

## **Dragon Was Terrible**

Kelly DiPucchio (author); Greg Pizzoli (illustrator)

This fractured fairy tale is brimming with anachronisms and fun. Instead of the usual rain of fire and death, this dragon is ravaging a kingdom with spray paint, toilet paper, and astonishing rudeness. Despite the offer of a nice reward (“You will like it!”) the dragon seems unstoppable until a clever boy tames it with the power of literature.

Kelly DiPucchio is the award-winning author of twenty-three picture books, two of which, *Grace for President* and *The Sandwich Swap*, were New York Times bestsellers. She describes herself as a person who likes to write almost anything. One of her favorite things to write is To Do lists, one of her least favorite is her own biographical information.

Greg Pizzoli became well acquainted with what children like in their books when he spent two years in AmeriCorps. His first book, 2014's *The Watermelon Seed*, garnered a Geisel Award, and he has been going strong ever since, wielding a retro palette and a delightful sense of the absurd to create an impressive number of superb books in just a few years.

### **Web Contacts**

<http://www.kellydipucchio.com>

On her homepage, click “News” to go to her blog. Her Twitter, Facebook, and e-mail contact links are also there.

<http://www.gregpizzoli.com/>

His blog and contact information are on his homepage here.

### **Big Ideas and Enduring Understanding**

The power of story can facilitate understanding, even in the midst of conflict.

### **Overarching Questions**

Why did the dragon respond best to the non-adversarial intervention?

### **Sample Text-Dependent Questions**

Why did it take a young (but clever) boy to resolve the situation?

Another alternative might have been to lure the dragon away. What might have been used to persuade

the dragon to relocate?

What might the dragon's role in the kingdom be in the future? The boy's?

### **Common Core ELA Standards**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

### **Suggested Activities**

1. Draw children's attention to the fact that, although he *is* terrible, Dragon never physically hurts, much less kills anyone. Sometimes he doesn't even destroy any property. Within those guidelines, ask them to think up additional ways that a pre-reformed Dragon might have been terrible, and illustrate them.
2. Write a king or queen's poster offering an appropriate reward for the taming of a different fairy tale villain. (N. B. It is probably worthwhile to point out that killing and "dead or alive" do not enter into it!)
3. Dragon spray paints "The king is a baby," with an unflattering portrait, on the castle wall. Ask your students to look carefully at the characters in the book and write/illustrate some other graffiti Dragon might have painted on the wall. If you have access, let the students create with the curiously addictive spray paint brush in Microsoft Paint®.
4. In this episode of Matthew C. Winner's podcast *All The Wonders*, Kelly DiPucchio and Greg Pizzoli actually meet for the first time, and discuss the book's origin. An editor saw a random dragon that Pizzoli had drawn and sent it to DiPucchio, asking for a story. Recreate this with your students by asking them to draw an interesting character, and then re-distribute the illustrations and use them as a story prompt.
5. Learn about the way dragon stories traditionally end, and more dragon lore here.

-- Write the following list of "Terrible and Not-Terrible Things Dragon Does" on cards and ask your readers to act them out *silently*. They could either go in order, or pass them out randomly and have the other readers guess which part of the book is being mimed.

1. Stomping on flowers
2. Playing tricks on guards
3. Spitting on cupcakes
4. Scribbling in books
5. Throwing sand
6. Taking candy from baby unicorns
7. Chasing fuzzy yellow ducklings around the moat
8. TPing the castle
9. Burning marshmallows

10. Spray painting graffiti
11. Popping birthday balloons
12. Drawing faces on the drawbridge
13. Burping in church
14. Following a trail of marshmallows
15. Pretending not to listen
16. Pretending to walk away
17. Climbing a tree
18. Falling out of a tree
19. Smiling and listening to a stor

### **Companion Books**

#### **Traditional dragon stories**

Hodges, Margaret, and Trina Schart Hyman. *Saint George and the Dragon*.  
Pyle, Howard, and Trina Schart Hyman. *Bearskin*.  
Yolen, Jane and Li Ming. *Merlin and the Dragons*.

#### **Dragon Stories With Alternative Endings**

De Paola, Tomie. *The Knight and the Dragon*.  
Moore, Jodi. *When a Dragon Moves In*.  
Munsch, Robert. *The Paper Bag Princess*.  
Robertson, M.P. *The Egg*.  
Wiesner, David. *The Three Pigs*