



# Edith Nesbit

Author **Edith Nesbit** / Illustrations **Fernando Llorente** / 86 pages / Book Series **Classic Tales**

## Objectives

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- To encourage students to **enjoy reading stories written a hundred years ago.**
- To build students' **confidence in understanding a story in English.**
- To provide students with **new lexical items within the context of the story.**
- To encourage students to **investigate the genre of fantasy literature.**

## Word bank

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### Key vocabulary

**Fantasy-related:** dragon, scales, claws, growl, rattle, dungeon, princess, prince, deliverer

**Cultural / historical references:** blacksmith, whitesmith, sixpence, feet and inches, St. George

### Key structures

Zero and first conditional structures – "If you do a really good job, I'll eat you last." "If you love me, come very quickly and free me - and we'll fight the dragon together." "If you can find the taps..."

## Tips and ideas

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### Before reading

- Brainstorm tales, legends and myths of dragons. What parts of the world have these creatures in their popular culture? What stories can they share?
- Ask your students to draw a table with three columns and put a smiley face in one, a puzzled face in another and a sad face in the third. Then write on the board or dictate some vocabulary from the stories and ask them to decide if they know it (write it in the smiley-face column), aren't sure about it (puzzled-face column) or don't know it. Ask pairs to compare their smiley-face list, and to teach each other words they feel they know but their partner hasn't put in that column. Monitor and pre-teach the words they have in the 😞.
- Encourage creative, higher level thinking skills by getting students to predict the theme of the stories from the titles.

### During reading

- Spend a session in class listening to one of the stories on the CD, while the students follow the text. Encourage them to do the same at home, if this is possible. (You could also find out how many of them watch TV / films on the internet with English subtitles - and stress how helpful this can be.)

- Use brief information checking questions after each section to keep up the pace of the reading session and make sure the class is staying together. Give students time to consider their reply and share it with their partner, before volunteering the answer.
- Use the illustrations to elicit what they think comes next - or get them to flick through the illustrations for the whole story and see if they can predict what it will be about.

### After reading

- Set up a higher order thinking skill activity where groups evaluate one story each. Elicit a list of criteria with the whole class (e.g. Interesting characters. Good plot. Satisfactory ending) and a way to rate their evaluations (e.g. from 1 to 3). After each group have completed their evaluation, they could report back to the class and see whether the other groups agree with their opinions.
- Show your students some visual organisers (timelines, Venn charts, spider-grams, storyboards, etc.) and ask pairs to choose one and use it to depict elements of one of the stories. The class could all focus on the same story, or you could split the students into three groups and cover all the stories.
- These stories were written in 1901 - two were set in an unspecified time in the distant past and one in the period it was written. Do your students feel they are old-fashioned? Do they prefer modern-day stories?

# Teacher support activities

## Great Games: Please, Mr Dragon

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This is a variation on a traditional playground game (Please, Mr. Crocodile) and is best played outside, if possible, as it involves running around. However, it can be adapted to play in the classroom.

One student is the dragon (this could be you to begin with, so the class sees a demonstration of how the game works) and stands in the middle of the designated playing area. This is the dragon's domain. The students line up along one edge and chant together, "Please Mr. Dragon, can we cross your domain?". Then the Dragon replies, "Yes, but only if..." followed by a colour, an item of clothing, length of hair, etc. Students who fulfil the dragon's specification (i.e. are wearing pink, can whistle, have glasses, etc.) can walk across safely, but all the rest have to run across - and Dragon tries to catch them. Anyone who is caught also becomes a dragon and these new dragons take turns responding to the class chant, and trying to catch the runners. The winner is the last person who has not been caught and turned into a dragon.

## CLIL Link: World literature

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Nesbit's children's stories have influenced many writers, including P.L. Travers (Mary Poppins), C.S. Lewis (the Narnia series) and J.K. Rowling (Harry Potter).

- Elicit what students know about Harry Potter and once they are familiar with the three stories in the book, ask them for similarities and differences.
- Ask students to write down a couple of fantasy stories they know (books or films) and to share them with their partners. They compare lists and give a brief outline if their partner does not know the plot or characters. Then pairs join up and share again, and finally ask for feedback around the class.
- Draw up a list on the board of the different titles as a peer-directed incentive to get the class reading more.
- Give groups the name of an author (P. L. Travers, C.S. Lewis, George R. R. Martin, Stephenie Meyer, etc.) or choose names from those mentioned in the previous activity. Task small groups to research their chosen author using the internet and the school library.
- You could give clues for what to look for (e.g. personal background, interests, fame, etc.) or simply give a time-frame and a focus for their output - a poster, a presentation, an annotated image, etc. - or free choice.
- Groups display or present their findings. As a round-up reflection task, you could ask students what these writers have in common or how they are different from one another.

## English Theatre: The Dragon in the Dungeon

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### Setting the Scene:

In *The Dragon Tamers*, John the blacksmith chains up the dragon and tourists come from miles around to see it in the dungeon. John and his wife provide refreshments and entertainment.

**Brainstorming the Characters:** Ask students to suggest who goes to the dungeon and what they say and do. As they make suggestions you - or a volunteer - can make a list on the board.

Pairs choose a couple of characters (e.g. two tourists, John and his wife, a tourist and the dragon, etc.) and imagine a short dialogue. Ask pairs to write down their dialogues (6 lines max!) so you can check them, then give time to rehearse. Props and scripts may be allowed if you can reach a class consensus.

Bring the class together (outside the classroom if possible, or at least try to change the physical feel of the surroundings, maybe by getting students to sit on the floor in a circle) and pairs take turns to perform their skits. Is it possible to record them in your teaching situation? Give constructive feedback and directed praise.