

# Dragon, Dragon

## John Gardner

2 **T**here was once a king whose kingdom was plagued by a dragon. The king did not know which way to turn. The king's knights were all cowards who hid under their beds whenever the dragon came in sight, so they were of no use to the king at all. And the king's wizard could not help either because, being old, he had forgotten his magic spells. Nor could the wizard look up the spells that had slipped his mind, for he had unfortunately misplaced his wizard's book many years before. The king was at his wit's end.

Every time there was a full moon the dragon came out of his lair and ravaged the countryside. He frightened maidens and stopped up chimneys and broke store windows and set people's clocks back and made dogs bark until no one could hear himself think.

He tipped over fences and robbed graves and put frogs in people's drinking water and tore the last chapters out of novels and changed house numbers around so that people crawled into bed with their neighbors.

He stole spark plugs out of people's cars and put firecrackers in people's cigars and stole the clappers from all the church bells and sprung every bear trap for miles around so the bears could wander wherever they pleased.

And to top it all off, he changed around all the roads in the kingdom so that people could not get anywhere except by starting out in the wrong direction.

### Vocabulary Builder

**ravaged** (rav' ijd) v.  
violently destroyed;  
ruined

### 3 Literary Analysis

**Character** Based on his actions, what words would you use to describe the dragon?

### 4 Reading Check

What is the problem in the kingdom?

*Dragon, Dragon* ■ 191

### 1 Motivation

Prepare an **Anticipation Guide** (*General Resources*, pp. 8–10) with the following statements:

- Always follow your parents' advice.
- Arranged marriages never work.
- You can always find a way to defeat any opponent.

Give students a copy of the prepared Anticipation Guide and have students mark their responses in the Me column. Have students discuss the statements in pairs or groups and mark the Guides again in the Group column.

### Concept Connector

Students will return to the Anticipation Guide after completing the story.

### Learning Modalities Visual/Spatial Learners

Have students take notes about the dragon in the story or make sketches of it as they read. When they have finished, ask students to either draw or write a description of the dragon based on what they have read about it.

### 2 About the Selection

The kingdom in John Gardner's story "Dragon, Dragon" is plagued by a dragon that outsmarts those sent to kill it. The kingdom's cobbler, who thinks he is the least important person in the land, is perhaps the smartest. His two eldest sons fail to slay the dragon because they refuse to take their father's advice. The younger son. He takes his father's advice and slays the dragon.

### 3 Literary Analysis Character

- Remind students that writers often use a character's actions to reveal what the character is like.
- Read the bracketed passage together. **Ask** the Literary Analysis question.  
**Possible responses:** The dragon is mean, destructive, wicked, and imaginative.

### 4 Reading Check

**Answer:** The kingdom is plagued by a dragon.

## Differentiated

### Instruction

Solutions for All Learners

#### Support for Less Proficient Readers

To assist students' comprehension, have them read along with the audio CD version of the story. Stop the recording frequently, and have students discuss what has happened. Guide the discussion by asking them questions about characters, story events, and changes in setting.

#### Strategy for Advanced Readers

A humorous element of this story is that although dragons, kings, and wizards are associated with medieval times, the dragon wreaks havoc with modern things such as car batteries. Invite students to write an additional paragraph that addresses more ways the dragon plagues the kingdom. Ask them to describe ways that it interferes with advanced technology, such as computers and telecommunications.

## 5 Reading Skill

### Make Inferences

- Remind students that authors provide readers with details they can use to make assumptions about characters and events. Rather than tell the reader that a certain character is this way or that way, the writer might describe how a character thinks or feels. The reader must then make inferences about the character's feelings to better understand the character.

- Ask** the Reading Skill question. Then ask a volunteer to read aloud the bracketed text. Tell students to listen for details that the author supplies so that readers can make an inference about the cobbler.  
**Possible response:** He does not think he is as important as they are. He lacks confidence.

## 6 Critical Viewing

- Possible response:** People might fear a dragon like this one because of its fierce expression, its sharp teeth, and its large wings and claws.

"That," said the king in a fury, "is enough!" And he called a meeting of everyone in the kingdom.

Now it happened that there lived in the kingdom a wise old cobbler who had a wife and three sons. The cobbler and his family came to the king's meeting and stood way in back by the door, for the cobbler had a feeling that since he was nobody important there had probably been some mistake, and no doubt the king had intended the meeting for everyone in the kingdom except his family and him.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the king when everyone was present, "I've put up with that dragon as long as I can. He has got to be stopped."

All the people whispered amongst themselves, and the king smiled, pleased with the impression he had made.

But the wise cobbler said gloomily, "It's all very well to talk about it—but how are you going to do it?"

And now all the people smiled and winked as if to say, "Well, King, he's got you there!"

The king frowned.

"It's not that His Majesty hasn't tried," the queen spoke up loyally.

- 5 Reading Skill Make Inferences**  
How does the cobbler think he is different from most people in the kingdom?

- 6 Critical Viewing**  
Why would the people of the kingdom fear a dragon like this one? **[Speculate]**

## Vocabulary Development

### Expressive Vocabulary

As students discuss Gardner's story, encourage them to use the expressive vocabulary. Provide them with sentence starters like these:

1. It was time for the king to *consult* . . .
2. The wizard could no longer *rely* on . . .
3. The king decided to *seek* . . .
4. The cobbler could not understand why the king would *appeal* . . .
5. When the wizard tried to *assist* . . .

## 7 Literary Analysis Character

- Remind students that in indirect characterization, characters are developed through their words, their thoughts, and their actions.
- **Ask** the Reading Skill question.  
**Possible response:** He is absent-minded and silly. He cannot remember important details.
- **Ask** students to give examples of sentences that the author might have written to describe the wizard if he were using direct characterization.  
**Possible response:** The aging wizard was quite forgetful and often had trouble remembering the words in his magic spells.
- Direct students' attention to the **Literary Analysis Graphic Organizer A (Graphic Organizer Transparencies, p. 43)**, shown on p. 176. Have them create a web for the wizard, using the words they identified.

## 8 Reading Check

**Answer:** He has forgotten the words to the spell that gets rid of dragons.

"Yes," said the king, "I've told my knights again and again that they ought to slay that dragon. But I can't force them to go. I'm not a tyrant."<sup>1</sup>

"Why doesn't the wizard say a magic spell?" asked the cobbler.

"He's done the best he can," said the king.

The wizard blushed and everyone looked embarrassed. "I used to do all sorts of spells and chants when I was younger," the wizard explained. "But I've lost my spell book, and I begin to fear I'm losing my memory too. For instance, I've been trying for days to recall one spell I used to do. I forget, just now, what the deuce it was for. It went something like—

*Bimble,*  
*Wimble,*  
*Cha, cha*  
CHOOMPF!

Suddenly, to everyone's surprise, the queen turned into a rosebush.

"Oh dear," said the wizard.

"Now you've done it," groaned the king.

"Poor Mother," said the princess.

"I don't know what can have happened," the wizard said nervously, "but don't worry, I'll have her changed back in a jiffy." He shut his eyes and racked his brain for a spell that would change her back.

But the king said quickly, "You'd better leave well enough alone. If you change her into a rattlesnake we'll have to chop off her head."

Meanwhile the cobbler stood with his hands in his pockets, sighing at the waste of time. "About the dragon . . ." he began.

"Oh yes," said the king. "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give the princess's hand in marriage to anyone who can make the dragon stop."

"It's not enough," said the cobbler. "She's a nice enough girl, you understand. But how would an ordinary person support her? Also, what about those of us that are already married?"

**7 Literary Analysis  
Character** Based on his actions and words, how would you describe the wizard?

## 8 Reading Check

Why is the wizard unable to get rid of the dragon?

1. **tyrant** (tī' rənt) *n.* a cruel, unjust ruler.

## Differentiated Instruction

Solutions for All Learners

### Support for English Learners

Students may be confused by the use of the word *spell*. Explain that *spell* has several meanings. Point out that they may know the meaning that is "to put letters together to form a word." Invite volunteers to complete this sentence: This is how I *spell* my name, \_\_\_\_\_. Then explain that a *spell* is also words that magicians and wizards say to make things happen. Read aloud the words of the spell that the wizard says. Point out that words to a spell are often nonsense words, such as these.

### Support for Special Needs Students

Have students listen to the story on the **Listening to Literature Audio CD**. Tell them to follow along in the book as they hear the text being read. After students listen to the CD, have them reread the pages. As a way of helping them track their reading, tell them to place a self-stick note next to the paragraph they are reading. Before reading the next paragraph, have them ask themselves one question about what they just read.

## 9 Reading Skill

### Make Inferences

- Remind students to look for clues that the author provides to help the reader make inferences about characters.
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud the bracketed passage. **Ask** the Reading Skill question.  
**Answer:** The cobbler's words: "It's a good enough kingdom, you understand, but it's too much responsibility."
- Ask students what other inference they can make from this passage about the cobbler.  
**Possible response:** The cobbler will not do something just for the promise of riches.

## 10 Literary Analysis

### Character

- Ask volunteers to review the two different ways authors develop characters.  
**Answer:** The two ways are through direct or indirect characterization.
- Ask** students the Literary Analysis question.  
**Answer:** It uses direct characterization. With direct characterization, writers present straightforward statements about a character.
- Ask students to suggest why the author uses direct characterization to reveal these traits rather than indirect characterization.  
**Possible response:** It would have taken too long to give examples of times when the son multiplied fractions in his head. It would have taken readers away from the story events.

"In that case," said the king, "I'll offer the princess's hand or half the kingdom or both—whichever is most convenient."

The cobbler scratched his chin and considered it. "It's not enough," he said at last. "It's a good enough kingdom, you understand, but it's too much responsibility."

"Take it or leave it," the king said.

"I'll leave it," said the cobbler. And he shrugged and went home.

But the cobbler's eldest son thought the bargain was a good one, for the princess was very beautiful and he liked the idea of having half the kingdom to run as he pleased. So he said to the king, "I'll accept those terms, Your Majesty. By tomorrow morning the dragon will be slain."

"Bless you!" cried the king.

"Hooray, hooray, hooray!" cried all the people, throwing their hats in the air.

The cobbler's eldest son beamed with pride, and the second eldest looked at him enviously. The youngest son said timidly, "Excuse me, Your Majesty, but don't you think the queen looks a little unwell? If I were you I think I'd water her."

"Good heavens," cried the king, glancing at the queen who had been changed into a rosebush, "I'm glad you mentioned it!"

Now the cobbler's eldest son was very clever and was known far and wide for how quickly he could multiply fractions in his head. He was perfectly sure he could slay the dragon by somehow or other playing a trick on him, and he didn't feel that he needed his wise old father's advice. But he thought it was only polite to ask, and so he went to his father, who was working as usual at his cobbler's bench, and said, "Well, Father, I'm off to slay the dragon. Have you any advice to give me?"

The cobbler thought a moment and replied, "When and if you come to the dragon's lair, recite the following poem:

*Dragon, dragon, how do you do?*

*I've come from the king to murder you.*

Say it very loudly and firmly and the dragon will fall, God willing, at your feet."

"How curious!" said the eldest son. And he thought to himself, "The old man is not as wise as I thought. If I say

## 9 Reading Skill

### Make Inferences

What details support the inference that the cobbler is practical and has common sense?

## 10 Literary Analysis

### Character

Does the sentence starting "Now the cobbler's eldest son . . ." use direct or indirect characterization? Explain.

## Vocabulary Development

### Multiple Meanings

Point out the exclamation, "How curious!" near the bottom of p. 194. Explain that *curious* has multiple meanings. It can be used as an adjective to mean "strange," as it is used here. It can

also be used as an adjective to mean "inquisitive or nosy," such as a *curious* cat. Ask students to think of situations or statements that would prompt a person to exclaim, "How curious!"

## 11 Critical Viewing

**Possible response:** It looks like a prosperous kingdom where many people live quite happily.

## 12 Reading Skill Make Inferences

- Remind students that an inference is a logical assumption. Ask students whether it is logical for a story that takes place in medieval times—with kingdoms, wizards and dragons—to feature a salesman who carries catalogues with him.
- Read aloud the bracketed passage. **Ask** students the Reading Skill question.  
**Answer:** The eldest son offers to leave a catalogue for the dragon and come back in a week.

## 13 Reading Check

**Answer:** He tells him to recite this poem:  
“Dragon, dragon, how do you do?  
I’ve come from the king to murder you.”

something like that to the dragon, he will eat me up in an instant. The way to kill a dragon is to out-fox him.” And keeping his opinion to himself, the eldest son set forth on his quest.

When he came at last to the dragon’s lair, which was a cave, the eldest son slyly disguised himself as a peddler and knocked on the door and called out, “Hello there!”

“There’s nobody home!” roared a voice.

The voice was as loud as an earthquake, and the eldest son’s knees knocked together in terror.

“I don’t come to trouble you,” the eldest son said meekly. “I merely thought you might be interested in looking at some of our brushes. Or if you’d prefer,” he added quickly, “I could leave our catalogue with you and I could drop by again, say, early next week.”

“I don’t want any brushes,” the voice roared, “and I especially don’t want any brushes next week.”

“Oh,” said the eldest son. By now his knees were knocking together so badly that he had to sit down.

Suddenly a great shadow fell over him, and the eldest son looked up. It was the dragon. The eldest son drew his sword, but the dragon lunged and swallowed him in a single gulp, sword and all, and the eldest son found himself in the dark of the dragon’s belly. “What a fool I was not to listen to my wise old father!” thought the eldest son. And he began to weep bitterly.

**11 Critical Viewing**  
Why would the king want to protect a kingdom like this one from a dragon?  
[Speculate]

**12 Reading Skill  
Make Inferences**  
What details support the inference that this is a humorous tale rather than a realistic or scary one?

**13 Reading Check**  
What does the father tell his eldest son to do when he gets to the dragon’s lair?

*Dragon, Dragon* ■ 195

## Differentiated Instruction

Solutions for All Learners

### Support for Less Proficient Readers

Have students work with a partner to identify the sequence of events in the story. As students read, have partners work together to write story events on pieces of paper or index cards. Then have students mix the cards and work together to arrange them in the correct order. Tell students to keep adding events as they continue to read the story.

### Enrichment for Gifted/Talented Students

The wizard’s spell and the cobbler’s rhyme lend comedy to the story. Invite students to write additional spells for the wizard and additional rhymes for the cobbler, using the rhythm and rhyme scheme that Gardner uses. Allow time for students to read their spells and rhymes to the class.

## 14 Reading Skill

### Make Inferences

- Have a volunteer reread the text that refers to the eldest brother's plan to slay the dragon on pp. 194–195. Then ask a volunteer to read the bracketed passage on p. 196.
- **Ask** the Reading Skill question.  
**Answer:** He is strong, whereas the older brother is clever. The older brother decides to trick the dragon by pretending to be a peddler. But the middle son decides to slay the dragon by using force.

## 15 Literary Analysis

### Character

- Ask students to identify what they know about the character of the dragon up to this point. Tell them to write words and phrases in a web for the dragon's character, as they did earlier for the wizard.  
**Possible responses:** He roars. He eats people.
- Have a volunteer read the bracketed paragraph. **Ask** the Literary Analysis question.  
**Answer:** He is clever. He chuckles. He plans ahead.

"Well," sighed the king the next morning, "I see the dragon has not been slain yet."

"I'm just as glad, personally," said the princess, sprinkling the queen. "I would have had to marry that eldest son, and he had warts."

Now the cobbler's middle son decided it was his turn to try. The middle son was very strong and he was known far and wide for being able to lift up the corner of a church. He felt perfectly sure he could slay the dragon by simply laying into him, but he thought it would be only polite to ask his father's advice. So he went to his father and said to him, "Well, Father, I'm off to slay the dragon. Have you any advice for me?"

The cobbler told the middle son exactly what he'd told the eldest.

"When and if you come to the dragon's lair, recite the following poem:

*Dragon, dragon, how do you do?*

*I've come from the king to murder you.*

Say it very loudly and firmly, and the dragon will fall, God willing, at your feet."

"What an odd thing to say," thought the middle son. "The old man is not as wise as I thought. You have to take these dragons by surprise." But he kept his opinion to himself and set forth.

When he came in sight of the dragon's lair, the middle son spurred his horse to a gallop and thundered into the entrance swinging his sword with all his might.

But the dragon had seen him while he was still a long way off, and being very clever, the dragon had crawled up on top of the door so that when the son came charging in he went under the dragon and on to the back of the cave and slammed into the wall. Then the dragon chuckled and got down off the door, taking his time, and strolled back to where the man and the horse lay unconscious from the terrific blow. Opening his mouth as if for a yawn, the dragon swallowed the middle son in a single gulp and put the horse in the freezer to eat another day.

"What a fool I was not to listen to my wise old father," thought the middle son when he came to in the dragon's belly. And he too began to weep bitterly.

196 ■ Short Stories

## 14 Reading Skill

### Make Inferences

How is the middle son different from the eldest son? Support your answer.

## 15 Literary Analysis

### Character

What new details about the dragon's character do you learn in this paragraph?

## Vocabulary Development

### Vocabulary Builder Reinforcement

Students will benefit from practice with the Vocabulary Builder words. Reinforce their comprehension with "show-you-know" sentences. The first part of the sentence uses the vocabulary word in an appropriate context. The second part of the sentence clarifies the first part. Model the strategy with this example for *ravaged*: The hurricane winds *ravaged* the buildings in the downtown area; the main street was cluttered with wood, glass, and roofing shingles.

Then give students these sentence prompts and coach them in creating the clarification

portion of each sentence:

1. The angry bear *ravaged* our campsite; \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sample answer:** the tent was ripped to shreds and the cooler was surrounded by broken eggs and empty bags.
2. The boy spent several hours *reflecting* on what he had done; \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sample answer:** his thoughts kept coming back to that one bad decision.
3. She *craned* her neck, trying to get a better view of the actor; \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sample answer:** her neck could not stretch enough to improve her view.

17 That night there was a full moon, and the dragon ravaged the countryside so terribly that several families moved to another kingdom.

“Well,” sighed the king in the morning, “still no luck in this dragon business, I see.”

“I’m just as glad, myself,” said the princess, moving her mother, pot and all, to the window where the sun could get at her. “The cobbler’s middle son was a kind of humpback.”

Now the cobbler’s youngest son saw that his turn had come. He was very upset and nervous, and he wished he had never been born. He was not clever, like his eldest brother, and he was not strong, like his second-eldest brother. He was a decent, honest boy who always minded his elders.

He borrowed a suit of armor from a friend of his who was a knight, and when the youngest son put the armor on it was so heavy he could hardly walk. From another knight he borrowed a sword, and that was so heavy that the only way the youngest son could get it to the dragon’s lair was to drag it along behind his horse like a plow.

When everything was in readiness, the youngest son went for a last conversation with his father.

“Father, have you any advice to give me?” he asked.

“Only this,” said the cobbler. “When and if you come to the dragon’s lair, recite the following poem:

*Dragon, dragon, how do you do?*

*I’ve come from the king to murder you.*


Say it very loudly and firmly, and the dragon will fall, God willing, at your feet.”


“Are you certain?” asked the youngest son uneasily.

“As certain as one can ever be in these matters,” said the wise old cobbler.

And so the youngest son set forth on his quest. He traveled over hill and dale and at last came to the dragon’s cave.

The dragon, who had seen the cobbler’s youngest son while he was still a long way off, was seated up above the door, inside the cave, waiting and smiling to himself. But

16  **Critical Viewing**  
Does the boy in this picture look like a dragon slayer? Explain. **[Evaluate]**

18  **Reading Check**  
What happens to the middle son when he arrives at the dragon’s cave?

*Dragon, Dragon* ■ 197

## 16 Critical Viewing

**Possible responses:** Some students may say that he seems too small and thin to successfully slay a dragon. Others may say he seems thoughtful and clever, and might possibly be able to figure out a way to slay the dragon.

## 17 Humanities

**Dick Whittington on his way to London** by Frank Adams

This illustration is a good representation of the cobbler’s youngest son. The boy is fearful of his tasks, and the illustration captures how uncertain he is about proceeding. Although the drawing was not done specifically for this story, its rich colors and impressionistic style capture the period and background of traditional folklore. After students have examined the illustration, **ask:** What do you think the boy is thinking about?

**Possible response:** Students may suggest that he is wondering why he agreed to try to slay the dragon, and he may be trying to think of a way to get out of doing this task.

## 18 Reading Check

**Answer:** He gallops through the entrance on his horse, rides under the dragon, and slams into the wall. The dragon swallows him whole.

## Differentiated Instruction

Solutions for All Learners

### Support for English Learners

The author uses a variety of verbs to describe the movement of the cobbler’s three sons as they attempt to slay the dragon. Preteach this vocabulary so that students will have a better chance to comprehend what the characters are doing. Write *spurred, gallop, crawled, strolled, charging, slammed, tremble, drag, heaved* on the board. As you read each word aloud, pantomime the action.

### Enrichment for Advanced Readers

Explain to students that rite-of-passage themes are about the transition of young men and women into adulthood. Slaying the dragon is a mythical rite-of-passage theme found in literature of many cultures. Challenge students to locate texts with themes about rites of passage for young men and women. Ask the school librarian to assist students as they search the shelves or the Internet. Provide time for students to share their findings with the class.

## 19 Reading Skill

### Make Inferences

- Have a volunteer read aloud the bracketed text. Then ask students to use their own words to describe the dragon's behavior. Ask them to paraphrase what the dragon says to the youngest son.
- **Ask** the Reading Skill question.  
**Possible response:** He cannot believe that such a small person will be able to slay him. He thinks the rhyme is really silly.

## 20 Critical Thinking

### Interpret

- Explain to students that an author's message is often revealed in the way conflicts are resolved in the story.
- Ask students what message is suggested by the way the problem is resolved.  
**Possible response:** The message might be that people should consider taking advice from their elders, because age and experience often bring wisdom.

20 minutes passed and no one came thundering in. The dragon frowned, puzzled, and was tempted to peek out. However, reflecting that patience seldom goes unrewarded, the dragon kept his head up out of sight and went on waiting. At last, when he could stand it no longer, the dragon craned his neck and looked. There at the entrance of the cave stood a trembling young man in a suit of armor twice his size, struggling with a sword so heavy he could lift only one end of it at a time.

At sight of the dragon, the cobbler's youngest son began to tremble so violently that his armor rattled like a house caving in. He heaved with all his might at the sword and got the handle up level with his chest, but even now the point was down in the dirt. As loudly and firmly as he could manage, the youngest son cried—

*Dragon, dragon, how do you do?*

*I've come from the king to murder you.*

"What?" cried the dragon, flabbergasted. "You? You? Murder Me???" All at once he began to laugh, pointing at the little cobbler's son. "He he he ho ha!" he roared, shaking all over, and tears filled his eyes. "He he he ho ho ho ha ha!" laughed the dragon. He was laughing so hard he had to hang onto his sides, and he fell off the door and landed on his back, still laughing, kicking his legs helplessly, rolling from side to side, laughing and laughing and laughing.

The cobbler's son was annoyed. "I *do* come from the king to murder you," he said. "A person doesn't like to be laughed at for a thing like that."

"He he he!" wailed the dragon, almost sobbing, gasping for breath. "Of course not, poor dear boy! But really, *he he*, the *idea* of it, *ha, ha, ha!* And that simply ridiculous *poem!*" Tears streamed from the dragon's eyes and he lay on his back perfectly helpless with laughter.

"It's a good poem," said the cobbler's youngest son loyally. "My father made it up." And growing angrier he shouted, "I want you to stop that laughing, or I'll—I'll—" But the dragon could not stop for the life of him. And suddenly, in a terrific rage, the cobbler's son began flopping the sword end over end in the direction of the dragon. Sweat ran off the youngest son's forehead, but he labored on, blistering mad, and at last, with one supreme heave, he

### Vocabulary Builder

**reflecting** (ri flekt' in)  
adj. thinking seriously

**craned** (kränd) v.  
stretched out for a better look

## 19 Reading Skill

### Make Inferences

What do the dragon's words and laughter suggest about his feelings?

## Vocabulary Development

### Vocabulary Knowledge Rating

When students have completed reading and discussing "Dragon, Dragon" have them take out their **Vocabulary Knowledge Rating Chart** for this selection. Read the words aloud once more and have students rate their knowledge of the words again in the After Reading column. Clarify any words that are still problematic. Have students write their own definition or

example in the appropriate column. Then have students complete the **Vocabulary Builder Practice** activities on page 201. Encourage students to use the words in further discussion and written work about this selection. Remind them that they will be accountable for these words on the Selection Test.



## Literature in Context

had the sword standing on its handle a foot from the dragon's throat. Of its own weight the sword fell, slicing the dragon's head off.

"He he ho huk," went the dragon—and then he lay dead.

The two older brothers crawled out and thanked their younger brother for saving their lives. "We have learned our lesson," they said.

Then the three brothers gathered all the treasures from the dragon's cave and tied them to the back end of the youngest brother's horse, and tied the dragon's head on behind the treasures, and started home. "I'm glad I listened to my father," the youngest son thought. "Now I'll be the richest man in the kingdom."

There were hand-carved picture frames and silver spoons and boxes of jewels and chests of money and silver compasses and maps telling where there were more treasures buried when these ran out. There was also a curious old book with a picture of an owl on the cover, and inside, poems and odd sentences and recipes that seemed to make no sense.

When they reached the king's castle the people all leaped for joy to see that the dragon was dead, and the princess ran out and kissed the youngest brother on the forehead, for secretly she had hoped it would be him.

"Well," said the king, "which half of the kingdom do you want?"

"My wizard's book!" exclaimed the wizard. "He's found my wizard's book!" He opened the book and ran his finger along under the words and then said in a loud voice, "Glmuzk, shkzmlp, blam!"

Instantly the queen stood before them in her natural shape, except she was soaking wet from being sprinkled too often. She glared at the king.

"Oh dear," said the king, hurrying toward the door.

### Literature Connection

#### Traditional Dragon Stories

Much of the humor in "Dragon, Dragon" comes from the way it turns traditional dragon stories upside down. For example, in *Beowulf*, one of the most famous dragon stories of all time, the king is a wise and noble man. A terrible dragon has been attacking his hall and killing his warriors. When brave Beowulf, a true hero, learns that the king needs help, he sails quickly to the rescue, humbly yet bravely presenting himself as the man for the job.

### Connect to the Literature

Which of the cobbler's sons is most like Beowulf? Explain.

## Literature in Context

**Cultural Connection** Beowulf is thought to date from the eighth century, although the earliest manuscript version of it is at least two centuries older than the story itself. The tale was originally told by bards, men who sang epic poems. It centers on the heroic achievements of a prince named Beowulf, who slays both the monster Grendel and Grendel's mother. In the process of killing the dragon, Beowulf, who has become king, receives a fatal injury. This epic poem is well known for its powerful language and metaphors.

**Connect to the Literature** Remind students that the oldest son presented himself quickly but not humbly, and he failed to do the job. The middle son was eager to do the job but also unwilling to need advice. The youngest son knew he was neither clever nor strong. Even though he was afraid, he went anyway.

**Possible response:** The cobbler's youngest son is most like Beowulf because he is more humble than his brothers.

*Dragon, Dragon* ■ 199

## Concept Connector

### Anticipation Guide

Have students return to their **Anticipation Guides** and respond to the statements again in the After Reading column. They may do this individually or in their original pairs or groups. Then, lead a discussion aimed at determining what students have learned that confirms or invalidates each statement. Encourage students to cite details, including quotations, from the text to support their responses to each statement.

### Connecting to the Literature

Have students compare the sentences they wrote before reading with their thoughts about advice

after reading "Dragon, Dragon." Ask them to explain whether their thoughts about giving and taking advice have changed and if so, how.

### Literary Analysis Graphic Organizer

Ask students to review the graphic organizers they completed to help them describe characters while reading. Show them **Literary Analysis Graphic Organizer B** (*Graphic Organizer Transparencies*, p. 45) as an example. Then have students share the graphic organizers they completed and the traits they identified about the characters in the story.