



How to Train Your Dragon learning activities

Age 8-11

CFE Second Level

Resource created by Linda
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Cross-curricular activities to
help pupils explore *How to
Train Your Dragon* by
Cressida Cowell

scottishbooktrust.com



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Book Trust**
inspiring readers and writers

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About this resource

This resource contains cross-curricular activity suggestions to help you explore the novel *How to Train Your Dragon* by Cressida Cowell. The resource has been produced to help you get the most out of our online [Authors Live event with Cressida](#), but you can use them at any point to engage pupils with *How to Train Your Dragon*.

How to Train Your Dragon class activities

Design your own dragon

LIT 2-20a, LIT 2-21a, LIT 2-24a, LIT 2-26a, HWB 2-11a, MNU 2-20a, MNU 2-20b, MTH 2-21a, EXA 2-04, EXA 2-06, EXA 2-07a

Design dragons to suit your personality or to meet particular criteria, e.g. design a set of dragons that focus on particular learning power or skill. This could be concentration, perseverance, or focus, to name a few. Create images showing specific attributes that help the dragons to be better at that power. Perhaps the concentration dragon has scales that create a protective layer that blocks out distractions! Develop these into a whole-school project with each year group contributing to the designs and attributes.

Individuals could design dragons to their own specifications and character types. Fact sheets and descriptions can be made to create posters or a class yearbook of dragons. Back-stories can be written: how the dragon became your pet and what it got up to with you in its early life. Develop some spreadsheets to be able to collate information on the dragons for a database, graphs and charts. The novel has pages with a particular style of fact sheet that you could replicate.

Make a set of Top Trumps for the class dragons and add in the dragons from the book. What properties or attributes do you think are important? Which properties are measurable this way? You can download a template for your cards, and receive free packs of Top Trumps cards, from the [Top Trumps Schools Club website](#) by Winning Moves.

You could also create dragons as part of your art programme. Look at dragons as they are portrayed in art from ancient times to present day – has it changed particularly? There is so much you can do here from the dragons of Chinese culture to those of the Vikings, through medieval times and beyond. Make up a PowerPoint with different images and allow your learners free rein. There are online tutorials if you wanted to be structured, or to act as a starting point. Remember to be very specific about the skills to be learned.

Finally, you could look at the opportunities to create 3D dragon art using recycled materials and raise awareness in sustainability at the same time. This could be a large-scale piece made by the whole class, or a home learning project. Pupils could get inspiration for their dragon sculptures from the [Tower of London dragon](#) and [dragon statues around the world](#).

Bashyball TCH 2-09, TCH 2-11a, LIT 2-20a, LIT 2-21a, LIT 2-24a, LIT 2-26a

Bashyball is a game referred to in the book - mainly to say Hiccup isn't very good at it – but we don't find out much more about it. Have your class reinvent the game

creating rules and tactics etc. Have them write instructions to help others play this game. Could it be made into a board or table top game?

Hiccup and his family LIT 2-26a, ENG 2-31a

In the novel we are introduced to lots of characters but we hear very little of their individual families. We know they are all part of the Hairy Hooligan tribe and later in the book we are introduced to the Meathead tribe. Choose a character, perhaps Dogsbreath, Fishlegs, Snotlout, Clueless, Speedifist or Wartihog. Give them families with a background, a home, siblings, grandparents, etc. Present all the information on large sheets and have a 'Meet the Hooligans' wall display. This activity could be developed this further by using these characters to write the 'lost chapter' where your character gets his own adventure with his dragon.

Alternatively, develop a whole new family, one with a strong female character at the centre. This is done in the film but not in the book.

Dragon training manual LIT 2-20a, LIT 2-21a, LIT 2-24a, LIT 2-26a

Hiccup tries to study Professor Yobbish's book on training dragons, but regrettably it's rather brief! It has an inviting front cover, a dedication page, a library label page and a page about the author. The book begins in earnest with Chapter the First (and the Last). It lasts for one page! Professor Yobbish tells us that the way to train a dragon is to YELL AT IT! Needless to say, Hiccup is a little frustrated by this. He works on his own list entitled 'Dragon Motivation' which includes gratitude, fear, greed, vanity, revenge, jokes and riddling talk.

Make a more comprehensive training manual using Hiccup's list for starters, expanding it with specific activities to cover each category. It would be good to make this more visual with illustrated directions and diagrams.

Later in the novel, the tribe needs advice on how to get rid of the giant sea monsters and Stoick the chief is appalled to see the book is so poor on advice. At the end of the novel he writes a letter of complaint to Professor Yobbish. We don't see a reply from the professor. Write a response for him justifying his actions.

Stylistic devices ENG 2-12a, LIT 2-16a, ENG 2-31a

Cressida Cowell uses a number of different stylistic writing devices to enhance our reading experience. She makes use of italics for Dragonese, capitalisation for emphasis, fact files and other inserts. Can your learners identify these and their purpose?

Pupils could also have a go at using these devices and experiment with Dragonese to write a short story from Toothless' point of view.

Drop everything, let's Viking! SOC 2-01a, SOC 2-02a, SOC 2-04a, SOC 2-06a

Have a 'drop everything, let's viking!' day where all your learning and activities are based around the Vikings. There are plenty of research opportunities here as well as collaboration with other classes or year groups. For example, you could share these [10 facts about Vikings](#) from NatGeo Kids and the [BBC Bitesize pages on Vikings](#).

For STEM activities, you could run a [Viking Animation Project using Scratch](#), or challenge the children to [design their own Viking ship](#).

How to Train Your Dragon word games LIT 2-21a

Hold a *How to Train Your Dragon* word tournament using games like scrabble, Boggle or Bananagrams. All words used must be linked to the novel and just for once, proper names would be allowed! This could be a challenge across the upper years and take place over the course of a few days/weeks to increase learners' skills in these literacy games. Like the Top Trumps, Winning Moves provides sets of Bananagrams for free when you register for their [Bananagrams School Club](#), although they do have a limit each year and close the actual challenge once they have reached their subscription maximum.

Dragon folklore RME 2-07a, RME 2-09b, LIT 2-25a, LIT 2-06a

Select different periods in history and different areas of the world. Find out about the myths and legends about dragons which were believed by people at these times. Develop a portfolio of dragon myths and beliefs and use these to write dragon tales of your own. Look at the illustrations in medieval texts and use these to inspire the illustration of your tales.

Make a long wall display, Scottish Tapestry style with sections for each dragon tale; either the established tales you have researched or the originals you have made.

The [Encyclopedia Dramatica website](#) and the [KidsKonnnect dragon facts](#) can help with this research.

Making use of your local library

The twelve book series LIT 2-01a, LIT 2-11a, ENG 2-12a

There are twelve books in Cressida Cowell's *How to Train Your Dragon* series. It's unlikely that many schools will have copies of all twelve but your local library should be able to help you with this. Pair up your class to peer read-and-share one or other of the novels. Wrap them all up in paper and have the pairs select by lucky dip or

raffle ticket. Alternatively, pin up a list of all the books and have the pairs sign up to the title of their choice.

The pairs can then be given class time to read their book giving regular updates to the rest of the class along the way. Notes can be taken as they read to allow them the opportunity to develop a report of their novel in a style of their choice once they have finished. The library or librarians could be involved by encouraging the pairs to report back to them. The library may agree to you creating a display about the novels. You may wish to leave the very last book in the series to be a whole class experience for 'closure'!

How to Train Your Dragon franchise

How to Train Your Dragon is an extremely successful franchise with 12 books, a film trilogy, 4 short films, a television series, a graphic novel and even a stage play/musical. Ask your library if they can help you by lending your class any of these other resources to compare and enjoy!

Readathon LIT 2-01a

Arrange a readathon at your library where different classes attend the library for ½ hour stints reading aloud the text as far along as they can before passing on to the next class until the novel is finished. Treat it as a Guinness World Record style event and challenge other schools to beat you! Investigate the other [reading records](#) held - could you re-enact any of them on a mini scale?

Books and afternoon tea EXA 2-01a, ENG 2-03a, LIT 2-06a

Hold an afternoon tea event where your class will take part in an intergenerational activity by reading to the older members of your community. This may need to take place in your local residential Home but the library may be able to help you with resources.

Serve tea and scones and reading aloud. This wouldn't have to be *How to Train Your Dragon*, it could be some of the children's classics which may appeal more to your listeners and trigger some very happy memories for them. Your class could research appropriate reading materials. They could complete some surveys of their potential listeners to see which children's books they would like to revisit.

Whole school activities

Film afternoon SOC 2-22a, HWB 2-14a

Hold a film afternoon for the whole school and watch the film together. Later use this experience for vertical learning activities such as artwork for corridor displays, written film reviews, blogs and vlogs. Classes could write a report about the similarities and differences between the book and the film.

Have classes use the event as an enterprise project organising healthy snacks to sell. The money raised could perhaps be donated to charity.

Dragon art EXA 2-05a

Hold a 'dragon doodle day' where every class is invited to join in: roll out long sheets of paper the length of your hall, or corridors, and provide pens and colouring pencils. Agree a set of rules e.g. avoid drawing over someone else's doodle, venture only kind comments on another doodle and ensure all doodles are socially acceptable. If the weather is suitable, take the doodle outside with chalks instead and cover the whole playground!

Reading on... LIT 2-01a, LIT 2-11a, ENG 2-12a

Who else writes about dragons? Select other novels with dragon related storylines and have a dragon-fest of reading. Older classes could select passages to read to younger classes. Compare the treatment of dragons in the different novels, and in particular, the relationship between humans and dragons, for example:

- *The Dragonsitter* by Josh Lacey
- *Dragons at Crumbling Castle* by Terry Pratchett
- *The Dragon Stoorworm* by Theresa Breslin
- *Tell Me a Dragon* by Jackie Morris
- *Dragon Rider* by Cornelia Funke
- *The Boy Who Grew Dragons* by Andy Shepherd
- *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* or *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* by J.K. Rowling
- *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* by Kelly Barnhill

You could also check out this [list of books about dragons from BookTrust](#) for more inspiration!