain in the past?
- List some different beliefs about dragons.
- What does the battle between a hero or heroine and a dragon symbolize in many tales and myths?
- Why are some plants given dragon names?
- How does the Taiwanese tale “How the Dragon Lost His Tail” (pages 20–21) explain the creation of different parts of China? What trouble do the little dragons still cause?
- Which real animals do dragons most resemble? Why do you think people patterned mythical dragons after these creatures?
- Name some positive things dragons were believed to do.
- What kinds of trouble could the dragons in the story “How to Become a Dragon” (pages 27–29) cause?

## Writing Workout

Students may complete one or both of the following activities:

- Create a tale about a dragon and its heroic slayer.
- Write instructions from a grown-up dragon to a young dragon on how to frighten people.

## Viewpoints

In the story “How to Become a Dragon” (pages 27–29), a clever little fish outwits a scary dragon. Ask students why people like stories in which a smaller, weaker creature triumphs over a large, frightening one. Ask them to give some examples.

## Then and Now

Hold a debate between those who think the Loch Ness monster, Nessie, exists and those who think it does not. Have the debaters research the latest information on the search for Nessie.

## Get Into Art

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Create a shield for a Chinese emperor whose symbol is the dragon.
- Read about the contest on pages 12–13. Design a dragon, but feel free to use color and any medium—paints, markers, or collage, for example.
- Collect drawings to make a gallery of dragons from around the world.
- Follow the directions to make dragon cutouts on pages 30–31 and use them as window decorations or greeting cards.

## Vocabulary

stereotype	resourceful
chaos	imperial
medieval	gluttony
ravenous	valor
typhoon	reptilian
mythology	hieroglyphic
membrane	exude
verified	

## Concept Mapping for Science Enrichment

Work with the class to create a chart of animals that resemble dragons. Use the information in “The Nature of Dragons” on pages 22–26. Under each heading, have students write the name of a specific kind of animal and a brief description of how it resembles a dragon. Use the following chart to get started.

	CROCODILIANS	SNAKES	LIZARDS
NAME	Crocodiles Alligators		
DESCRIPTION	Live in water; are scaly; can roar, bellow, and hiss; are dangerous to people		

## Research Projects

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Find out about the Chinese New Year celebration and its parade led by a moving dragon supported by many marchers. What does the Year of the Dragon foretell? What does it mean if you are born in the Year of the Dragon?
- Read more about famous dragons such as Leviathan in the Bible and Python in ancient Greek mythology.
- Do research on a famous dragon slayer (or tamer). See the names with asterisks in “Follow These Footsteps.” Present your report by pretending to be the dragon slayer or tamer and telling about your exploits.

## Just for Fun

- Distribute copies of “The Dotted Dragon” on pages 18–19.
- Have a student volunteer make the recipe on pages 32–34 and bring it in to show the class.

## Drama and Art Enrichment

Have a group of students use paper cutouts of dragons and fish to make stick puppets for a play that tells the story “How to Become a Dragon” on pages 27–29.

## Literature Enrichment

Read aloud “The Fifty-first Dragon,” a short story by Heywood Broun, and discuss the power of magical beliefs. For seventh and eighth graders who like to read fantasy stories about dragons, suggest Anne McCaffrey’s series about the planet Pern and its human and dragon inhabitants. Titles include *Dragondrums*, *Dragonflight*, and *Dragonsinger*. Another series for this age group by Margaret Weis begins with *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* and involves battles against dragons. Younger readers might enjoy *Dragon Circle* by Steven Krensky and *Dragon of the Lost Sea* by Laurence Yep.

## Follow These Footsteps

Agamemnon	Nebuchadnezzar	Daniel*
Perseus*	Andromeda	Heracles*
Saint Margaret*	Sigurd*	Deodatus de Gonzano*
Apollo*	Pliny the Elder	Herodotus
Saint Michael*		

\*Famous dragon slayers and tamers; see “Research Projects” above.