



Dragon Moon by Carole Wilkinson

The thrilling conclusion to the *Dragonkeeper* trilogy

Teacher Notes prepared by Joy Lawn, Children's Literature Consultant

Readership: Mature mid
primary – mid secondary

Appropriate for class novel
study and literature circles, as
well as independent reading

Genre: Historical fantasy

Setting: Ancient China in the
Han Dynasty.

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Historical fantasy

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Ancient China in the Han Dynasty.

Rationale

These teacher notes have been written to send students back to the text and other sources, actively engage in learning and provide a creative learning experience, where possible.

How to use

The learning activities in one Key Learning Area may also be applicable to other subject areas.

Suggested answers and page references are included where appropriate.

These teacher notes can also be used in conjunction with the notes on *Garden of the Purple Dragon*.

About *Dragon Moon*

Emperor Liu Che is becoming unpopular because he is directing the riches of the empire into his quest for immortality. Ping and Kai are at Beibai Palace, which is attacked by the imperial soldiers for several reasons, including the Emperor's desire to have the imperial dragon returned. A silk square showing a secret dragon home, and its interpretation by a seer, send Ping and Kai on a journey. They save the Emperor en route, pass through regions in desperate need of rain and venture along the Great Wall of China.

Jun, the false dragonkeeper, saves them from the guards and joins them. Then they are guided by an old man, Danzi's former dragonkeeper. Kai and then Ping finally reach the dragon sanctuary, where the trilogy mounts to an apt conclusion.



ENGLISH

Symbolism There are many symbols in the book and trilogy. Find some and explain what they may represent.

(Teacher tip: Symbols include dragons, the moon, rain and rainbow, seasons, garden, page 55, and others)

Dragon How is the dragon represented? (It is also shown as an image on the cover and at the chapter headings. Also read page 32)

Moon What images are used to describe the moon? (There are references to the moon throughout the book, including pages 137, 233, 283, 317, 334)

Write a poem about dragons or mythical creatures, using symbolism.

Rain People in the novel believe that dragons make the rain, page 76. The dragons also believe they can make it rain, but don't want to help humans since the massacre at Long Gao Yuan, page 246. Also read pages 271-272. When it finally rains there is a rainbow, page 331. (Note the link with 'dragonfly wings'.) Write your own explanation of why it rains, as a fantasy, fable, myth or legend.

The Journey – Plot Profile Much of this novel describes Ping and Kai's journey to find the dragon home. This is a contrast from the prequel, *Garden of the Purple Dragon*, which is set primarily in the Emperor's garden. What part of Kai and Ping's journey did you find most interesting? How did the author make this part interesting? Consider setting, characters and difficulties. Construct a plot profile of the journey.

Enrichment: 'The seasons' – use a code such as a colour or symbolic code to show which season correlates to the plot highlights.

Text Construction – Number Eight The author has constructed a fantasy version of Ancient China in the Han Dynasty based on research and reconstruction. The number 'eight' is regarded as an inauspicious number, page 307. The author discovered that in Ancient China 'nine' was an auspicious number and 'four' an inauspicious number (it sounds the same as 'death'). She could find no mention of 'eight' so decided that as 'two multiplied by four' equals 'eight', the number 'eight' would be very inauspicious, page 326. Find out other information from Ancient China from the book, then try to discover how the author has researched or reconstructed this. See the author website www.carolewilkinson.com.au

Purpose of Life – Hot Seat The dragons do not seem to do much so Ping questions their purpose of life, pages 278 – 280. Put the dragons in the 'Hot Seat' to answer questions about the purpose of their existence, when they should use their power or lose their wisdom, and their bond with humans, pages 289, 301.

When Ping left she was 'doing what she least wanted to do, but she knew it was right,' page 319. Relate Ping's experience here and the dragon's views, to people's lives, using public figures, known people and students themselves.



SOSE/HISE

Chinese Dynasties Find out about the different Chinese Dynasties, including the Han Dynasty where this story is set. Show the dynasties on a large-scale timeline on the wall. Illustrate each dynasty with a representative feature, such as a Ming vase from the Ming Dynasty.

The Great Wall of China Read sections of the book that are set here, such as pages 90-91, 139-140. Find out more about the Great Wall. Then, in groups, select one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, such as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and make a two-dimensional diagram or three-dimensional model of it.

Four Spiritual Beings 'Dragons are one of the four spiritual beings. The phoenix and the qilin have already disappeared from the earth ... There are only dragons and tortoises left', pages 279-280.

1. Investigate some of these Chinese spiritual creatures further. The glossary and author's website www.carolewilkinson.com.au will help.
2. Discover spiritual creatures from Australia's Indigenous stories. Present as a poster and story-telling session.

Seven Cunning Pieces Read about these, and the lines and characters on the silk square on pages 13,15,16,18, 86. Use tangrams to make the shapes described. See also the Black Dog Books Website for more information on these www.bdb.com.au/dragonkeeper/ This site also shows Danzi's map, information about the Chinese language and an audio interview with Carole Wilkinson.

SCIENCE

Rain and Drought There are many references to rain, and its lack, throughout the book. As Ping and Kai pass through villages, the people become increasingly upset about the lack of rain, page 88.

1. Describe the water cycle as a scientific process.
2. Research best options/procedures for supplying water to your city or region. Select the best idea from the class and propose how this could be implemented.

Also see 'English – Rain'



CREATIVE ARTS

Animation Create animations by photographing changing drawings of how Kai grows and changes, particularly colour-wise, throughout this book or the whole trilogy. He becomes a dragon of 'five' colours, page 298. (Note: the number 'five' is of particular significance in Garden of the Purple Dragon.)

(Teacher tip: changing from purple to green, page 67; reverse scales growing, page 82; no wings, page 88; changed from a dragonling to a juvenile, page 103.)

Jade Read the descriptions of jade jewellery and other items on pages 169 – 180. Jade may come in a range of colours, but is best known in emerald green. Use emerald green beads and other jewellery-making materials (from a craft supplier) to make jewellery such as necklaces, bracelets, brooches, earrings or rings. Alternatively, hair decorations or wind chimes could be made, page 171.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Carole Wilkinson is an award-winning author of books for children. She has a longstanding fascination with dragons and is interested in the history of everything. Carole is a meticulous researcher who finds it difficult to stop researching and begin writing. She once searched for weeks to find out whether there were daffodils in Han Dynasty China. Carole is married, has a daughter, and lives in inner-city Melbourne.