

Dragon

Facts



Dragons have appeared in different cultures across the globe. For some, they represent evil and for others, they represent good fortune. However, their stories often have strong similarities.

Origins of Dragons

When looking at the origins of dragons, different cultures all have similar elements to their stories. Dragons are typically described as large lizards or serpent-like creatures. Some dragons can fly whereas others have legs to enable them to walk. Sometimes, they can do both.

The English word 'dragon' comes from the Latin term 'draco' and the Greek word 'drakōn' came before it. Originally, it was a word used for any gigantic serpent, including dragons. The shape has generally stayed as a snake, with some experts believing this came from humans' instinctive fear of snakes.



Medieval English Dragons

Dragons in tales from medieval England were commonly thought to have wings, long tails and the ability to breathe fire. Occasionally, this opinion differs as some people thought dragons were unable to fly and had poisonous breath.

Before the Norman Conquest, the royal symbol featured dragons as they were considered important.

In Arthurian legend, it claims that these symbols were used by Uther Pendragon, King Arthur's father.

The patron saint of England, Saint George, is famous for his legend about a dragon. This legend tells the story of a Roman soldier who saved a king's daughter from a dragon before slaying it.



Disclaimer: Sensitive and/or upsetting topics may emotionally impact your students due to past experiences. You should consider whether this content is appropriate and ensure adequate support is available for anyone affected.

Norse Mythological Dragons

In Norse mythology, a man named Fafnir took an extensive amount of gold from his father. Fafnir then turned into a dragon to guard his precious gold that the Viking god Odin had cursed. However, the dragon was eventually slain by Sigurd.

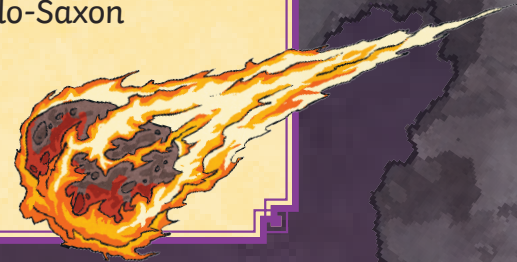
When Vikings attacked Lindisfarne in Northumbria in AD 793, dragons were thought to have been sighted in the sky shortly before. This was according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and these sightings were seen as a warning. However, it is now believed that these dragon sightings were actually a comet.

East Asian Mythologies

In comparison, East Asian dragons are seen in a more positive way. In tales from Chinese, Korean, Indian and Vietnamese cultures, dragons are often featured as symbols of good fortune. In Chinese mythology, a lung dragon roams the skies and represents the heavens.

Interestingly, a dragon was the emblem of the imperial family and appeared on the Chinese flag before the founding of the Republic of China in 1912.

Although associated with air, Japanese and Chinese dragons are usually shown as wingless creatures.



Questions

1. What language does 'draco' come from? Tick one.

- ☐ English
- ☐ Greek
- ☐ Latin
- ☐ Chinese

2. Which Viking god cursed the gold? Tick one.

- ☐ Thor
- ☐ Odin
- ☐ Freya
- ☐ Loki

3. Underline one word in the quotation below that suggests this description of dragons was generally believed by medieval English people.

Dragons in tales from medieval England were commonly thought to have wings, long tails and the ability to breathe fire.

4. Look at the section called **Origins of Dragons**.

Find and copy a word that suggests humans have an automatic fear of snakes.

5. In which legend were dragons used as royal symbols?

6. Fill in the missing words.

Dragons have appeared in _____ cultures across the globe. For some, they represent evil and for others, they represent good fortune. However, their stories often have strong _____.

7. Based on what you have read, what would be an appropriate new title for this text?
Explain your answer.

8. Summarise what you have learnt about East Asian mythology using 25 words or fewer.

Answers

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- ☐ English
- ☐ Greek
- ☒ **Latin**
- ☐ Chinese

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3. Underline one word in the quotation below that suggests this description of dragons was generally believed by Medieval English people.

Dragons in tales from medieval England were commonly thought to have wings, long tails and the ability to breathe fire.

Award 1 mark for:

- **commonly**

4. Look at the section called **Origins of Dragons**.

Find and copy a word that suggests humans have an automatic fear of snakes
instinctive

5. In which legend were dragons used as royal symbols?

Dragons were royal symbols in Arthurian legend.

6. Fill in the missing words.

Dragons have appeared in **different** cultures across the globe. For some, they represent evil and for others, they represent good fortune. However, their stories often have strong **similarities**.

7. Based on what you have read, what would be an appropriate new title for this text?
Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think a new title could be 'Dragons Around the World' as the text describes three different cultures and places where dragons appear in their mythology.

8. Summarise what you have learnt about East Asian mythology using 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I have learnt that in East Asian mythology, dragons are viewed more positively in comparison to the other dragons mentioned.