

# DRAGON GIRL



## TEACHER'S GUIDE

### Curriculum Connections and Activity/Discussion Guide

*The activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts for grades 3–5.*



Andrews McMeel  
Publishing

## ***Dragon Girl: The Secret Valley***

**Jeff Weigel**

AMP! Comics for Kids  
Andrews McMeel Publishing  
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**GRADE LEVEL:** 3–7

### **Curriculum Connections**

English Language Arts

### **Thematic Connections**

Fantasy \* Family \* Discovery \* Animals \* Villainy

### **Overview**

Eleven-year-old Alanna and her brother Hamel are orphans doing their best to take care of each other; one day Alanna stumbles upon a cave full of dragon eggs. When the eggs hatch and a mother dragon comes to claim the babies, Alanna is swept along for the ride as they journey to Dragon Rock, a mysterious magnetic force that draws dragons of all shapes and sizes to a magical, untouched valley. When the valley is threatened by outsiders, Alanna must join forces with a mysterious explorer to save the dragons' homeland. Students will enjoy this fantasy adventure; they will use it to discuss the fantasy genre, extend vocabulary, participate in class discussion, and complete individual writing exercises.



## **English Language Arts Lesson Plan: Collaborative Discussion and Creative Writing**

### **Objective**

Students will read this graphic novel independently, keep a reading/vocabulary journal, participate in pre- and post-reading class discussions, and complete individual writing exercises based on the book.

### **Pre-reading Discussion Questions**

- \* Show the book to the class, displaying the front and back cover, and then flip through the pages. Ask if anyone knows what a graphic novel is. Can they guess why it's called a "graphic" novel? Have students read other graphic novels? Do they read comic books or comic strips? What makes a comic book different from a graphic novel?

- \* Because of the title and the cover image, it's clear that the book is about dragons, and hence it is part of the "fantasy" genre. Ask students if they have read other fantasy books or graphic novels or have seen fantasy movies. Do they enjoy them? Why or why not? Have they read other graphic novels or watched movies about dragons? What other books about dragons have they read?
- \* Have students keep a journal while reading this book and record two things:
  - Any examples that support the book's genre category: any pictures, words, or phrases that show readers that the story doesn't take place in our world.
  - Any unfamiliar words or phrases as they read the book. Ask them to try to uncover meaning through context and then to verify with a dictionary.

### Post-reading Discussion Questions

- \* Begin by asking students if they know what a prologue is and show them the prologue pages at the beginning of the book. Do they feel that the prologue gave sufficient background details to introduce the story? How did the author/artist separate the prologue visually from the main story? Would the story have stood on its own without the prologue? Explain what an afterword is, and ask if the students felt the book needed to have one. Were they happy with the end of the story? Did they feel that there was more to be told? Do they think that Dragon Girl will have more adventures?
- \* Ask students to share the fantasy "clues" they recorded in their reading journals. Were there more clues in the pictures or in the text? What are some things that happen in this story that are common to the fantasy genre? How did this book compare with other fantasy stories they've enjoyed?
- \* Discuss the relationship between Alanna and her brother Hamel. He is older, but is he taking good care of her or vice versa? The story is told in the third-person, but how different would it have been if Hamel was telling it in the first-person? Would it still seem like a story about Alanna? What if Hamel had found the dragon cave before Alanna? Do students think he would have told her about it or tried to protect her? Which of the siblings do students like better? Is the book more interesting to girls AND boys because it has both as main characters?
- \* Alanna and Hamel are orphans, which is a common theme in books for children. Why do students think that authors/artists choose to use orphaned children as main characters? Can students think of other stories featuring orphans? How would this story have been different if the children's parents had been alive?
- \* All good fantasy stories feature a villain opposite to the "good" main character. Do students feel that Sir Cedric fills the bill? Aside from greed, what are his other bad qualities? What are some other characteristics of villains in general? Does anyone sympathize with Sir Cedric's side of the story? How would the story have been different if Sir Cedric had been left out? Would it have been equally enjoyable? Why or why not?

### Writing Exercises

- \* Give students a list of some of the story's "comic words" and ask them to make up definitions for them. (Examples: *squark, uurp, foosh, meep, snarff, gaahh, thoom, fawhoosh, shiff.*)

- \* One fantasy element that is NOT present in this book is magic. No one in the story is able to do magic, not even the dragons. Have students write a story essay where they introduce a magical element to the book. What if Alanna had magic powers? What if Sir Cedric did? What if the airship could fly magically and didn't require the special keys? How would this have changed the story—for better, or for worse?
- \* Have students insert themselves as a character in the story. Would they be a friend or sibling of Alanna or Hamel? A supporter of Sir Cedric? A crewperson on the airship? Have them choose a chapter from the book and write their own dialogue as they interact with the other characters.
- \* Compare and contrast Alanna's interaction with, and beliefs in, the dragons with that of Sir Cedric's. Whose approach do students agree with? Do they think the dragons would be fun or a nuisance? Would they like to have a pet dragon or a pocket of silver?

## English Language Arts Standards (abbreviated version) this guide aligns with:

### Grade 3

**Reading:** RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.4, RL.3.6, RL.3.7

**Writing:** W.3.1, W.3.3, W.3.4

**Speaking and Listening:** SL.3.1, SL.3.3, SL.3.3

**Language:** L.3.1, L.3.2, L.3.3, L.3.4

### Grade 4

**Reading:** RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.4, RL.4.6, RL.4.9

**Writing:** W.4.1, W.4.3, W.4.4, W.4.9

**Speaking and Listening:** SL.4.1, SL.4.2, SL.4.3, SL.4.4

**Language:** L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3, L.4.4

### Grade 5

**Reading:** RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3, RL.5.4, RL.5.6, RL.5.7, RL.5.9

**Writing:** W.5.1, W.5.3, W.5.4, W.5.9

**Speaking and Listening:** SL.5.1, SL.5.2, SL.5.3

**Language:** L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.3, L.5.4



Visit the Common Core State Standards website to read about the individual standards:

[www.corestandards.org/the-standards](http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards).