

Here be dragons



If the children in your class are brave enough, try **Pie Corbett's** beastly approach to non-fiction and writing instructions...

How to trap a dragon:

Are you kept awake at night by the sound of dragons crunching bones? If so, do not despair. Help is at hand. Dragons must be defeated. Read these instructions and soon you too will be rid of this terrible pest.

What you need:

a magical spade, a brown sheet, some leaves and sticks, plus a large lump of tasty meat.

What you do:

- First, dig a deep pit.
- Next cover the pit with a brown sheet.
- After that, scatter on the leaves and sticks.
- Finally place the large lump of meat on top.
- Now tiptoe behind a tree and wait.
- In the end, the dragon will not be able to resist the temptation and will therefore fall into the pit.

A final note of warning:

Do not enter a dragon's cave as the treasure may be enchanted.

How to look after a pet dragon:

Have you ever wanted to keep a unique pet? If so, purchase a dragon from the local hatchery. You will never be bored.

However – a pet dragon is not easy to care for and you will need to follow these instructions. If not, you

may find that your baby dragon becomes a fiery nuisance!

What you need:

A dragon whistle, a collar, plenty of food and a dragon's den.

What you do:

- Your pet dragon will roam freely. However, if you use a dragon whistle then it will come whenever you call. Dragons have very good hearing, so even if your pet has flown into a distant valley, it will hear your whistle and fly to you.

- If you need to make sure that your dragon stays near you then a good collar is a necessity. Even young dragons can be very strong, so the collar should be made of the finest dwarf metal. A collar will be essential if you intend



to put your dragon in for a 'Best Baby Dragon' competition.

■ Dragon mealtimes can be scary so follow these instructions to the letter or you may be scorched!

First, collect dragon food such as mice, rats and the bodies of other lesser creatures.

Next, lay the dragon feast on a flat rock.

After that, provide a bucket of water as dragons always like to drink after eating.

Finally, retire to a safe distance before letting your pet out for its dinner.

Remember that a hungry dragon may well mistake you for its next meal so a simple disguise is essential...

■ Keep your pet lodged in a simple dragon's den. These have to be custom-made and can be purchased at your local 'Dragons R Us' store. They should be made of fireproof material. At first you may keep a very young dragon in the house, but as it grows larger, you will have to find an

outdoor spot as a sleeping dragon will snore loudly. They have also been known to cause house fires accidentally.

A final note of warning:

Dragons are not just for birthdays. They are for a lifetime. As your pet matures, it will be able to communicate with you telepathically. It will protect you from danger and, of course, a trained dragon will allow its owner to ride on it as it flies. Many owners treat their dragons by polishing their scales with the juice of sun flames and feed them titbits such as cloud berries.

One final word of caution. Dragons cannot help hoarding. It will always be their instinct to collect and hide anything bright, shiny or valuable. This means that you must hide away anything that glitters.

Free resource

GET A WHITEBOARD-FRIENDLY VERSION OF PIE'S INSTRUCTIONS...

If you would like to share this example with your class on the whiteboard, you can download a copy from the following website teachprimary.com/howtotrapdragon.php



**Read the story
on pages 16-17
and then try the
following
activities**

Introducing the topic

Dragons are always popular. You could start by mocking up a front page from the local newspaper, stating that dragons have been sighted in the local area. Alternatively, there are three mocked up newsclips on youtube about dragon sightings in Louisville that are ideal to introduce the topic – visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=ae1nMWcllQM

Working with the texts

To begin the topic, you might ask the children to think of different ways to trap the dragon. In order to write their instructions, it helps to learn a version. Use the simple 'How to trap a Dragon'. This can be learned orally, using pictures and actions.

Once the children know the basic model, work out the underlying pattern and language features. They can then use these to work on a class version using a different method for dragon trapping. Use shared writing to model the writing, pitching it at the right level given the children's abilities. They can then follow this by writing up instructions for their own different methods for dragon trapping.

Once they have written and illustrated their instructions these could be swapped, and their writing partner might check to see if they have managed to write a clear set of instructions that would be easy to follow. Children give each other feedback.

The second set of instructions is harder. Read and discuss, using the following ideas to help the children deepen their understanding of the text and to internalise the language patterns:

- Pretend you are an interviewer on *Dragon Watch*. Interview an expert about how to keep a pet dragon.
- Role-play purchasing a dragon's den from the local store.
- Sit the children 'back-to-back' so that they can role-play a phone-in about 'how to feed a baby dragon' to a radio show's Dragon Agony Aunt.

Giving clear instructions

Work with the children to develop 'the ingredients for writing an effective set of instructions'. Use the list as a guide for the class shared writing, the children's own writing and evaluation. They will notice such key points as:

- Use a clear title so the reader knows what the instructions will be about.
- Begin with an opening that makes the reader want to read on. A good hook to use is a question.
- In the opening make it clear why the reader should read the instructions.

- List ingredients in order.
- Make any instructions easy to follow.
- Organise what has to be done in order, using numbers, letters or bullet points.
- Simple drawings help the reader if sections are hard to explain in words.
- Use 'bossy' verbs, e.g. 'Throw the meat to the pet', to tell the reader what needs to be done.
- Use 'time' connectives to organise the order, e.g. First, next, after that, etc.
- Use 'you' to talk to the reader, e.g. 'You may now need to hide'.
- End the instructions with any key points or reminders.

Writing a dragon keeper's handbook

Decide with the class what a dragon keeper's handbook would have in it – brainstorm a list of possible chapter headings and then organise into a sensible order; for example:

- Feeding a baby dragon.
- How to house your pet.
- How to find a lost baby dragon.
- How to ride a dragon.
- How to stop your pet from entering the sewage system.
- Caring for a dragon's teeth.
- How to keep a dragon's fire bright.
- How to communicate with a dragon.
- How to teach a dragon to sing.
- How to keep a dragon amused.
- Answering dragon riddles and surviving.

Pairs or individuals can write up different sections of the guide. These should be illustrated. For the class shared writing, select by common agreement one section to work on together. Make sure that you model with the children the language patterns of instruction with sufficient embellishment to the right level.

Publish your handbook on the internet or turn it into a guide that can be duplicated for other classes to read. Ideally, hold a class assembly so that the class can inform the whole school about how they can trap a dragon and keep one as a pet. What fun!

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