Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for
Dealing with Dragons
by
Patricia C. Wrede

Book Information
Patricia C. Wrede, Dealing with Dragons
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Interest Level: MG

Bored with traditional palace life, a princess goes off
to live with a group of dragons and soon becomes
involved with fighting against some disreputable
wizards who want to steal away the dragons' kingdom.

Award: ALA Best Book for Young Adults; SLJ Best
Book; State Award
Topics: Adventure, Runaway; Fantasy/Imagination,
Dragons; Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other;
Recommended Reading, IRA/CBC Choice;
Recommended Reading, NY Publ. Library
Best Books for the Teen Age;
Recommended Reading, YALSA Popular
Paperbacks; Series, Enchanted Forest
Chronicles

Main Characters
Alianora  a princess, held captive by Woraug, who
becomes friends with Cimorene and works with her
to foil the wizards' plans
Antorell   Zemenar's son, an inept wizard
Cimorene   a princess bored with the traditional role
of a princess
Kazul      the dragon who accepts Cimorene as her
princess and eventually becomes the King of
Dragons
Morwen     a witch and a friend of Kazul who helps
Cimorene defeat the wizards
Prince Therandil a prince betrothed to Cimorene
the stone prince a prince who was partially turned
to stone, and who helps Cimorene and Alianora
defeat the wizards
Woraug     a dragon who betrays the other dragons
in a plot with the wizards
Zemenar    head of the Society of Wizards

Vocabulary
crestfallen feeling shame or humiliation, dejected
jinn        a genie
preposterous contrary to common sense, absurd
volunteer   one who freely offers services

Synopsis
Cimorene is a princess who is bored with the
traditional activities allowed to princesses. When her
parents arrange for her to marry Prince Therandil,
she runs away and volunteers to be a dragon’s
princess.

Kazul, a female dragon, accepts Cimorene's offer.
Cimorene's job is to cook and clean for the dragon,
sort her treasure and catalogue her library. Prince
Therandil and other knights arrive to rescue
Cimorene. She declines their offers and sends them
home.

Cimorene meets Alianora, another captive princess.
Together they work on a spell to protect them from
the dragons' fire.

Through several encounters with the wizards
Zemenar and Antorell, Cimorene learns that the
wizards are looking for something in the dragons'
territory. After meeting the stone prince in the Caves
of Fire and Night, they learn that Woraug, another
dragon, is plotting with the wizards. The wizards
plan to help Woraug become the new King of the
Dragons. Once he is king, Woraug will give the
wizards the King's Crystal, a tool they can use to
locate all the magic in the world.

Cimorene, Alianora, the stone prince, and Morwen
foil the wizards' plan. Zemenar and Antorell are
melted and Woraug turns into a toad. Kazul is
crowned King of the Dragons and Cimorene stays
on with her as princess for the King of Dragons.
Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Literary Analysis

The climax of a story occurs when the central problem is resolved. What is the climax of this story? Why do you believe this is the climax?

The climax of the story happens between pages 186 and 202. Students may argue that the main problem is between the dragons and the wizards, so the destruction of the wizards on pages 186-188 resolves the conflict. They may argue that the main problem is between Woraug and the other dragons, and it is resolved when Woraug shamefully turns into a toad on page 202. Students should support their arguments with information from the story.

Inferential Comprehension

Cimorene sent Therandil to rescue Princess Keredwel. Do you think Keredwel was pleased with this? How do you think Keredwel and Therandil would get along?

Keredwel was probably very happy to be rescued because she did not like being a dragon’s princess. She might be unhappy to learn she was not Therandil’s first choice, but would have accepted his rescue anyway. Keredwel and Therandil accepted their traditional roles as prince and princess, so they were probably happy with each other.

Inferential Comprehension

Cimorene and Alianora were similar in some ways and different in others. Compare and contrast these two characters. Use examples from the story to show their similarities and differences.

Similarities may include the fact that both were interested in magic and didn’t enjoy the company of the other captive princesses. Differences may include Cimorene’s willingness to remain a dragon’s princess, while Alianora chose to marry the stone prince.

Constructing Meaning

King Tokoz was killed when Woraug put some of the dragonsbane plant in his tea. Look up “bane” in the dictionary. What does it mean, and why did the author name the plant dragonsbane?

The word bane means something destructive, a poison or killer. In the story the dragonsbane plant was poisonous to dragons.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Characterization  Cimorene is not a "proper" princess for her time. The Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munsch is a short children's story that also features a dragon and a non-traditional princess. Read The Paper Bag Princess and discuss the similarities between the princesses in the two stories. Discuss how many fairy tales would be very different if the characters in them challenged their traditional roles. Have students rewrite an old fairy tale or write new fairy tales featuring characters who challenge the stereotypes.

Understanding the Author’s Craft  The story is told in the third-person point of view and reveals a great deal about the way Cimorene thinks. The reader doesn’t really get inside other characters in the book, although we can make inferences about their ideas, viewpoints and opinions from what they say and how they act. We know Therandil is a "proper" prince. Discuss how he might view Cimorene's actions and her situation. How might he describe his experiences with her to others? Have students rewrite an episode in the book in the first-person from Therandil’s point of view.

Making Predictions  At the end of the story the return of the wizards is clearly predicted. Have students brainstorm how the wizards might return, what actions they might take and how Cimorene and the dragons might again defeat them. Patricia C. Wrede has written more books in The Enchanted Forest Chronicles series. Students may read those books to learn how the
Responding to Literature  Cimorene is very different from her sisters, and she is not the kind of princess her parents expect her to be. Children today are often compared to their siblings, or have expectations placed upon them by their parents. Have children discuss times they have been compared to their brothers and sisters, or have had ideas and opinions different from the rest of their families. How did they feel in these situations, and how did they deal with them?