

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher by Bruce Coville

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## Book Information

Bruce Coville, Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher

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148 Pages

Book Level: 4.9

Interest Level: MG

Small for his age but artistically talented, twelve-year-old Jeremy Thatcher unknowingly buys a dragon's egg.

**Award:** Misc./Other; Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature; State Award

**Topics:** Fantasy/Imagination, Dragons; Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other; Mysteries, Magic; Recommended Reading, IRA/CBC Choice; Series, Magic Shop

## Main Characters

Herbert Thatcher Jeremy's father, who is a veterinarian

Hyacinth Priest the librarian who helps Jeremy find information on raising dragons and also helps Mr. Elives

Jeremy Thatcher a sixth-grade boy who is interested in art and is chosen to hatch and raise a dragon

Mary Lou Hutton a sixth-grade girl who has a crush on Jeremy and is the only other person able to see the dragon

Mr. Kravitz Jeremy's art teacher

Mr. S. H. Elives the owner of the magic shop, who sells Jeremy the dragon's egg

Mrs. Thatcher Jeremy's mother

Specimen Jeremy's best friend, who also has an interest in art, but does not know anything about the dragon

Tiamat the name Jeremy gives to the dragon

## Vocabulary

**Midsummer Night** June 23rd, a date filled with magic

**peril** a state of danger

**quicken** to bring to life

**slither** to move or slide with a side-to-side motion

**summoning** to gather up, call forth

## Synopsis

Jeremy Thatcher has lived in Blodgett's Crossing his entire life. Now in sixth grade, he has a passion for drawing and hopes to win the spring art contest. Mary Lou Hutton has a crush on Jeremy and wants to kiss him. While running away from her, Jeremy stumbles upon a magic store he has never seen before--Elives' Magic Supplies. Jeremy enters the strange store and soon finds himself owning a beautiful dragon egg.

The egg, which Jeremy purchased for only a quarter, comes with strict instructions on how to help it hatch. Using a combination of moonlight, magic and friendship, Jeremy becomes the caretaker of a very tiny dragon and names her Tiamat. He is able to use thought to communicate with her and finds himself connected to her both physically and emotionally.

As Tiamat grows, Jeremy is faced with a multitude of feelings about her. She becomes too big for his room, and eats an enormous amount of meat and milk. She is invisible to everyone except Jeremy and Mary Lou. Tiamat's curiosity and loyalty to Jeremy get him into some difficult situations both at home and at school. Although she brings chaos to his life, he is fiercely loyal to her, and protects her at all costs. When the time comes to send Tiamat back to her own world, Jeremy is faced with the difficult task of saying good-bye.

## Open-Ended Questions

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

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## Literary Analysis

Do you believe in worlds other than the one we live in?

*Quality discussion should ensue using a debate format. Opinions may vary on the subject as to whether or not they believe other worlds do exist. Statements should be backed up with reasons as to why or why not they have these opinions.*

## Inferential Comprehension

What does Jeremy learn from his experience with hatching the egg, raising the dragon and then having to say good-bye?

*The correct answer should reflect the fact that Jeremy learns about responsibility, commitment and heartache. Although Jeremy loves Tiamat, he is faced with many situations in which he finds himself angry and frustrated with the responsibility he has been given. Even though raising her is difficult work, he is reluctant to let her go.*

## Constructing Meaning

What does the following statement mean? "Nothing you love is lost."

*The correct response should reflect the idea of things we love being held in our hearts forever. Although a person or pet we love may move away or even die, the memories of that person or pet stay with us forever. Once we have loved something or someone, that person or thing becomes a part of who we are.*

## Constructing Meaning

Would you be willing to take on the responsibility of raising a dragon and then letting her go?

*Answers to this question will be based on individual opinions. Students should state their answer and back it up with reasons pertaining to commitment, responsibility and acknowledgment of the difficulties that may arise from their choice.*

**Understanding Literary Features** This story can be considered a fantasy. Ask students to describe sections of the book that help them identify that the author intended his work to be considered a fantasy. Divide students into small groups. Ask the students to work together as a group to write a short fantasy.

**Understanding Characterization** Jeremy changes as a result of the responsibility he assumes when he becomes a dragon hatcher. Encourage students to track and discuss the changes that occur in Jeremy's personality. Ask the students to write in their journals and describe some of the ways they are changing. Have the students describe additional responsibilities they have been given by parents and teachers, and the way in which these responsibilities have changed them as a person.

**Understanding the Author's Craft** The author's use of dialogue in this story is unique. Tiamat is able to "speak" to Jeremy by sending thoughts, feelings, and sensations to him. Although Tiamat and Jeremy communicate in very different ways, they are able to develop a very strong bond between them. This difference in communication can also occur in the real world. People may speak entirely different languages or may mean something different what than the listener hears. Ask students to discuss ways in which people communicate with each other. Encourage them to describe a situation in which they had difficulty communicating with someone. Brainstorm ideas that help people communicate with each other.

**Making Predictions** Jeremy experienced a great deal of ambivalence when he made the decision to return Tiamat to her world. Ask students to predict what may have happened if Jeremy had refused to let her go. Encourage students to share situations in which they made a difficult decision. Ask them to describe how their lives would have been different if they had made a different choice.

## Teachable Skills