

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Talking to Dragons by Patricia C. Wrede

Book Information

Patricia C. Wrede, Talking to Dragons
Quiz Number: 20139
Harcourt Brace & Company, 1985
ISBN 0-590-48475-3; LCCN
255 Pages
Book Level: 4.6
Interest Level: MG

Daystar goes on an adventurous journey through the Enchanted Forest with a magic sword, a fire-witch and a baby dragon.

Topics: Adventure, Discovery/Exploration; Adventure, Survival; Fantasy/Imagination, Dragons; Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other; Mysteries, Magic; READNOW - Perma-Bound, Perma-Bound - Read Now Grades 6-8; READNOW - Renaissance Learning, RLI - Grades 6-8 (Theme: Surviving); Recommended Reading, YALSA Popular Paperbacks; Series, Enchanted Forest Chronicles

Main Characters

Antorell a spiteful wizard who is determined to avenge himself on Cimorene
Cimorene (Mother) the mysterious and capable mother of Daystar
Daystar the careful young son of Cimorene who must accomplish a secret task
Kazul the King of the dragons; she helps defeat the wizards
King Mendanbar the ruler of the Enchanted Forest; he has been missing for seventeen years
Morwen a kind witch who heals Daystar's hand and gives Shiara a kitten
Shiara a young fire-witch who has difficulty making her magic work
Telemain a friendly magician who helps Daystar complete his quest
the little dragon the young and headstrong dragon who befriends Daystar and Shiara

Vocabulary

dwarf in legends, a creature that looks like an unusually small person and is very good at working with stone
indignantly with anger, usually due to a feeling of unfairness
peculiar strange; odd; weird
proper correct; appropriate; right
tingle have a tickling or stinging feeling in the body

Synopsis

One day a mysterious wizard attacks the home where Daystar lives with his mother, Cimorene. After Cimorene melts the wizard, she sends Daystar into the Enchanted Forest on a strange mission. Daystar must take a special sword and do a specific task, but his mother refuses to tell him what the task is. Soon after entering the Forest, Daystar accidentally causes the sword to show one of its powers. As Daystar journeys through the forest, he meets a young fire-witch named Shiara, who is unable to use her powers. When Daystar is injured by touching a wizard's staff, he and Shiara are led to the home of Morwen the witch. Morwen heals Daystar and gives Shiara a kitten.

After Daystar and Shiara continue their journey, they encounter a weeping Princess, who tricks Daystar into giving her the sword. However, a magic fountain springs up when Daystar gives her the sword, and she drops it and insists that he keep it. After the Princess's failure, a wizard appears. He is about to attack Daystar when a dragon arrives. The dragon gets rid of the wizard and joins Daystar's quest after Daystar persuades it to let the Princess and her knight go in peace. The dragon also informs them that they are headed toward the castle where Kazul, the King of the dragons, lives.

After the travelers fight a wicked fire-witch, they stumble upon the home of Telemain the magician. Telemain advises them to take the Caves of Chance to the castle. Along the way, a band of wizards attacks them, and the sword shows its power again. Inside the caves, Daystar finds a key, and the dragon helps him defeat the quozzel. When they

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Talking to Dragons by Patricia C. Wrede

exit the caves, the dragons are waiting for Daystar. Kazul sends Daystar to use the sword to free the Sleeping King of the Enchanted Forest, who was enchanted by wizards seventeen years earlier. Despite the efforts of the wizards, Daystar releases the King and realizes that he is the King's son. After a brief battle against the wizards, Daystar's family is reunited, and Shiara agrees to be Kazul's servant in order to learn about magic.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Why is it necessary for Cimorene to send Daystar into the Enchanted Forest without teaching him how to use the magic sword?

If the person who carries the sword knows what he is carrying, the wizards' spells can find the sword. Daystar needs enough time to make the earth, air, water and fire elements recognize him as the rightful heir of the sword. If the wizards find him before he is recognized, the wizards might be able to prevent him from reaching the castle and saving his father.

Literary Analysis

What is the tone, or writer's attitude, expressed in *Talking to Dragons*? Support your answer with examples from the text.

The tone of this book is very light and humorous, even when Daystar's adventure becomes dangerous. Daystar makes references to many typical features of fairy tales as though they are everyday events. The most dangerous enemies Daystar and his friends face seem a little ridiculous, such as the quozzel that looks like blackberry jelly or the fact that Antorell is melted or otherwise runs off several times. Even the mixed-up spell that makes Shiara's magic work only when she is polite is amusing.

Inferential Comprehension

During his journey Daystar encounters a dragon that ultimately decides to befriend Daystar and travel with him. How does the dragon contribute to the success of Daystar's journey?

The dragon saves or aids Daystar many times. He frightens Antorell away after Antorell uses the Princess as a trap for Daystar. He suggests taking the shortcut that leads them to Telemain. He chases away the quozzel when it is trying to retrieve the key. He also finds the dwarves to clear the tunnel after the quozzel caves it in.

Constructing Meaning

What clues does the reader have that Daystar is on his way to becoming a very powerful magician?

Daystar is able to do many things that amaze other people familiar with magic. After Daystar defeats the wicked fire-witch, Telemain notes that the magic of the sword was not meant to be effective against the magic of a fire-witch. He stumbles through the forest, accidentally doing the right things to make the sword recognize him without even knowing what he is supposed to be doing. At the end of the story, he snatches Antorell and the demon and flings them back into the demon world without even thinking. He then heals the little dragon by twisting a "piece of nothing." All these accomplishments are signs that Daystar is destined to be a very powerful magician.

Teachable Skills

Describing Actions or Events This story has many exciting events. Have the students draw a picture of one of these moments. Have them make sure they use as many of the details described in the book as possible.

Comparing and Contrasting This story has many motifs that are similar to those used in the story of King Arthur: a sword that grants power, a young man destined to be king and a battle between the powers of good and evil. Have the students read a short version of the tale of King Arthur and then have them write a paper showing how the two stories are similar and how they are

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Talking to Dragons by Patricia C. Wrede

different.

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors The magical beings in this book derive their magic from many different sources, and they have many different kinds of powers. Have the students select two magical beings (for instance, a wizard and a dragon) and write a dialogue in which they explain the source of their power and give examples of what they are able to do. Remind students to keep their selected speakers in character.

Identifying Reading Strategies Daystar's mother must prepare him for his journey without telling him what he needs to accomplish or what his real identity is. The author gives several clues as to how she does this. Have the students identify several of these clues and use them to create a two-column chart. In the left column, students can list clues about how Cimorene prepared Daystar for his journey. In the right column, they can describe the event or events in which Daystar demonstrates a particular skill or lesson learned from his mother.