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Grade 6**

**The Department of Curriculum
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Instruction**

Literacy Support Parent Guide

The Roller Coaster and Dragon, Dragon

by Shelby Ostergaard (2021)



In this section of the Literacy Support Guide, we're reading anchor text, "The Roller Coaster," by Shelby Ostergaard and "Dragon, Dragon" by John Gardner. In "The Roller Coaster," a young boy learns an important lesson about fear while on a school trip. Ostergaard encourages readers to discuss the theme of Honor & Courage as it relates to the text. We are trying to answer this big question: "What does it mean to be brave?"

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Ways to Support your Child

1. Ask your child what literary texts: "The Roller Coaster" and the paired text, "Dragon, Dragon" are about?
2. **Parent Answer Keys**-Review written responses together

Related Media

Watch the following clips with your child at home.

1. ['How rollercoasters affect your body - Brian D. Avery'](#)
2. ['Why Do We Like Roller Coasters? | The Science and Psychology Behind Them'](#)

ANCHOR TEXT



Name: _____

Class: _____

The Roller Coaster

By Shelby Ostergaard
2021

Shelby Ostergaard is a writer and teacher based in Washington, D.C. As an educator, she is dedicated to creating texts that help kids understand the world around them. In "The Roller Coaster," a young boy learns how to confront his fears.

As you read, take notes on how Hudson's thoughts about riding the roller coaster change throughout the story.

[1] Hudson had been looking forward to this trip for weeks. This was more than the usual buzz and excitement about end-of-year trips. This was the eighth grade class trip! The last trip before high school. The best field trip, maybe the best *thing*, that middle school had to offer.

In sixth grade, they had gotten on a sweaty bus and gone to Medieval Times.¹ Watching a bunch of adults play pretend and put on a whole dinner tournament for them was way better than school, even if some of the food was really gross. And in seventh grade, they had all gone to the local pool, which was more fun. But still.

The eighth grade class trip was different. They got to go to Six Flags Great America,² home to more roller coasters and games than any place north of Florida. Eighth graders didn't have to spend the entire trip in groups and in lines. They got to wander around the park by themselves, free to do as they pleased for an entire school day. Considering that they were practically in high school, eighth graders didn't need as much supervision.

Hudson's best friend, Davion, had even convinced his older sister, Tasha, to chaperone.³ Tasha was already home for the summer for college. She was also, apparently, bored enough to agree to chaperone her little brother's field trip.



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1. Medieval Times is family dinner theatre featuring staged, medieval-style games, sword-fighting, and jousting.
2. Six Flags Great America is a theme park located in the Washington, D.C. area.
3. **Chaperone** (*noun*) a person who accompanies and looks after another person or group of people

[5] Tasha chaperoning was the key to them having a good time. First, she had a car, so Hudson, Davion, and another friend of their choosing, would get to ride with her instead of being stuck on a sweaty, smelly bus for an hour. Second, Tasha was nineteen. Therefore, she was more chill than a parent. She wouldn't try to stop them from blowing all their money on arcade games or eating too much cotton candy. Finally, and most importantly, Tasha was effortlessly cool. She was a singer, playing with a band at a regular gig⁴ every Saturday she was home. Hudson's family had gone to see her with Davion's family. She was fantastic. She'd even gotten Hudson's dad to get up and dance. Just the image of her up there, with her natural hair looking like a crown, effortlessly enjoying herself in front of all those people, made Hudson's palms sweat.

The truth was, Tasha made Hudson really nervous. But, in a good way.

And now, finally, after weeks of anticipation, they were at Six Flags Great America. Unfortunately, Hudson was really nervous. Not in a good way.

Hudson, Davion, Tasha, and their friends Trey and Justin were waiting in line for the Twisted Twister. In front of them, the coaster rose menacingly out of the ground. From the very beginning, the Twisted Twister lived up to its name. The black coaster tracks corkscrewed⁵ almost immediately. Then, the riders in the yellow cars were given a moment to catch their breath as they were cranked slowly to the top of a hill. But the relief didn't last long. As soon as the roller coaster cars were over the peak, the track twisted again. And again and again and again.

"I've heard that it turns so much that, by the time you get to the end, you've gone 1080 degrees around. That's like four full circles!" Davion said with a grin. He was holding cotton candy in his hand.

[10] Ordinarily, Hudson would have made a joke about how they taught math at school, Davion just didn't learn it. But, glancing at the Twisted Twister again, his stomach felt too tight to say anything at all.

"There's a zero-G⁶ roll and a twelve story⁷ drop!" Trey jumped in, excitedly reading information about the coaster from his phone. "The Twisted Twister is absolutely epic!"

Hudson did not agree. He personally felt that the Twisted Twister was terrifyingly huge. And horrifically twisted. And absolutely the scariest roller coaster he had ever seen.

But Hudson wasn't about to mention his fear to his friends. This was the eighth grade trip! He couldn't pretend to busy himself with arcade games and food, his friends would know what's up. They would tell him that he was acting like a little kid, too scared to go on the park's best ride. How is he ever going to be ready to go to high school with them next year? And Tasha? He'd seen her up on that stage. She wasn't scared of anything. She'd never understand.

He felt dorky and awkward standing there. He'd liked the outfit he put on this morning, but now his shorts

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4. "Gig" is slang for a live musical performance.
 5. **Corkscrew** (*verb*) to move or twist in a spiral motion
 6. Zero gravity, or zero-G, is a state of weightlessness.
 7. A "story" refers to the number of levels or floors in a building.

looked childish next to all of his friend's jeans. They all looked older and cooler than him. Davion's shoes matched his hat and they looked stylish against his dark skin. Trey and Justin were both wearing jerseys. They looked like high schoolers. Hudson looked like a second grader.

- [15] The sea of people between them and the Twisted Twister was steadily shrinking. Hudson smiled weakly as his friends cheered when they counted just three rope barriers to go. Then two. Then one. And then they were at the stairs. Davion, Justin, and Trey were nearly jumping up and down with excitement. Hudson was so scared he could feel it down to his toes. He started to worry he might throw up.

Then they were at the front. The people just ahead of them strapped in. Hudson was so scared now that he almost said something. He could feel his heart pounding. But then he saw that a little kid, who looked no older than ten, was excitedly grinning as he sat in the coaster seat right in front of them. And he swallowed his words.

"1080 degrees divided by 360 degrees is *three*. So that's three full circles," Tasha said firmly, looking over at her little brother. Her hands were in the pockets of her shorts, and she carried a backpack full of reusable water bottles for the boys. "What math are they teaching you at that school?" She rolled her eyes.

With an incredibly loud whoosh, the group in front of them was off. Hudson could hear them screaming, but he couldn't tell if the screams were because of delight or terror.

Their car pulled up and the barriers glided smoothly up. Justin, Trey, and Davion rushed forward, whooping. Hudson felt his legs lock up. He couldn't move. The image of the roller coaster car seemed to swim in front of his eyes. All he could think about was the roller coaster twisting off the track, spinning off into the sky. And he knew, suddenly, that he could not do it. He was too afraid.

- [20] Without a word, Hudson turned and bolted. He pushed past the crowd and ran out of the line. Their faces blurred in front of him. He could hear people's upset exclamations, but he didn't care. He just kept moving.

He'd made it down the stairs before he stopped to take a breath. He was still in the line, standing next to two families he didn't know. He took another, deeper breath. His heart was racing. He wiped his sweaty palms on his pants and ran a hand through his hair. Now that his fear and panic had started to fade, embarrassment was creeping in. *Of course the roller coaster wasn't going to fall off the tracks*, he thought. *The park wouldn't be allowed to operate it if that was a problem*. He put his hands in his pockets, shifting his feet.

He couldn't go back. What would he even say? The only thing more embarrassing than getting scared once was getting scared twice. Unsure of what else to do, he kept walking, past the seas of people. He sat down on a bench near the bathrooms and put his head in his hands.

"Hey!" He looked up. Somehow, Tasha was standing in front of him. He looked around for his friends, but Tasha was alone. "Are you okay?" she asked.

"Oh, uh, yeah, I just started feeling, um, sick," Hudson responded.

- [25] "Sick?"

"Yeah. Too much cotton candy. You know."

"Mmm," Tasha said, sitting down next to him. "I get that... but, you know, it looked to me like you were a little

nervous about getting on the ride.”

“Nervous? Of course not!” Hudson said, shaking his head. “I was fine!”

“You know, it’s okay if you were scared. Everyone gets scared,” she said.

[30] “Yeah, right,” Hudson muttered. “You don’t. I’ve seen you on that stage, you’re fearless.”

“You think I’m fearless?” Tasha said with a laugh. Her eyebrows were raised as she looked at him. “Are you kidding? I get such bad stage fright!”⁸

“Yeah, right,” Hudson said. He rolled his eyes. “You don’t need to make that up to make me feel better. You couldn’t get in front of that many people if you had stage fright.”

“I’m not making it up! I get so scared before shows that I can’t eat for like two hours before we go on stage.”

“What? But you... look like you aren’t scared of anything up there.”

[35] “I’m glad it looks like I’m not scared,” Tasha said. “But that’s not true. I get really scared and nervous before I perform. But singing is important to me. And I want to share what I love with people. So, even though I’m scared, I do it anyway. I push through the fear and just get up and do it.”

“I wish I could be brave like you are,” Hudson said, surprising himself with his honesty.

“I think you could be,” Tasha said. “Let me ask you something. Is it important to you to get on the roller coaster?”

Hudson thought about it for a minute.

“Yeah,” he said finally. “It is. I’ve been looking forward to this field trip for weeks. And I want to be able to look back and remember having fun with my friends. I don’t want to look back and remember running away and sitting alone by the bathrooms.”

[40] “Well... then I think we should get back in line. But if you decide you don’t want to, that’s okay too. I just want you to make a decision based on what you want and not what you are scared of. Everyone gets scared, but brave people don’t let fear stop them.”

Just then, he saw his friends coming towards them, big grins on all three of their faces. “That was awesome!” Davion said. “Are you okay? Why did you run off?”

“I got a little nervous. But I’m okay now. And I really want to ride the coaster. Would you guys mind waiting in line again?”

8. Stage fright refers to the nervousness a person feels before or during an appearance with an audience.

"I would LOVE to ride that thing again!" Davion said, and they charged off. Tasha stood next to Hudson as they waited in line this time. She smiled at him every time he looked over at her. He felt encouraged. When they got to the stairs, his stomach started to clench⁹ again. But he screwed¹⁰ his eyes up and made himself take each step forward. He could feel himself wanting to bolt again when their turn came. But he stood his ground and took deep breaths. And he got in the car.

They lowered the safety harness on top of him. He could feel his palms sweating. Tasha was sitting next to him and she looked over and smiled, giving him a thumbs up.

[45] WHOOSH! Almost without warning, the ride started. It felt like he'd left his heart (and maybe his stomach) back on the loading platform. He screwed his eyes up tight, peeking out of the tiniest slit. He did not want to be surprised by the first turn. He tightened his grip, bracing himself. *Oh no, oh no, oh no.*

And then... they whipped into the first corkscrew turn. Before he knew it, Hudson's feet were above his head. He was flying and he heard himself scream as delight spilled out of him. After so many hours filled with fear, for the first time that day, Hudson felt weightless. And it felt amazing.

When they got out, Tasha had them all pose for a picture by the ride's sign. Hudson's grin was so big that it looked like it would break his face. He put a copy of the picture in his locker door. It stayed there through all four years of high school, a reminder of what was more important to him than fear.

"The Roller Coaster" by Shelby Ostergaard. Copyright © 2021 by CommonLit, Inc. This text is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

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9. **Clench** (*verb*) to contract or tighten a part of the body
 10. **Screw** (*verb*) to tightly wind

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which statement best expresses a theme of the text?
 - A. Roller coasters are very scary.
 - B. Being fearless means never being afraid.
 - C. Embarrassment always comes with fear or being afraid.
 - D. Fear should not stop you from doing what is important to you.

2. What does the word "peak" mean as used in paragraph 8?
 - A. the highest point
 - B. the sharpest point
 - C. the top of a mountain
 - D. the bottom of a mountain

3. Which detail from the story best supports the idea that facing a challenge was important to Hudson?
 - A. "Hudson had been looking forward to this trip for weeks." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "'You think I'm fearless?' Tasha said with a laugh." (Paragraph 31)
 - C. "'I wish I could be brave like you are.' Hudson said, surprising himself with his honesty." (Paragraph 36)
 - D. "He put a copy of the picture in his locker door. It stayed there through all four years of high school, a reminder of what was more important to him than fear." (Paragraph 47)

4. How does paragraph 40 help develop the plot of the story?
 - A. It explains why Hudson thinks Tasha is fearless.
 - B. It explains why Hudson decides to overcome his fear of the ride.
 - C. It clarifies why Hudson is afraid of going on the roller coaster.
 - D. It describes what Hudson learns about being afraid.

5. How do Hudson's different reactions to the roller coaster contribute to the theme of the story? Use details from the text to support your answer.

PAIRED TEXT



Name: _____

Class: _____

Dragon, Dragon

By John Gardner

1962

John Gardner (1933-1982) was an American author, poet, and professor who was influenced by medieval literature. "Medieval" refers to a period in Western history, namely in Europe, that spans from the 5th century into the 15th. It is sometimes called "The Middle Ages." Gardner wrote with the purpose of encouraging his readers to always do and be better. "Dragon, Dragon" combines medieval fantasy and modern humor to teach a lesson. As a dragon ravages the kingdom, who will step up to defeat him, and what will it take? As you read, take notes on character traits of the cobbler's sons and how the author uses them to develop the plot of "Dragon, Dragon."

- [1] There was once a king whose kingdom was plagued¹ 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.²



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Every time there was a full moon the dragon came out of his lair and ravaged³ 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 clappers⁴ from all the church bells and sprung every bear trap for miles around so the bears could wander wherever they pleased.

- [5] 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.

1. **Plague (verb)** to continually cause trouble or distress to (someone or something)
2. "At wit's end" is a phrase that means puzzled, frustrated, and ready to give up.
3. **Ravage (verb)** to damage or harm very badly
4. a small piece inside of a bell that makes it ring

"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 cobbler⁵ 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.

[10] 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.

"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."

[15] "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 deuce⁶ it was for. It went something like —

Bimble,

Wimble,

Cha, Cha

CHOOMPF!

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

5. a person who makes or repairs shoes and other leather goods

6. a phrase that expresses confusion, frustration, or surprise

"Oh dear," said the wizard.

[20] "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.

[25] "Oh yes," said the king. "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give the princess' 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?"

"In that case," said the king, "I'll offer the princess' 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."

[30] "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.

[35] The cobbler's eldest son beamed with pride, and the second eldest looked at him enviously.⁷ 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."

7. **Enviously** (*adverb*) feeling or showing a desire to have what someone else has

"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 something like that to the dragon, he will eat me up in an instant. The way to kill a dragon is to out-fox⁸ him." And keeping his opinion to himself, the eldest son set forth on his quest.

[40] 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."

[45] "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.

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

8. a term meaning to defeat or trick someone by being more intelligent or clever

"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 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?"

[50] 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.

[55] "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.

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.

[60] 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.⁹

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.

[65] "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 minutes passed and no one came thundering in. The dragon frowned, puzzled, and was tempted to peek out. However, reflecting¹⁰ 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 craned¹¹ 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.¹² "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 ha 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

9. a farm machine used to dig into, break up, and turn over soil

10. **Reflect (verb)** to think seriously and carefully about

11. **Crane (verb)** to stretch toward something

12. **Flabbergasted (adjective)** feeling or appearing very shocked or surprised

and laughing.

- [70] 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 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.

- [75] "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?"

- [80] "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.

"Dragon, Dragon" from DRAGON, DRAGON AND OTHER TALES by John Gardner. Copyright © 1975 by Boskydell Artists, Ltd. Reprinted by permission of Georges Borchardt, Inc., for the Estate of John Gardner.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which statement best expresses the moral of the story?
 - A. Be kind to elders who may have forgotten things in their old age.
 - B. Trust in your own abilities over the opinions of others.
 - C. Having confidence is more useful than being humble.
 - D. Listen to the wisdom and suggestions of your elders.

2. The characterization of the dragon in paragraphs 2-5 contribute to the story by —
 - A. revealing that the dragon is greedy.
 - B. describing how the dragon is a nuisance.
 - C. explaining why the dragon is angry with the village.
 - D. showing that the dragon only attacks when he is bored.

3. What does the word "tyrant" most likely mean as used in paragraph 14?
 - A. a trusted ruler
 - B. an unfair ruler
 - C. a powerful wizard
 - D. a talented craftsman

4. Which detail from the story provides the best clue for the meaning of the word "reflecting?" (Paragraph 67)
 - A. The dragon wants to peek out but decides to be patient.
 - B. The dragon is not paying attention when the youngest son approaches.
 - C. The dragon pretends not to be paying attention when the youngest son approaches.
 - D. The dragon is bored because none of the cobbler's sons provide a great enough challenge.

5. Reread paragraph 72. How does this paragraph most contribute to the story's theme?
 - A. It shows that the youngest son is cleverer than his father.
 - B. It shows that the youngest son values his father and his advice.
 - C. It shows that the youngest son cannot control his anger, much like the dragon.
 - D. It shows that the youngest son is worried about another dragon seeking revenge.

6. How does the characterization of the cobbler's youngest son develop the plot of the story? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

ANSWER KEYS



Answer key > The Roller Coaster

by Shelby Ostergaard ● 2021

1. Which statement best expresses a theme of the text?

6.RL.KID.2 ^

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary.

- A. Roller coasters are very scary.
- B. Being fearless means never being afraid.
- C. Embarrassment always comes with fear or being afraid.
- D. **Fear should not stop you from doing what is important to you.**

2. What does the word "peak" mean as used in paragraph 8?

6.RL.CS.4 ^

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including allusions to other texts.

- A. **the highest point**
- B. the sharpest point
- C. the top of a mountain
- D. the bottom of a mountain

3. Which detail from the story best supports the idea that facing a challenge was important to Hudson?

6.RL.CS.4 ^

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including allusions to other texts.

- A. "Hudson had been looking forward to this trip for weeks." (Paragraph 1)
- B. "'You think I'm fearless?' Tasha said with a laugh." (Paragraph 31)
- C. "'I wish I could be brave like you are.' Hudson said, surprising himself with his honesty." (Paragraph 36)
- D. **"He put a copy of the picture in his locker door. It stayed there through all four years of high school, a reminder of what was more important to him than f (Paragraph 47)**

Help

4. How does paragraph 40 help develop the plot of the story?

6.RL.CS.5 ^

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

- A. It explains why Hudson thinks Tasha is fearless.
- B. It explains why Hudson decides to overcome his fear of the ride.**
- C. It clarifies why Hudson is afraid of going on the roller coaster.
- D. It describes what Hudson learns about being afraid.

5. How do Hudson's different reactions to the roller coaster contribute to the theme of the story? Use details from the text to support your answer.

6.RL.KID.2 ^

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary.

Student answers will vary; while Hudson is initially excited to attend the eighth grade trip, he is surprised by his fear of a roller coaster and must work through his fear in order to ride it with his friends. Hudson, like many students his age, is looking forward to his eighth grade class trip to an amusement park. The reader learns this trip is important to Hudson for a number of reasons, including that it is the last trip before high school: "This was the eighth grade class trip! The last trip before high school. The best field trip, maybe the best thing, that middle school had to offer" (Paragraph 1). Throughout the story, Hudson's fear of riding one of the roller coasters grows, even though he wants to seem brave and make memories with his friends. Hudson's fear causes him to run away from the roller coaster. Tasha, his friend's sister, finds him and explains how she deals with her fear each time she is on stage performing: "'I'm glad it looks like I'm not scared,' Tasha said. 'But, that's not true. I get really scared and nervous before I perform. But, singing is important to me.'" (Paragraph 35). Hudson then realizes why the trip was important to him: "'I want to be able to look back and remember having fun with my friends. I don't want to look back and remember running away and sitting alone by the bathrooms.'" (Paragraph 39). When he rides the roller coaster, Hudson learns that pushing past fear is possible, and he is able to make lasting memories with his friends.

Answer key > Dragon, Dragon

by John Gardner ● 1962

1. Which statement best expresses the moral of the story? 6.RL.KID.2 ^

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary.

- A. Be kind to elders who may have forgotten things in their old age.
- B. Trust in your own abilities over the opinions of others.
- C. Having confidence is more useful than being humble.
- D. Listen to the wisdom and suggestions of your elders.**

2. The characterization of the dragon in paragraphs 2-5 contribute to the story 6.RL.KID.3 ^
by —

Describe how the plot of a story or drama unfolds, as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

- A. revealing that the dragon is greedy.
- B. describing how the dragon is a nuisance.**
- C. explaining why the dragon is angry with the village.
- D. showing that the dragon only attacks when he is bored.

3. What does the word "tyrant" most likely mean as used in paragraph 14? 6.RL.CS.4 ^

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including allusions to other texts.

- A. a trusted ruler
- B. an unfair ruler**
- C. a powerful wizard
- D. a talented craftsman

4. Which detail from the story provides the best clue for the meaning of the word "reflecting?" (Paragraph 67) 6.RL.KID.2 ^

Describe how the plot of a story or drama unfolds, as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

- A. **The dragon wants to peek out but decides to be patient.**
- B. The dragon is not paying attention when the youngest son approaches.
- C. The dragon pretends not to be paying attention when the youngest son approaches.
- D. The dragon is bored because none of the cobbler's sons provide a great enough challenge.

5. Reread paragraph 72. How does this paragraph most contribute to the story's theme? **6.RL.CS.5** ^

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

- A. It shows that the youngest son is cleverer than his father.
- B. It shows that the youngest son values his father and his advice.**
- C. It shows that the youngest son cannot control his anger, much like the dragon.
- D. It shows that the youngest son is worried about another dragon seeking revenge.

6. How does the characterization of the cobbler's youngest son develop the plot of the story? Use evidence from the story to support your answer. **6.RL.KID.3** ^

Describe how the plot of a story or drama unfolds, as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

Student answers will vary. The author uses the characterization of the cobbler's youngest son to both move the plot forward and support the story's theme. When it's the cobbler's youngest son's turn to slay the dragon, a clear pattern has already been created. Both of his older brothers have tried to slay the dragon and failed. The characterization of the cobbler's youngest son both moves the story along and supports the theme of listening to one's elders. The author describes the cobbler's youngest son as a humble young man who values the advice of his elders. Unlike his older brothers, the youngest son is not confident, and he is not eager to confront the dragon. In fact, he was "very upset and nervous, and he wished he had never been born" (Paragraph 59). In the same paragraph, the author tells us that while the boy is not clever or strong like his brothers, he is "a decent, honest boy who always minded his elders." This characterization tells the reader that unlike his brothers who are overconfident in their skills, the youngest son is humble. Because of this, he actually listens to his father's advice (Paragraph 66), and he follows it by reciting the poem to the dragon (Paragraphs 68-69). In the end, the youngest son defeats the dragon, becomes rich, gets to marry the princess, and earns half of the kingdom (Paragraphs 78-79). This shows that being humble and listening to one's elders truly pays off.