



## **Garden of the Purple Dragon**

**by Carole Wilkinson**

**The second book in the award-winning *Dragonkeeper* trilogy**

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

Readership: Mature mid primary – mid secondary

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

Genre: Historical fantasy

Setting: Ancient China in the Han Dynasty.

### **Awards**

Winner WA Young Readers Book Award; Shortlisted 2006 Qld Premier's Literary Awards; Shortlisted 2006 COOL Award; Shortlisted 2006 Kids Own Literature Awards (KOALA); Shortlisted 2006 YABBA

### **Rationale**

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

### **How to use**

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

Suggested answers and page references are included where appropriate.

These teacher notes can also be used in conjunction with the notes on *Dragon Moon*.

### **About *Garden of the Purple Dragon***

Ping is rearing Kai, the purple dragon at Black Dragon Pool in the mountains. She feels responsible and alone as she keeps him safe from hunters and necromancers, collects insects for him to eat and tries to develop his speech. As Kai grows he learns to shape-change, and he saves Ping from the Necromancer by pushing her down a well. When Ping is arrested by the imperial guards, Kai is in the shape of a soup ladle. Ping feeds him her blood until he is discovered and becomes a favourite of the Emperor, Liu Che. Ping instigates a search for the Dragonkeeper families which seems to find her successor but leaves her injured and abandoned. Her second-sight leads her to her mother but she returns to Ming Yang Lodge for Kai, whose blood is being used as an elixir of immortality. The number five features in the story and the 'power of five' friends helps Ping defeat the Necromancer.



ENGLISH

**Table of Contents** Before reading the novel, write an imagined plot outline using the chapter headings. Then select one heading to focus on and predict and write a plot outline in depth of that chapter.

**Character Profile** At the start, Ping is weighed down by her responsibilities and loneliness. She doesn't think she is a good dragonkeeper but then realises, 'Caring for him wasn't a burden. It was a pleasure, a privilege.', page 71. Write a character profile of Ping, including her feelings and actions.

**Dragons in Literature and Mythology** Find examples of dragons in literature and mythology. Chart the different attributes of dragons, including

- Physical descriptions
- Abilities, such as fire-breathing, flying
- Personalities
- Relationships with humans

Then make up your own dragon, using some of these attributes, plus other attributes of your invention.

**Significant Numbers**

1. How are numbers used and important in the story? How is the number five important? Think of some other significant sets of five.
2. Read page 156, then make up a poem or clues leading to a prediction based around numbers.

(Teacher tip: One is for the universe, two is for the forces known as yin and yang – equal and opposite, they hold the universe together ...page 156. Five is for five elements and for five friends, pages 316, 321, the five-coloured thread, page 130, and the earth of five colours, page 190.)

**Speech** Ping sounds like a youngster. Find examples. What do you think about Kai using the word, 'okay', pages 212, 304, 349. Does it suit him? Is it appropriate? Choose another word he could use instead and explain why it may be preferable.

**Symbols** As individuals or in groups, select three symbols from the book, such as dragons, fire, garden, friendship, colours, blood, immortality ... Respond to the symbols and represent each using a different medium. One of these must be the medium of writing. Others could include movement such as drama or dance; or art, such as collage.



## SOSE/HISE

**Han Dynasty** Research the Han Dynasty and present findings. Compare and contrast with other ancient Chinese Dynasties. See also the author's notes at the end of the novel, and her website [www.carolewilkinson.com.au](http://www.carolewilkinson.com.au)

**Chinese Writing** Chinese characters for reading and writing are described on pages 139-141. Try writing some of these. See if a guest knowledgeable in this area can visit the classroom and demonstrate these and others. Otherwise, research what they look like and see how your attempts match the written description.

The author uses the following website: <http://www.mandarintools.com>

**Tower of Babel** Read the report of the tower falling on pages 176 - 177. This scene may be inspired by the Biblical Tower of Babel. Find out what this was and what happened to the people who built it. Compare and contrast with what happened in the book.

## SCIENCE

### Silkworms

1. Read pages 216-217, 221-2, describing silkworms.
2. Read the poem The Silkworms by Douglas Stewart.
3. Show the lifecycle of the silkworm in pictorial form.
4. Create flow charts showing the process of making silk and silk products.
5. Make cocoons from cottonwool, cotton etc
6. Make a display using mulberry leaves and mulberries, if in season, silkworms or their eggs or cocoons, threads of silk and silk products (such as silk scarves)

### The Liver

1. Read about the function of the liver in the book.
2. Research its scientific / physiological function.
3. Label a diagram of the human body, showing the liver, ribs and heart (and any other body part mentioned in the book).

**Materials** Several materials are mentioned in the book, such as bronze and iron, page 130. Research how these were discovered and their uses in the past and present.



## CREATIVE ARTS

**Bamboo Book** After reading page 135, make a bamboo book from thin strips of bamboo bound together side by side (or plywood or cardboard). Write Chinese characters on the strips (see 'English – Chinese Writing').

**Garden** The Emperor is so pleased with his new dragon that he decides to name it after him, 'The Garden of the Purple Dragon', page 130. Make miniature gardens, based on the descriptions of the garden in the book. Cuttings of real plants could be placed in soil or they could be made of craft materials. If possible, use 'earth of five colours', page 190; or simply, five colours in total in the garden. Make the Rustling Bamboo Pavilion by planting a spiral of bamboo canes (or equivalent) with a narrow path through them, pages 138, 101. Bells are also heard in the garden. Attach some bells to the miniature gardens, or nearby to catch the breeze.

(Teacher tip: There are other references to the garden on pages 84, 95-101, 120 -124.)

**Dragon Model** Create a large scale stylised or symbolic representation or model of Kai. Read pages 332 – 333 and elsewhere. View the book cover. Incorporate significant elements such as the reversible scale, his purple colour, his sharp talons and other features.

**Architecture** Draw a design (from an architectural perspective, if possible) of either:

1. the 'Chamber of the Spreading Clouds' , page 93.
2. the tower, pages 99- 100.

(Teacher tip: architectural drawings may need to be viewed first)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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