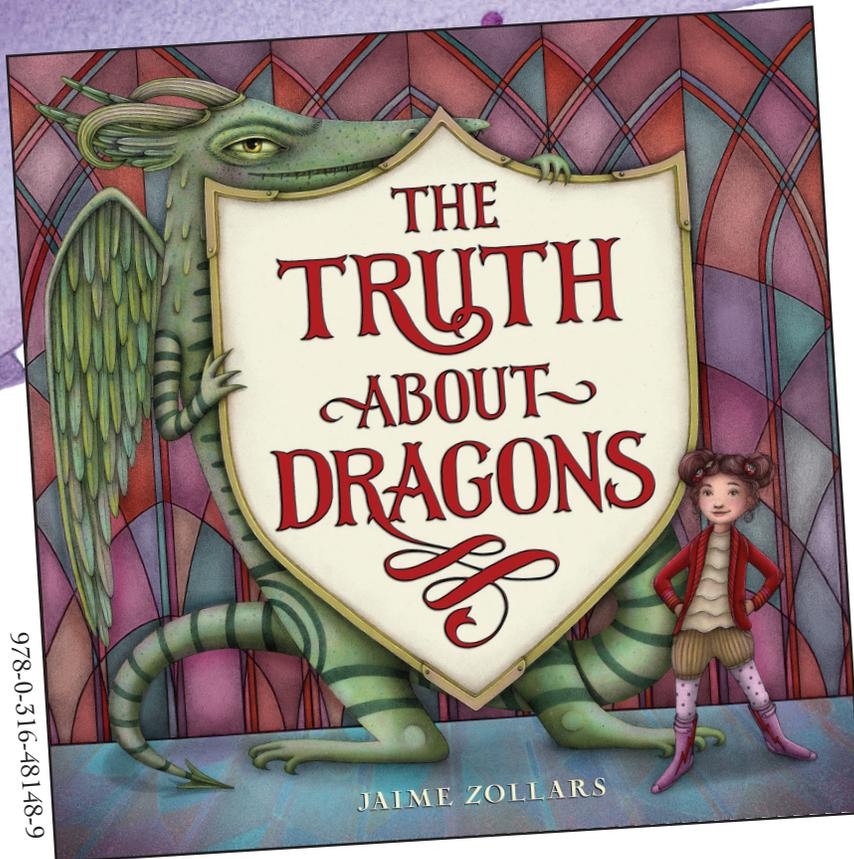


# CURRICULUM GUIDE



## The Truth About Dragons

BY  
JAIME ZOLLARS

**A**S A YOUNG GIRL cautiously approaches a castle full of soaring, roaring dragons, she worries about their wildness and their terribly sharp teeth. And, indeed, the dragons are hungry and noisy, and they seem to be hovering closer and closer . . . until the girl notices that some of the beasts are wearing mismatched socks. And some are playing tambourines. And some prefer to color quietly in the corner. Could there be more to these dragons than she first realized?

In this enchanting tale about seeing beyond fears to the often-surprising truths underneath, every page turn reveals another dragon meticulously transformed into a friend.

★ “A beautifully rendered, comforting, gentle lesson in overcoming fears.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY  
BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

[jaimezollars.com](http://jaimezollars.com) [LBYP.com](http://LBYP.com)



The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org).

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



-  The story begins with, “The stories about dragons are true.” What do you believe to be true about dragons from books you’ve read or movies you’ve seen? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1](#)
-  How does the mood change in the story from the opening pages where the dragons are described as having terribly sharp teeth and hovering and smothering, to the first *real* truth about dragons: that their socks are mismatched? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#)
-  Look carefully at the illustrations on the first several pages. What do you see tucked behind the little girl on the second double-page spread when she is surrounded by dragons who “hunt day and night”? Look at the illustration where the girl notices that the dragons are wearing mismatched socks. What are the dragons holding in this illustration? How do the things you notice in both illustrations give you a clue about the next setting in the story? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7](#)
-  Describe the behavior of the dragons when they are in the cafeteria and in the library. What words does the author use to capture what the dragons are doing? Look at the little girl’s face in each situation. How do you think she is feeling about the dragons’ behavior? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7](#)
-  The dragons and the little girl seem to be having a wild time playing musical instruments together. The next page in the story shows the group resting on cots. Look closely at the illustration of the group playing music and the illustration of the group resting. What hints in the illustrations do you see that reveal more about the characters? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7](#)
-  Why do you think that there are more children than dragons appearing in the story as the group wanders through “wetlands and wilds” and hunts for “relics and rocks”? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#)
-  The little girl and her friends seem to be happily playing and ruling the castle together. How does the author let the reader know that the story is about to change? What feeling did you have as a reader when you saw that there was something new coming in the story?
-  What appears on the bridge of the castle where the group is playing? Describe this new character and the reaction of the group to what they see on the bridge. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1](#)
-  Why do you think that the little girl feels sorry after the events on the bridge? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#)
-  The story ends with one last truth about dragons: “So the real truth about dragons, the one stories don’t say, is that we all see dragons . . . until one day.” What are the children doing in the illustration? What did the children see instead of dragons on that “one day”? What important lesson was learned by the characters in this story? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2](#)

# ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

## Setting the Scene

*The Truth About Dragons* begins with a little girl approaching a castle that looks as if it is from a fairy tale. A castle appears again when the children are playing together at the end of the story. Divide drawing paper into two equal sections. Draw the castle from the beginning of the story on one side and the castle that appears later on the other side of the drawing paper. Write a caption for both describing the two settings and the different feelings that each castle adds to the story.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3**

## Hidden Talents

While the dragons are boasting and crowing about their artistic talents, the little girl is seen in an illustration talking with one dragon about a “talent that whispers.” What do you think that it means to have a talent that whispers? Think of a talent you have that not everyone may know about. Write a description about your special talent and include an illustration. In your classroom, display a gallery of talents that whisper.

## Chasing Dragons

As she stands on the bridge face-to-face with the large, green dragon, the little girl realizes that sometimes dragons “dare you to be your own knight.” Think of a time when you were faced with a fear or difficult situation and had to be your own knight. In a personal narrative story, describe the difficulty, your reaction, and how you dealt with your fear. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3**

## Visions of a Brave Future

Sometimes a person’s fears can make it hard to recognize the positive in situations. Discuss how the dragons in *The Truth About Dragons* affected how the little girl felt in the story. How did she overcome her fears? What positive things in your life help you overcome your fears? Hunt through magazines to find pictures to cut out and assemble onto a vision board that showcases the positive parts of your life. As your search for pictures for your board, think about places that you would love to visit, things that bring you joy, colors that make you happy, and your dreams and goals. After you have glued your pictures in place, find a partner to share and discuss your vision boards.



The discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both master’s and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

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# THOUGHTS ON CHANGE



Look carefully at the three illustrations that show the little girl on the bridge with the green dragon. Notice how she and the dragon change in each illustration. What do you imagine these two characters are thinking at this part of the story? Draw pictures of the girl and the dragon in these three scenes, showing their changes. Include bubbles over the characters' heads and express their thoughts. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7**



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

# FIGHTING FEAR

Everyone has times in their lives when they experience fear or anxiety. It can be helpful to recognize fears in order to understand how to deal with them. Make a list of five things that make you feel fearful or anxious. Talk with a partner about what strategies might be useful in helping you overcome these fears. You will be building a powerful toolkit that you can use when any of the fears on your list enter your life. Be your own knight!



I feel anxious or fearful when...

Here is a strategy I can use to help me feel less fearful or anxious.

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# CONTEXT CLUES

*The Truth About Dragons* is full of wonderful vocabulary. Look at these sentences from the story. Use the words in the sentences as clues to help you understand the meaning of the underlined word in each sentence. Write the meaning of each underlined word.



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.4

“Dragons tower and hover and smother until there’s almost no sunshine left.”

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“Dragons are boastful, they swagger and crow, though many have talents that whisper.”

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“Dragons are testy, dragons may snap, and sometimes they’re sorry but can’t find the words.”

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“Like rascals, they rattle and rumble and ROAR and clamor and thunder and CRASH until the air is thick and fierce.”

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“But sometimes (dragons) challenge and pick and provoke, and nettle and needle and pester and poke.”

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