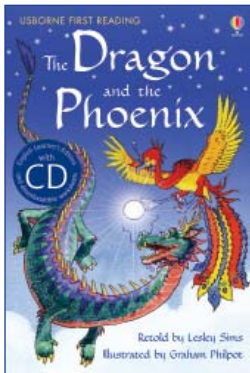


The Dragon and the Phoenix • Teacher's notes



Author: traditional, retold by Lesley Sims

Reader level: Elementary

Word count: 235

Lexile level: 350L

Text type: Folk tale from China

About the story

A dragon and a phoenix live on opposite sides of a magic river. One day they meet on an island and discover a shiny pebble. The dragon washes it and the phoenix polishes it until it becomes a pearl. Its brilliant light attracts the attention of the Queen of Heaven, and that night she sends a guard to steal it while the dragon and phoenix are sleeping.

The next morning, the dragon and phoenix search everywhere and eventually see their pearl shining in the sky. They fly up to retrieve it, but the pearl falls down and becomes a lake on the ground below. The dragon and the phoenix lie down beside the lake, and are still there today in the guise of Dragon Mountain and Phoenix Mountain.

The story is based on *The Bright Pearl*, a Chinese folk tale. Chinese dragons are typically depicted without wings (although they are able to fly), and are associated with water and wisdom. Chinese phoenixes are immortal, and do not need to die and then be reborn. They are associated with loyalty and honesty. The dragon and phoenix are often linked to the male *yin* and female *yang* qualities, and in the past, a Chinese emperor's robes would typically be embroidered with dragons and an empress's with phoenixes.



About the author

Lesley Sims always wanted to be a writer. She has written a range of stories, including funny history books and books for beginner readers. In her spare time, she likes going to plays and concerts, playing the saxophone and reading.

Key words

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words, which are important in the story.

dragon	p13	polished
phoenix		feather
p2 mountain		pearl
p3 shining	p15	watching (meaning "guarding")
lake		
p4 beside	p16	shone
p6 forest		brighter
grew	p19	guard
p11 shiny		steal
pebble	p24	landed
sand		ground

Key phrases

p4	Long, long ago
p7	deep inside
p17	Queen of Heaven
p20	[it] was gone
p23	It's mine!
p25	still there today



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Before reading

You may like to search online for images of dragons and phoenixes from different cultures and in different media that you can show students as part of your warm-up activity.

Start by writing the word DRAGON on the board. Do students know what it means? (In many European languages, the word is of course very similar.) What words would they use to describe a dragon? List them on the board. Now write the word PHOENIX and discuss with students. This will be harder and may need to come mostly from you. Tell them the phoenix is a big, bright, magical bird with long feathers. Write PHOENIX on the board next to DRAGON and list the descriptive words underneath.

Where are these two animals found? [In story books and legends as well as in art, e.g. paintings and sculptures.] Now show the book cover. Do students notice anything about the dragon in the picture? They may or may not pick up the lack of wings, and you can say that this is typical of Chinese dragons.

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Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

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During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

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|-------|--|--------|--|
| pp2-3 | Can students see the dragon and phoenix shapes in the mountains? | p14-15 | Why do you think the dragon and phoenix want to stay with the pearl? |
| pp6-7 | Do you think the dragon and phoenix are friends? (Notice the phoenix waving to the dragon.) | p18 | Why do you think the Queen of Heaven wants the pearl so much? |
| p12 | How do you think the pebble has turned into a pearl? [With magic from the river and the phoenix feather, maybe.] | p19 | Is this how a queen should behave? |
| | | p22 | How would you describe the dragon and the phoenix here? [Brave, determined...] |
| | | p23 | What makes the pearl fall out of the sky? |
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Puzzles (pages 26-29)

You might like students to work on these in pairs or small groups. If so, ask the "After reading" questions before doing the puzzles.

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After reading

Ask the students if they've noticed people wearing pearl earrings or necklaces. Are pearls usually made out of pebbles? You could describe, if the class don't already know, how pearls grow inside the shells of shellfish (usually oysters). They begin as a tiny piece of dirt that the oyster gradually covers with a hard, shiny white coating. Pearls have been prized as jewels for hundreds of years. Today they can be cultivated and harvested, but in the past they had to be hand-picked by divers, and were very precious and rare.

Look at pages 2-3 and imagine you are the walkers looking down at the lake, describing to each other what they can see. Can you imagine how the story of the Dragon and the Phoenix might have been inspired by this view? Do you know of any landmarks in your area with unusual names and stories to explain them?

As a follow-up exercise, you could encourage the class to find out and write about where pearls come from, and look for pictures of pearls, either advertisements in magazines or pictures of people wearing pearls. You could combine these with any dragon and phoenix pictures you found for your warm-up activity in a class display.

