

# *ESL EXCHANGES*

*Fall 2010*

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**FOR**

**Sam**

**who flies with dragons**

**1996-2010**

*Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children that dragons can be killed.*

G. K. Chesterton

Dear Sam,

Dragons! And some misguided man telling children that they need to know how to kill them. What a totally horrible thought! We have always known, you and I, that dragons are real but neither of us ever wanted to kill one. Dragons, like all living creatures, have souls and personalities, are good as well as evil, brave as well as cowardly and wise and creative as well as occasionally foolish. They are different from us, but does that justify killing them without reason?

We silly humans seem to fear that which is different from us. Sometimes that is another human that looks different, a creature people feel is mythological, or someone who has a different belief system or customs. Each should be judged on their own merits, on the contents of their character and the kindness of their soul. Those that are evil will be judged by their maker, the foolish will hopefully learn, and those



that are beautiful in their own way will be free to enter the hearts of others. We should never fear the evil so much that it keeps us from opening our hearts to all that is good, no matter what, who or where we find them.

Dragons, like love, are in our hearts and imaginations. They populate our dreams and offer us the impossible come true. Why would we want to destroy that, why would we want children to destroy their dreams? With the death of dreams comes the death of hope. All children need hope.

I know that you are now with the dragons, surrounded by the souls of those as beautiful as you are. May they guard you and guide you. May you fly freely with them across the skies,

feeling the breeze in your hair. I promise to continue to see the beauty in people's differences, as you always did. As for the dragons, I will guard as many of them here as I can and one day I will join you on your flights across the sky.

I love you,

Grandma



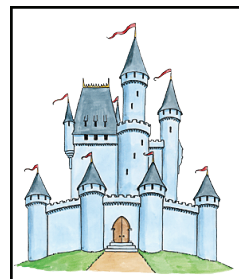
Dear Pat,

After hearing this quote, I instantly thought, “Why should a dragon be killed?” This may go against the norm but I see dragons as positive creatures. Dragons to me represent fantasy because they do not truly exist. With fantasy anything is possible and everything makes sense. Dragons, either the villain or hero, are a major part of imagination.

Fantasy and imagination represents dreams which children are full of. Children’s imaginations naturally run wild so there is no doubt that children wouldn’t have to be told that dragons exist. Fantasy to adults is sometimes reality to children. With that said, fairy tales telling children that dragons can be killed is a horrible thing. This is telling them that their magical, mystical, dream filled world can be crushed. It shows that dreams do not always prevail and come true. Even though children have to learn that life does not always have a happy ending, I don’t think that fairy tales should be the thing to show them that. This quote pulled at me because fairy tales are children’s portal into their own world and showing that their creatures can be killed is not good.

Sincerely,

Daniqua Windsor



Dear Mrs. Hach:

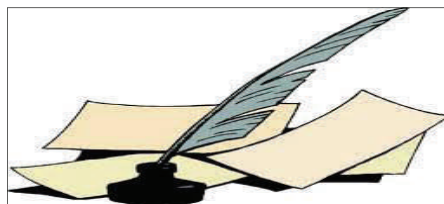
I totally agree with the quote. Fairy tales do not always tell children the existence of evil, such as ugly witches, horrible monsters, and dragons which mean darkness in western culture.

Fairy tales always give children the ideas that the evil things just exist in fairy tales through imagination, and never appear in the real world. In addition, fairy tales try to only bring hope and happiness to children. Even though children know fantasy through imagination and also have experienced the coldness and darkness of the world already, fairy tales make them believe that the real world is full of hopeful and beautiful things. I still believe that there are more kind people than selfish ones, and selfish people can be educated to change for the better. So, the darkness in the world can be brighter one day.

Fairy tales focus on influencing children in a positive way and making them see the world in a bright light. They teach that the evil, like dragons, always can be killed by a hero or a prince after a struggle. Fairy tales want to convince people to believe that even though evil things exist, we can fight them and beat them at last through much effort and persistence. The fact is that we are clever and powerful enough to face and solve difficulties. Fairy tales keep hope: kindness always can beat evil in the end!

Sincerely,

Wen Xu



Dear Mrs. Hach,

Good things don't always happen, but bad things can be overcome by having braveness and courage. No one would tell us the existence of bad things in our life, but somehow we know it and we have to discover it by ourselves. During our childhood, parents tend to read fairy tales to us because they give us the hope that good will follow if we fight with the bad. In fairy tales, dragons are considered bad because they always look ugly and they eat people for a living. People suffer from dragons. However, the brave hero would always kill them at the end, which makes the hero more respected. Fairy tales don't tell children the existence of dragons because they don't exist in the world and they don't want to scare children or they want to give children the space to imagine. The purpose of fairy tales is to make children believe that all evil things can end.

I consider that dragons are the bad weather in our daily life. We have a lot of different weather in our daily life: sunny days, windy days, and rainy days. All of us are aware that we cannot have sunny days all the time. Sometimes, we have to experience a rainy day or even a stormy day, but we all know that tomorrow is another day. After the rainy days, we always get a beautiful rainbow and sunshine. The bad weather makes the sunny days brighter. To spend the bad days happily is the same as to hope for good things. Children, who read fairy tales, understand that there is always hope in their life and everything will turn to good eventually.

Sincerely,

Xiaoyi Xu



Dear Ms. Hach,

I fully agree with the quote, “Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed.”

In reality, children have seen dragons many times before they can read. The image of dragons appears everywhere such as on TV, movies, cartons, advertisements, toys, stationeries, and the packages of children’s food. For children, dragons are just one kind of animal such as lions, bears, and tigers, which are too dangerous to be around. Therefore, they cannot see dragons in their normal lives. Children must have known a bit about dragons before they read fairy tales.

In this quotation, dragons seem to represent the fears of children, since the image of a dragon is powerful, evil, and dangerous. Fairy tales don’t tell children to be afraid. Fear is part of human nature. A dragon is just an image which makes the children's fears become objective. At the same time, fairy tales always teach children to be brave and fight the powerful characters. No matter how big and horrifying the dragon is in the fairy tales, eventually, it would be killed by a young brave child. In this case, children learn to be brave and to overcome fear .

Sincerely,

Wenyan Zhang





Dear Mrs. Hach,

I do like this quote and agree with it. As I read the quote, the first thing appearing in my mind is the idea of victory of good over evil. It is really important that fairy tales give children the hope that right will win over wrong, “the monsters can be killed,” and similarly, bad people will be punished, so that children always believe in the strength of faith and good will. The monsters in fairy tales are a good example of the problems, obstacles, and even evils that one has to face in one’s daily life. Bearing in mind the idea that “the monsters can be killed,” children will be given confidence and motivation to overcome the difficulties that they have to cope with. In addition, as the monsters are often huge compared to humans, the fact that they can be killed by humans will strengthen the idea that one can win over anything and achieve any goals with one’s will. Therefore, children will not be afraid when facing such serious problems, and will do their best for success. Overall, the thought that “the monsters can be killed” will give children more courage and strength to conquer new heights and be victorious, like the way humans have always won over monsters in fairy tales. This motivational idea is not only essential for children when they are young, but also helpful for them when they grow up into adults.

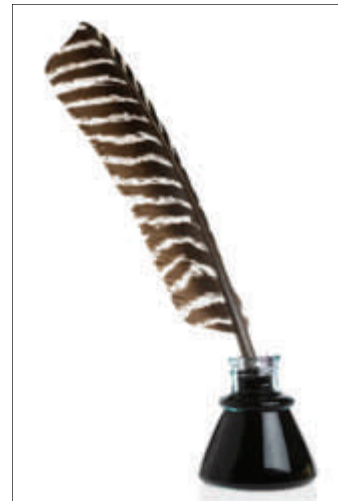
As for adults, they often have to cope with a much larger number of challenges in daily life. These are obviously more complicated, significant, and difficult to deal with. The more we grow up, the more serious our problems may be. Therefore, we certainly need a stronger belief than children do, a belief that no matter how complicated or unsolvable the problem is, we can still find a way to deal with it, and in the end, everything is going to be alright. Regarding this fact, the idea that “the monsters can be killed” can become an important support for all adults. Although

we adults may not believe in monsters, let alone whether they can be killed or not, the subconscious notion that problems can be solved if we try our best that we learnt from fairy tales when we were young can be a big help. It gives us the feeling “I can do it,” so that we will never give up or run away when facing obstacles. The statement “the monsters can be killed” even suggests the existence of a beautiful world without “monsters” and evils, so that we humans will strive not only for a better life for ourselves but also for a better society.

I am looking forward to getting your response.

Best regards,

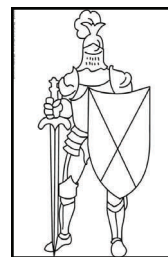
Phuong Minh Cao



Dear Mrs. Hach,

Dragons, witches, monsters, giants exist in children's mind whether or not with fairy tales. By proposing a story with those creatures, we are able to picture all the scenes, to believe and to visualize. Fairy tales are not trying to convince us that dragons exist; when a storyteller introduces a dragon, he does not provide any arguments proving dragons' existence at a certain point of life. Children who know that dragons exist are not crazy, because those dragons exist in their imagination. Children might create a monster so big and powerful in their head that they would not know how to defeat that monster; it is like creating Golem.

Fairy tales also help children to get over their fears. A children's imagination brings a lot of nightmares and fears. By telling children that the Golem in their nightmares can be killed, they will be less terrorized by the Golem.



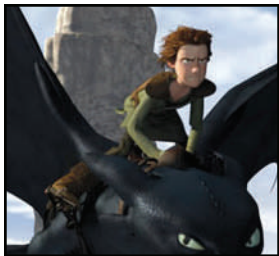
Fairy tales tell the children that the Golem can be defeated no matter how powerful he might be. That self-confident feeling is what children need in order to grow up and this is why fairy tales are so useful for children. If children already know that dragons exist in their mind, fairy tales give them the tools to defeat those dragons. Dragons and monsters in one's mind as a child turn to daily problems and obstacles in one's mind as an adult. The fears and the problems are different as we age, but the psychological path is the same. The main character that we identify with defeats the Golem and moves on with his life, and we do the same when we overcome any difficulty.

Sincerely,

Mamadou Camara

Dear Professor Freel,

The quote has points and I definitely agree with it. When I was a little boy, I liked dragons when they appeared in fairy tales since they do the right thing by helping their family and giving people a hand to save their lives. The movie, *How To Train Your Dragons*, is based on fairy tales and tells the story of a dragon that saves a little boy and helps him grow up. By watching the movie, we learn that dragons are not always evil to people.



On the other hand, they sometimes seem to be the enemies of people since the dragons kill people and destroy the world using their magic fires and wings. However, dragons behave that way just to save their own family and areas that they live in. Actually, people act badly toward dragons first in order to have confidence that they are strong enough to kill dragons. Every time I watch fairy tales about dragons, I learn why dragons are killed by people. Dragons are not actually bad monsters, but they just keep away from dangers that are brought by people. They fight against people and kill them when they face dangerous situations. For children, dragons are enemies because their fathers are sometimes killed by dragons, not because they are natural evils.

By teaching children that dragons can be killed, fairy tales make children brave and teach them not to be afraid to step into the world.

Sincerely,

Yuya Tamai

Dear Mrs. Hach,

In eastern cultures, children know that dragons exist through their everyday lives even though fairy tales do not tell children that the dragons exist.

When I hear the word “dragon,” it constantly makes me think of good fortune. In eastern culture, a dragon has always been a symbol of power, wealth, and great wisdom. In many stories dragons put people to the test to see if they are worth enough to share his mysterious



power to make them have better of everything. Receiving dragons’ approval is not an easy task. However, people couldn’t resist willing to share their magnificent power.

In many Asian cultures, people believe that dragons control the weather especially with the rains. The dragon gods can give us the right amount of rain, or cause severe weather such as storms and hurricanes when people behave improperly. They also engage with great rivers and could cause floods to show their anger toward our lack of respect to nature. We believe that the gods know what we are doing and they show their thoughts by using the weather. It is always humans who make mistakes and the gods, dragons, are trying to tell us about it.

Unlike in western cultures, dragons in eastern culture are highly respected, worshipped, and also awed because of their supernatural powers. Dragons are not our enemy; they are rather wise instructors who help us and give us an opportunity to make our life better as long as we behave in good manners. I support the idea that dragons shouldn’t be killed.

Sincerely,

Chiaki Miki

Dear Mrs. Freel,

I have read the quotation more than 10 times and I started to analyze the two sentences, so I could figure out what is the real meaning. While I was analyzing the sentences, I realized what Chesterton means by those two simple sentences. Chesterton simplified points and put them together in two simple sentences, in other words, he generalized them. For instance, we can conclude several points out of the quotation such as; there are two kinds of dragons, good dragons represent good people and bad dragons represent bad people, and children might be afraid to be killed if they do a bad thing. The quotation has many points to discuss and I'd like to share some of them.

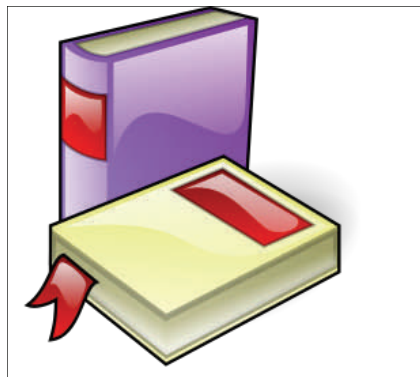
At first, if we think about dragons, it will come to our minds that there are two kinds of dragons, good and bad. From that point, if both kinds were characters in a fairy tale, we could conclude that one of them must be defeated at the end of the story, because the bad is always against the good, but the good always win and the bad is defeated. That is what Chesterton had mentioned in his quote that children already know that dragons exist, but they don't know or they never heard before that they can be killed.

When the parents tell their children a fairy tale, they would explain to them that the good dragon represents good people and the bad dragon represents bad people, or the children might figure that out by themselves. After the parents tell the fairy tale, children will be cautious of doing bad things. Therefore, children will have a glance in their minds about killing and being killed.

Killing the bad guys is not that bad, but it's not that good either. For example, the word "killing" in any fairy tale could be replaced by the word "defeating". Therefore, it's not good to mention to a child that a dragon could be killed, and at the same time, it's good to let the child recognize right from wrong by giving them an example of the bad dragon that is defeated at the end of the fairy tale.

Sincerely,

Mahmoud Jawharji



Dear Professor Freel:

Asian people have different ideas about dragons. In their minds, everything has its own god. A tree has a tree god, a fish has a fish god. And a dragon is a kind of god, too. It will use its power to help people. But if people make it angry, it will hurt people, too. So, people respect a dragon, but also are afraid of it.

In my mind, the root of differences between Asian dragons and European dragons is “belief”. They believe in different gods. In Asian belief, gods have a world, which is very similar with our world. There are many gods in it. And one god controls one thing. They also have a main god who is like a king. Dragon is also a god that controls the rain and the sea. It’s a very important role. The sea and rain will affect a country’s agriculture which is the basis of countries. So, people respect it and want the dragon to give them good weather. The emperor wants people to follow him, and he tells people that he is the son of a dragon. He can know dragon’s mind and communicate with it. In order to consolidate his status, he magnifies a dragon’s power. Because of this situation, Asian people think a dragon is good, and a dragon also becomes a tool of the emperor.

Sincerely,

Yao Xie





Dear Mrs. Freel,

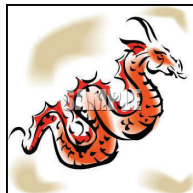
I do not agree with Chesterton's quotation concerning fairy tales about dragons because the dragons I knew represented good.

In my culture, dragons represent lucky and good things. When I was a child, my parents always told me dragons are a deity in fairy tales. Fairy tales will tell children the dragons exist and they will protect them. For example, we always said the dragon is the god of the water in the fairy tale. They can control the weather. One day, a flood came to the town; people would die. They tried to run away, but they were running too slow compared with the flood. The dragon helped people solved the problem by using its tail, and it saved all the people. This made people trust the dragon. After that, people began to build the temple for dragons and also to pray to dragons. The story about the dragon was passed down to today. However, children are not sure if the dragon really exists in the world, because nobody saw the dragon before; we just were told that there are dragons which exist in the fairy tales. Even if children are not sure if dragons exist, the dragons appearing in our fairy tales cannot be killed. The dragon is still our patron saint. We would like to keep to the image of the dragon as a holy animal.

Above all, in my opinion, the dragon represents good things, and we all believe it can bring good luck for Asian people. Whether the dragon exists or not, the fact that people respect them will never change, and dragons won't be killed in our fairy tales.

Sincerely,

Hong Yuan (Tracy)



Dear Mrs. Freel,

Fairy tales are used to tell people a truth about life. For example, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* tells people that we should be kind and honest. Also, many fairy tales like this one were supposed to tell readers that bad people must have an awful result. Some classmates said that the fairy tales about dragons want to tell children to be good. And the reason why a dragon can be killed is that a dragon plays a bad role. However, the dragon represents good luck and power in China. Many Chinese regard it as an idol to pray to for good luck.

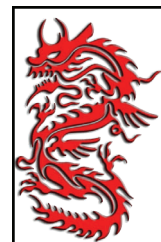
There is a long history about the dragon in China. It represents the Emperor of China in many dynasties. The clothes that Emperors wore had many dragons on it. Any Chinese citizen cannot wear this kind of cloth because the dragon symbolizes a high class in China. Only the Emperor could have the honor to be called the son of a dragon. Even though this is an old concept, it has a deep influence in Chinese life. We can still see many houses that have bricks which look like a dragon. Many of the temples have dragon statues because the dragon has a close relation to the weather. In their minds, while the dragon comes from the sky, it will bring rain at the same time.

Furthermore, we will see many Chinese names that have a dragon character included. The reason why people use this character is that their parents want them to have a bright future because they believe that this kind of name can bring their children good luck. Obviously, the dragon is very important in Chinese traditional culture.

Enjoy your life.

Sincerely,

Guole Shi



Mrs. Freel,

A while ago, I took out a fairy tale collection which was covered with dust. I opened the book, the story in black and white starts; in every fairy tale, there is a clear line drawn between the good and bad, and totally nothing in the middle. The victory ending always belongs to the virtuous characters. Instinctually, children know that good people will get a reward, and bad will be punished. The “gray area” person does not get or lose anything. If we all think as a child, then society today would not be as complicated as it is.

Children hug everyone who gives them candy; their trust is based on how much benefit they receive; they do not consider how much others will take advantage on them. When I was little, my parents kept telling me, “Do not take candies from strangers.” It sounds silly now, but it was important to know back when I was 3. A child gives her trust in a moment; because she doesn’t think the world is filled of strategies and profits. She has never thought that the one who gives her the candy may want to kidnap her. Instead of the thought, she takes the candy and politely says “Thank you”. The child thinks that she does her part as a diligent child since she doesn’t rush to eat the candy right away. In her mind, the candy giver is good because he appears as a good person but he covers his true purpose. However, as a child, she can’t see that. And if the stranger were in a fairy tale, the child would want him to be the prince who would kill the dragon, despite how much the candy giver plans behind him.

When children make decisions, it seems they have quick reactions to the situation. In her mind, her mother is being a bad character at that moment. She might be the witch in the fairytale where children think that they are bad. Their simple thoughts are limited only between good and there is no gray area.

Because they think life is simple; they do not have the ability to worry about the good people with the bad purpose or the “bad” people with good purpose. If we all live like a child, where we cannot see the grey area and live in the definite good and bad; will we need to worry as much as we need to?

Sincerely,

Zhe Zhu (Kelly)



Dear Mrs. Freel:

Hi, how is everything going? The last class was really impressive to me. We have discussed Chesterton's belief about dragons. From my understanding, the author believed that the story should educate children to correct their mistakes. "Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed," means everything is possible if we try our best. The dragons both in western and Asian culture show the power and wisdom. But in the fairy tales, the authors make it possible that immortals can fight supernatural power and beat them. In addition, no matter how the dragons or evil things are strong, finally evil cannot defeat justice. This quotation reminds me of my favorite cartoon, "Pocket Dragons Adventures".

When we discussed the topic about fairy tales having an influence on children's behavior in the class, I was thinking of my favorite cartoon, *Pocket Dragon Adventure*. There are six small pocket dragons and an evil dragon. In their stories, there is a main character Filbert; he is confident to be a leader and favors controlling others. Because of his personality, he gets into a lot of trouble and his friend Scribbles gives him a hand when he makes the situation messier. Finally, he learned that the winner is a group not a single person. The teamwork leads them to beat the evil purple dragon.

When I was a student in my elementary school, I was an opinionated person. One day, I took part in an invention competition with my classmates. We were assembling the model aircraft. We had different opinions in the final part of this competition. I suggested adding a small fan into the aircraft, but we were supposed to finish it in 10 minutes. I still persisted, so we didn't finish it and lost the game. After that I felt ashamed, but they didn't blame me too much. I was thinking of it, and changed since I watched *Pocket Dragons Adventures*. I realized that I was in a big group with

my classmates, teachers, and friends. We are not a single person. We need cooperation and association. Thanks to my classmates and the editor of this cartoon, they taught me how to be a member of society. The cartoon, made for children from 6 to 13, has the same value as fairy tales. It is a great lesson for me to consider the meaning of both fairy tales and cartoons.

Thank you for reading my letter. It is my pleasure to share my feeling with you.

Have a good weekend!

Yours,

Kajia Chen



Dear Mrs. Freel,

As you know, Asian people recognize that dragon's existence is good fortune, so I do not want to consider dragons as bad influences for children. However, I also know bad dragons of European fairy tales. I think that Japanese customs and morals are deeply related to good dragon's fairy tales. When I was little, my grandmother read me my favorite fairy tale before I went to bed. A point of the story is that the boy and dragons are friends. On the other hand, European fairy tales have a bad dragon which is killed by a main character most of the time. Now, by comparing Japanese and European fairy tales, I will try to prove to you that Japanese fairy tales give a good influence to children more than European fairy tales.

A fairy tale which my grandmother told me emphasizes that having a great friendship with anyone is very important, even if it is with dragons. The point is that children should make friends without any stereotypes. We know a bad character should exist in fairy tales and a main character should fight against difficulties or enemies. Therefore, in European fairy tales, dragons are usually used as enemies. However, my favorite Japanese fairy tales set a bad man instead of a bad dragon. The man is avaricious, so the man tries to kill dragons to get money because dragons are considered as precious and expensive if he sold on the black market in the story. The boy tries to protect the dragons because they are friends even though the dragons cannot speak. I mentioned that the most important point in this fairy tale is making friends without stereotypes, such as if children think they can be friends with foreigners even though they cannot have a conversation because of different languages. In addition, one more important thing in this fairy tale is not to be avaricious such as killing a life even if you do not have money. These points are deeply related to how to educate children and how to create the peaceful world when they grow up.

Children have to know the right way to decide and choose. They also should know what

they can do or cannot do in the real world through the fairy tale. At this point, I can say Japanese and European fairy tales play the same role because both emphasize teaching children how to make right decisions and choose the right way in the real world. However, Japanese fairy tales are more educational for children compared to European fairy tales. It does not matter what creatures are bad or good because different cultures have a different value for the creatures. I would like to advise strongly not to read for only surface elements of the fairy tale such as a prince being brave because he killed a bad dragon in the European fairy tale. Just telling a story cannot educate children for making a right decision. If children could not get deeper message such as morals, they just know a story and just envy a prince because he is handsome and brave. Interpret what fairy tales deeply want to tell to children such as morals or a right way to live in a given society, in Asian fairy tales, if you have wonderful friends, you should protect them by following the right decision by attacking enemies. I think children cannot understand morals of the fairy tales, so parents should read fairy tales to them including teaching morals and making right decision in children's life.

Sincerely,

Sumire Tsutamune





Dear Mrs. Freel,

Asian dragons and European dragons are different characters. Asian dragons are symbolized as good fortune, but European dragons are known as bad things. I think that dragons in fairy tales are European dragons mostly, and their roles are bad or harmful beings.

When children read fairy tales, the basic story is that dragons are killed. But why? I think the authors want to tell that people can defeat evil. However, children should be able to judge not only bad people but also wrong actions. In other words, children also learn what is wrong is or is not in their lives. Children know wrong things, but they cannot judge which action is bad or good. Fairy tales tell that children are attacked if they become bad children. I suppose that children learn the last phase of bad people from Chesterton's quotation.

In class, we discussed the differences between European dragons, that are a kind of monster, with Asian dragons, the symbol of great wisdom, for children. However, when I read his quotation at first, I thought that the role of dragons in fairy tales is to be a metaphor for an insurmountable obstacles in life for children. I interpreted Chesterton's quote as: *Fairy tales do not tell children what the exact obstacles of their lives are, and children know that there is an insurmountable wall in life. However, it is possible to overcome a difficulty.* I do not think it matters whether dragons are good or not in fairy tales because their positions are just something that children can learn from their lives. Fairy tales weave a moral into stories, and children have to learn something from them. Children interpret as dragons are giant and fierce monsters, so dragons can be a life obstacle standing in front of children.

It was very fun to think about Chesterton's quotation and dragons. In the future, when I read fairy tales, I will try to think what the teaching of each story is. When I read the dragon's fairy tale, I guessed it is a European dragon that is a bad creature. Also, the dragon looks like a life obstacle. If other people read it, there might be different opinions and feelings about the role of the dragon. All symbols, such as dragons, have important yet different meanings for children.

Sincerely,

Tomoe Sumi



Dear Mrs. Freel,

Most students agreed with Chesterton's belief and only a few people disagreed. However, I agree with this quotation, because fairy tales tell children if they do something good, it will pay off, but if they do something bad they will be punished.

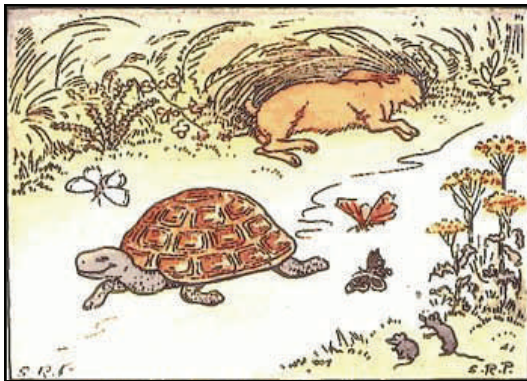
Like the story *Cinderella*, her hardship paid off at the end. She was doing all kinds of chores that her mother demanded her to do. She basically lost her personal life. She cleaned rooms and rooms, and she was still being nagged about; she washed tons and tons of dishes and she was still being criticized by her step-mother. With all the pressure and with her endurance, she did not give up hope. She knew that if she just kept working, she would have a day which would be filled with honor and praise. Finally, she married a handsome prince. After all the years of struggling, she received her reward—being an respectful princess. Clearly, this fairy tale encourages children, no matter what kind of hardship comes, if they have hope and keep working, they will be rewarded.

However, the story of the tortoise and the hare gives a different example. The hare serves as a proud character. Her pride creates for her downfall. The hare overestimated herself; she thought that she could beat the tortoise in running without any doubt. Therefore, she took a nap during the contest. As a result, she lost the game. Mortally, pride counts as a sinful quality; logically, the hare was characterized as the bad one. The fairy tale was structured in a way that the hare lost the game; this was her punishment for being proud. The bad ones were punished so that the children would learn a lesson. They would not want to imitate the bad characters to expect their punishments.

Fairy tales suggest children do good deeds, so that punishment will be avoided. Even though small behaviors count, the lesson the fairy tale brings out is to tell the children that they will receive whatever fruits that they planted. If they have a good conscience and a good heart, then they will be good without any further surveillance.

Sincerely,

Hee Soo Kim



Dear Professor Freel

For many years, adults used fairy tales to teach their kids a lot of ideas about behavior. To make the fairy tales interesting and attractive, story tellers added a lot of fictional characters into the story. Dragons are one the most attractive characters. Different cultures tell different stories about dragons and children learn different thing from the stories of dragons.

For example, dragons are holy in China. For many years, we told the story of different dragons in China from one generation to another. The most famous fairy tale in China about dragons is the Legend of Zulong. Zulong was the god of dragons and he was also the first dragon in this world. He protected lives from evils and ruled nature. Zulong finally died and his body became a mountain which is located in the middle of China. Before he died, Zulong sent his four sons to guard the four directions. In China, we believe that the dragons are the representation of nature. So those fairy tales about dragons told us that we should respect nature. We take what nature gives us, but we can never lord over nature, just like we can never be the lord of dragons.

Dragons also play an important role in western culture, but different from the dragons in Chinese fairy tales, the dragons in western fairy tales always appear in an evil way. For example, an evil dragon kidnapped a beautiful princess. Then the handsome prince or the brave knight kills the dragon and saves the princess. Although the dragons usually play evil roles in western fairy tales, they do tell a lot of important things to children. Those fairy tales tell children that the dragons exist because they stand for evil. And evil always exist in this world but evil can never beat justice. We should always have a brave heart to fight against evil.

Eric Chen



Dear Mrs. Freel,

In my thinking, there are many different types of “dragons”. All of the “dragons” have amazing power and magic. In China, every person is the descendant of the dragon, as am I. Even though we say that we are dragon’s children there are still many different types of people. Some people are good and kind, but some are bad and evil. In my opinion, the world unites kindness and evil.

Some people would like to be a European dark dragon which damages others and hurts themselves at the same time. I had a great friend who grew up with me. He was a really good boy when we were in high school, but he was totally different after he graduated from high school. Something happened when he was taking GaoKao (It is a national exam in order to go to college or university), and he did not get a college’s offer. After this, he changed his thinking about society and about life. He thought this world was unfair; some people do not need to work or study but they are still very rich and why did he have to bear these responsibilities? On September 1<sup>st</sup>, he walked out with a watermelon knife. He went to a square and sat on a stone for about 2 hours and watched people sitting and having fun with family. He wrote down one word, “unfair,” on the stone then he began to cut and carve those people. He wounded at least 15 people and he killed himself. The world is “unfair.” Not every person wants to be a dark dragon. Some people can make a turn and go back the right way. People do wrong things like my friend. They got punishment in jail or other places. Some change their minds and turn to begin a new life. Fairy tales plant a seed in our minds. This seed contains hope and warns us that we are fighting with our dark side. We were told how to fight with ourselves, even though nobody tells us that darkness exists.

Sincerely, Zhanpeng Gao



Dear Mrs. Freel,

Today, I decided to fulfill my wish. Since I was a little boy I always liked dragons. I think that they are powerful, proud, and gallant. That is why I will tattoo the left side of my chest with a European dragon. I know that in European cultures a dragon has a bad reputation like Chesterton implied in his words, but according to my research, it also protects the heart from devilry so I choose the left side of my chest. Most children fear dragons because dragons kill people, eat them, and disturb their lives. However, if we look at the case from dragons' view point, we will understand that their behaviors are only defensive. Everybody hates them— wants to kill them. That is why dragons must protect their own benefits and lives. I don't think that they deserve this bad fame and I think that in fairy tales, there is prejudice against dragons. It is a bad thing for children because it may cause them to judge people by a first impression. For example, a person may seem to be brutal on first impression but after talking with him, we may understand that he is of a perfect personage.

Besides, I remember that in some orthodox churches, Lucifer is described as a dragon and put in hell by Michael. I think that this description of the devil helped the dragon to be hated more and more. In my opinion, we must search the good even in the bad because we can find the good even in the worst things. To hate or to dislike someone is too easy, but don't forget that Lucifer is a child of God, and Lucifer was not killed but punished.

Sincerely,

Onur Cokar



Dear Mrs. Freel,

Drugs, murders, and bribery are classic examples of illegal and unethical activities. We know that. However, these exist. Fairy tales are said to prevent us from doing bad things, but what are fairy tales for? What is the purpose? Once a famous person stated, "*Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed.*" This quote caused a great discussion, but I am sure the quote is right for three reasons.

First of all, I believe the word "dragons" represent notorious people such as thefts, robbers and criminals. Children already realize early on there are bad people in the world. In fact, children who watched *Superman* tried to act like superman and tried to punish imaginary devils, enemies and generally bad people. The reason is that they already learned there are people who are doing illegal or unethical activities through external environment such as TV, books and so forth. Another example is that after watching a horror movie or reading a horror story, when we are children, tend not to go bed alone because we believed ghosts existed, and we didn't want to encounter them. These behaviors imply that children have an ability to realize something bad exists. If they can't do that, they wouldn't act like that.

Secondly, the ultimate purpose of fairy tales is to tell children that if they do something good, it will pay off and if they do something bad, they will be punished. As I mentioned above, dragons are replaced by notorious people. The statement exactly matches the ultimate goal of fairy tales. If dragons wouldn't be punished or killed, it follows that even if we do something bad, we will never pay the price. This is not what fairy tales are trying to preach to children.



Finally, the interpretation of dragons convinced me to agree with the statement strongly. I mentioned above that dragons mean bad people. However, at the same time, dragons might represent general people, including nice and generous people. Even good people might be killed because, in this case, dragons seem to be an enemy for humans. They don't look like friends or companions. We misunderstand due to our stereotypes. We tend to judge based on appearance or first impression. I feel fairy tales also teach children that we must not judge something just based on its figure.

I know Chesterton's statement offers a lot of room for debate, but I am on the same side with Chesterton.

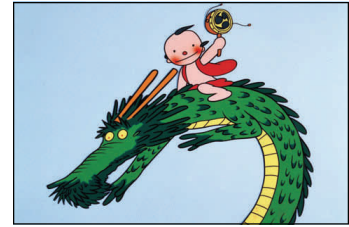
Sincerely,

Takayuki Nagase



Dear Mrs. Freel,

In class, I disagreed with the statement which said fairy tales tell that “dragons are bad to children.” I did not want dragons to be a symbol of evil. That might be because dragons are not evil in Asia as you wrote on blackboard. If the quotation that we learned in the classroom described “monsters,” I would say that monsters are evil. However, dragons are different. They symbolize an almighty creature in my mind.



I am going to explain why I got that image about dragons. When I was in kindergarten, I often watched the TV program called *Nihon Mukashibanasi* which means “tales of old Japan.” At the opening, a theme song was played and a little child would fly in the sky on the dragon. It looked so peaceful. That image gave me a good impression of dragons. Please look at the picture. In the story, the child is the son of the dragon. They are flying together in harmony.

Another reason that I think dragons are good is because of *Dragon Ball Z*. It is actually not a fairy tale but anime. However, it is so popular and every child of my generation has watched at least one episode. So, I guess it gave children a lot of influences as much as fairy tales. In the story, the main character, Gokuu, tries to gather 7 dragon balls. If he gets 7 dragon balls, the huge dragon appears and he grants only one wish to Gokuu. In the story, the dragon is almighty like a god. The dragon can revive even dead bodies.

These stories I watched when I was a child gave me the impression that the dragons are good. That is why I disagree with the statement in class.

Sincerely,

Yumi Koide

Dear Mrs. Freel:

In Asian or Eastern culture, human are always fearful of such natural phenomena. In olden times, the ancients hoped that they would have power to control thunder, lightning, rain and wind. They would swim in the water like a fish; fly in the sky like a bird, run on the road like a horse. And all of these characteristics are part of a dragon. So, an Asian dragon includes the head of camel, a neck of snake, an antler, the eyes of a turtle, fish scales, tiger paws, eagle claws and the ears of an ox. This is a composite structure and it means that a dragon has the head of ten thousand monsters.

Asian dragons are good and European dragons are bad. Why? Culture is the reason; different cultures cause different arts or esthetic understanding. Asian people regard dragons as a symbol of the spirit. Because of the geography, Asian ancients lived by rivers. In China, drought and inundation plagued humans and raised huge panic. Ordinary people could not change anything except to accept the reality of nature. Then the theme of Asian culture is obedient to fate and to respect unknown deities. So the omnipotent dragons became the hope and inner sustenance. A dragon is isolated, but it also attempts to let common people know that life is not fair. So as time past, a dragon y became the symbol of Eastern culture and spirit.



Western culture has two headstreams: the Ancient Greek civilization and the Hebrew civilization. The Ancient Greek civilization is based on intellectual enquiry and emancipates the mind. The Hebrew civilization emphasizes dedication, belief and worship. So the theme of western culture is that a powerful hero fights against nature and fate with a tenacious will. Dragons are always represented by supremacy. Therefore, humans defeat evil strength and get success at the end. The core of western culture is humanism and individualism. It finally caused humans to believe they can conquer nature. Dragon is only one of the great frustrations.

Fairy tales are often based on imagination, but imagination is from knowledge. Knowledge is a main part of culture and culture finally comes from people. So every fairy tale is just a representation of people's view.

Sincerely,  
Shan Yu

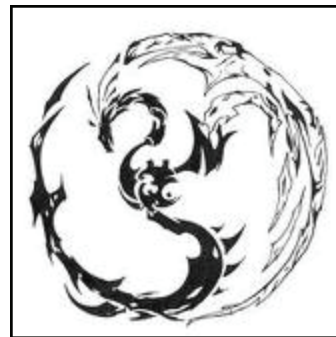
Dear Mrs. Freel,

Dragons have a dual personality as far as I am concerned. In other words, bad dragons can be a good thing according to some fairy tales in Asian cultures. That is why I cannot be on any side. Generally, dragons are described as a bad thing in western culture. In Asian culture, however, a dragon is a holy thing and a legendary creature, especially in Korea, that brings people good fortune.

Chesterton defined dragons as a bad thing so they can be killed. He is trying to say to people that they can overcome hardships they face by killing bad things. Fairy tales teach us how to defeat badness and evil things by being patient and displaying intelligence and how to take care of matters as they come. Chesterton wants people to know that bad things like dragons should be victims to show, especially, to children positive aspects.

Bad dragons can be changed to good dragons. At least in Asian fairy tales, sometimes bad things changed to good things by good people. It tells children that if we take care of bad things with true love and a sincere mind, it could make them inclined to trust people. On the other hand, in some fairy tales, dragons which were originally good became bad things because humans treated them badly. This story allows people to realize that if we treat people, whether they are bad or not, with a sincere mind, we can have good results. That is why I believe that dragons are two-faced.

Junghee, Cha (Nicole)



Dear Mrs. Freel,

When I was a child, my parents used to read me some books before I go to sleep. It was very fun to listen to fairy tales. At that time, I thought the purpose of fairy tales were for children to enjoy reading and give them some interests in reading books. However, now I think there are more meanings included in fairy tales, not only acquiring some interests in books but also teaching ethics and morals too. Moreover, they teach us about life.

The statement which Chesterton wrote tells clearly how fairy tales play a role in order to educate young children. In my opinion, fairy tales are the exercise books for children. The most important thing which children need to know at first is this world is created with morals and ethics. These two main parts are essential to create children's characters. If you don't teach them what is right and wrong, they might commit a crime in the future or cannot define the difference between justice and injustice. Therefore, we need to teach morals and ethics to tell children that there is right and wrong in this world by symbolizing good and bad as prince and monsters. The reason why they use monsters, like dragons, is it is very easy to understand they are evil and bad. Why? That is because they are very different from those evils that exist in this world; in other words, they are very weird. Although some dragons in fairy tales are good, it is easy to identify them as the symbol of bad things.

As I just mentioned, dragons or monsters represent bad things, but apart from those images they are also the symbol of difficulties or trials which we face in our lives. Think about a typical story in which there is a prince and princess. The prince tries to go to a castle to see the princess, but on the way to the castle, he meets with a dragon and he has to defeat it in order to meet

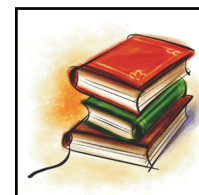
with princess. When we compare this with our lives, princess is a symbol we want to achieve in our lives and dragon is something we have to cope with. This kind of fairy tale teaches us there are so many things we have to manage during our lives, but once we pass them we can make progress. It is like a typical success story we hear, but it is a true story in our society.

So far, I talked about the role of western fairy tale, and now I would like to talk about some of the characteristics of Japanese fairy tales. One of the most interesting things in Japanese fairy tales is that gods come out in fairy tales. Moreover, there are some fairy tales that characters are model of gods because most of the fairy tales come from ancient Japanese myths. Probably, apart from bibles or books related to religions, gods will not come out in western fairy tales. In eastern fairy tales, usually gods are described as nature, for example a dragon as rain or river, because Japanese people used to think that there were gods in nature. It would be easier to understand if you imagine Greek gods like Zeus, Apollo, and Poseidon. The roles played in Japanese fairy tales are the same as those in western fairy tales, but I think Japanese fairy tales teach lessons to the children. The reason is Japanese people in former times thought it was important to teach children some lessons.

Fairy tales are important exercise books for young children to understand human life, society, ethics and morals. Also, once children get interested in books they will continue to read even after they grow up. Therefore, it is very important to read books to children if we want them to grow up as real adults, those who have knowledge, morals and ethics.

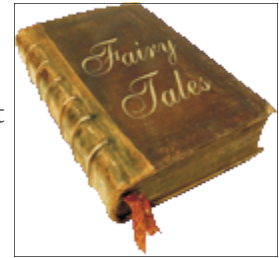
Sincerely,

Yoshiyuki Harima



Dear Professor Freel,

Dragons are viewed as an evil monster in Japan. Older people in Japan use a dragon as a way of discipline. When I was young, my mother would often say, “If you told a lie to somebody, a dragon would come down from the sky and eat you”. I was scared of dragons at that time, and corrected my wrong behaviors. Also, in many Japanese fairy tales, evil dragons come out to kill bad children. They are usually living in a deep mountain, and sometimes descend down to a village to hunt bad children. The dragon can only attack children who are doing something wrong such as lying or stealing other people’s property. Good children cannot be targeted.



This traditional fairy tale is closely related to the quote “Fairy tales don’t tell children that dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tells the dragon can be killed”-G.K Chesterton. In fairy tales, the main characters who represent “goodness” always defeat the dragons which represent “evil”. So I think this quote can be interpreted as a metaphor. He uses dragons to talk about the relationship between good and evil. I think the author wants to tell us that there is always a chance for happiness in the end. Every child can live happily after they defeat the evil “dragons”.

Sincerely,

Yusuke Ota

Dear Professor Corbett,

There are many messages in this quote by G. K. Chesterton. When I first read it, I didn't care what the dragon symbolized, because dragons for me are imaginary, but more importantly, I don't want to interfere with anyone's beliefs, and I also wanted to stay neutral. Being neutral is best for me because there are too many different symbols that dragons represent in other countries and it is hard to argue if I wanted to try. One of the examples is that dragons in China are lucky, but in other cultures they see dragons as killers or bad luck.

As I read the quote over and over, I came to the conclusion that G. K. Chesterton was trying to say that children are gullible and they easily believe in imaginary concepts. Fairy tales offer them images and show them how to deal with a dragon.

There was also an important message in this quote. Children can learn that "dragon" can be interpreted as being a metaphor for crazy people and killers, kidnappers who are looking to hurt young children. The quote offers the idea that though these people do exist in the world, the evil they seek to commit can be defeated; thus, it gives the reader the idea that they are also a part of the solution. They also understand they have the power to defeat the "bad people" in the world.

From,

Yuka Suzuka





Dear Professor Corbett,

Hi! Professor Corbett. When you talked about the quote from G.K. Chesterton in the class, I got two reactions from it. First, I thought that fairy tales created fantasy for children which also lied to children. Second, I thought the concept of the dragon is very different in America and China. In America, the dragon is evil creature, but in China, the dragon is a holy and untouchable creature.

Fairy tales lie to children by saying that dragons exist and can be killed. However, we know that dragons actually do not exist in real life. No scientist has ever found the evidence of dragons existing. Dragons are one of the creatures that we imagine. If dragons never existed how can one be killed? Fairy tales never clearly state that dragons exist but children are led to believe that dragons exists when they read these stories. Fairy tales not only lie to children but also created the fantasy by giving the impression that we are capable of almost everything. However, it is totally different in the real world; we need to work hard in order to get what we want. Sometimes working hard does not work because we do not have the ability to do whatever we wanted to do. The real world collapses the fantasy created.

On the other side, the concept of “dragon” is completely different in America and China. In China, we see dragons as one of the most powerful gods. In ancient China, people were not allowed to wear any clothing that had images of dragons except for the Emperor. Dragons also represent luck for us. However, when I moved to America, I realized that dragons are evil in America. At first I would not accept this idea but then I was okay with it because different cultures have different belief?

Although fairy tales lie to children it also creates fantasy which gives children a happy childhood. It could be a way that adults protect children from facing the real world too early. Different concept of the dragons let me understand that the world is mysterious. Different points of view not only happen in people but also in nations.

Sincerely,

Yu Nan Tang



Dear Patricia Corbett,

Mr. Chesterton's quote made it seem that every dragon is an evil creature that will pillage any village and do harm to any person it confronts. He's basically telling children that killing a dragon will be the only way we are all safe. Dragons are not as bad as Mr. Chesterton makes them seem. In many books, films and other cultures, dragons are considered the wisest and strongest creatures in fairy tales.

In medieval times, like American and British folklore, Dragons are known to kidnap fair maidens, burn villages down to the ground; and make mince meat out of brave soldiers. These creatures did not like being nice but other cultures like China, Japan, the Incas and others, dragons were worshiped as gods or guardians because they symbolize wisdom, longevity, good health, good luck, and protection. Children will come to learn not all dragons are violent or cruel, now that there are many authors and producers portraying dragons as adorable cute creatures like *Dragon*



*Tales* or adventurous, wise and protectors like the novel *Eragon*.

The original stereotype of Dragons has lessened over centuries since the medieval days. And now every child does not want to harm the good dragons, instead they basically want to read books about them and the people who travel with these wise and noble creatures. Not every dragon wants to hurt people, some want to tell tales of their own adventures and journey to the children, from there and back again.

Joyce Armijos

Dear Professor Corbett,

After reading the quote from G.K. Chesterton I feel as though it has a double meaning. When Chesterton says that dragons can be killed, I do not necessarily think he means dragons but bad things in general. By believing in something enough, a child can bring that thing to life in his imagination, like dragons or other monsters that usually terrorize people in fairy tales. By killing the monster, the author shows the child that he can overcome most obstacles with hard work and determination. The reason Chesterton uses fairy tales is to make the quote apply to a wider audience than just people that are currently children; he uses fairy tales to apply to everyone that once was a child because at some point during their childhood, everyone either reads or hears a fairy tale in which the main character of the story gets in to a bad situation.

Lynton Merriwether



Dear Mrs. Corbett,

Fairy tales usually start good and end good. Usually the main character in the fairy tale defeats the evil character. Once the evil is defeated the fairy tale would end “Happily Ever After”. Also fairy tale is a world where most people want to live because there is no pain or negative energy because it’s always defeated. G.K. Chesterton uses a metaphor in the quote. For example, “dragon” means evil and “killed” means defeated. A fairy tale would never tell a child that a dragon exists because children have an idea of evil already. “Fairy tale dragon can be killed” means that evil can be defeated and evil will come to an end.

Fairy tales only paint a good image by killing evil. In reality we have to face our struggles (evil) to get through. In most fairy tales, the main character has company to defeat evil. In the real world, we usually face our evil alone and have to fight it alone. Therefore, fairy tales are giving children the wrong message by giving examples that in order to face our evil (struggles) we need help from others. We can’t always get help because then we won’t learn the message or why the struggle was worth it.

Jennifer Martinez



Dear Pat,

After reading this quote it reminds me of when I was younger, how I used to believe in fairy tales. Okay, to be honest, I just believe fairy tales are like myths that are always told and people start to believe them. Fairy tales have been told so many times to a child they start to assume that “monsters” or “dragons” do exist. At some point of the fairy tale, mostly at the end of the story, every “monster” is killed. It’s like the writer is trying to give a message that everything will be fine. But eventually when the child grows older they realize that the whole “fairy tale” story has been all made up and it was just the writer’s imagination on paper.

For example, when I was younger my family constantly told me that Santa Claus did exist. Every Christmas we would lay out a cup of milk with cookies on the living room table. The next morning I would wake up and see that half of the cookies were gone and the cup of milk was empty. As I grew older I began to realize that Santa Claus was just all in my head. I noticed my mom would wrap all of the gifts while my nieces were sleeping, so I assume she did the same for me. Ever since I just stopped believing in Santa Claus.

Another event would be the tooth fairy. But the Dominican way was if you don’t pull your tooth out the tooth fairy will not bring you money. My mother would always tell me to pull it out because I was going to get a tooth behind it. So every time my tooth was pretty loose, I would always pull it out and give it to my mother so we could both put it under my pillow. I would always get a dollar, but something inside me told me it was my mother and the tooth fairy didn’t exist at all. The message writers are trying to give is for children to learn their moral values. If you do the right thing, everything will come out right for you.



Jasmine Martinez

Dear Patricia Corbett,

There is a deep meaning to the quote “ Fairytales don’t tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairytales tell children that dragons can be killed”- G.K Chesterton. The meaning of this quote in my opinion has nothing to do with dragons. I believe this quote shows you how subliminally we place negative ideas in the younger generation’s minds. Adults place in their children their own fears and biases. Fairy tales in the American culture mostly show dragons as an image of evil and danger. That one idea tells them to fear something that may not be a threat to any individual. It also automatically teaches them not to like things that are unknown or different from them. Fairy tales need to be developed in new ways not only to entertain but to show children to accept others different from themselves.

Yours truly,

Arisa James





Dear Professor Pat,

Many children grow up with fairy stories, even adults are the audience of fairy tales. Nonetheless, fairy tales typically feature such a magical character as dragon. G.K. Chesterton's quotation, in American culture, the dragon is an evil creature that should be destroyed. Children believe that dragons really exist. Colloquially, a dragon is wickedness, and an evil as monster.

However, a dragon has a very different meaning in Asian culture. Dragons traditionally symbolize power, strength, and good luck in Asian culture. Historically, a dragon has a horse's head and a snake's tail, and they are typically portrayed as long, scaled, serpentine creatures with four legs. Furthermore, in Chinese culture, dragons can control the moving of water, such as waterfalls, rivers, or seas. The dragon in Asian culture is similar to a god in American culture. Right now, Chinese like to use the word "dragon" to describe a person who has excellent and outstanding achievements. Also, in order to bring good luck back home, Chinese like to decorate their houses by using classic dragon pictures, fantastic models, or special art products. In other words, the dragon is not a shocking character in Asian culture.

In the modern century, fairy tales are altered so that they can be read to children. Fairy tales have been used in literature, films, and to examine the human condition. Americans have accepted the evil image of dragons. Because of the cultural difference, dragon has the opposite meaning to what it has for Asians. No matter which religion we follow, the word "dragon" may have unique significance in your mind. Professor Pat, am I right?

Sincerely,

Shuping (Ivy) Liu



Dear Ms. Corbett,

The G.K. Chesterton quotation: “fairy tales does not tell children that dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children that dragons can be killed” can be interpreted from many different angles. Dragons in fairytales are usually bad figures that are expected to be destroyed in order to receive peace. Children are taught about dragons and how to enact with them. This shows a similarity between the fairy world and the real world. The roles of dragons in the quote are a metaphor for evil; an aspect that humans themselves create. Evil in the real world is shown in many circumstances that humans deal with in life, and we are taught to fight against evil. We know that evil, bad behavior, and basically anything harmful to others can be solved by our acknowledgement. This metaphor relates to the quotation because the children are examples of us trying to make our world better. The dragons do exist for children, the same way evil exist in our world. We as a society try to inform ourselves about the evil in our world as the fairy tales are trying to warn the children. Power can be compared to dragons in fairytales: we in the real world know that power has a lot of input in our society and abuse of power can lead to destruction. This quotation is a good example of how we the people view our society and how we need to fight against the abuse of power. This quote gives a chance for open interpretations of the meaning of dragons. It allows me to analyze a different way of looking at the abuse of power in our world and comparing it to dragons in the fairy tale world.

Sincerely,

Joskary Diaz

