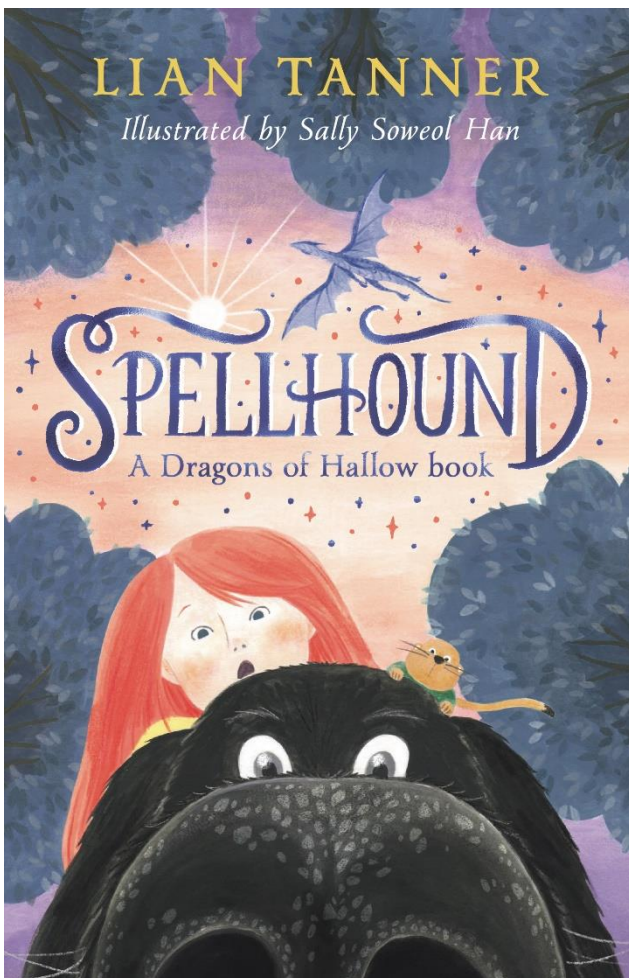


Spellhound: Dragons of Hallow 1

By Lian Tanner



What do a minch-wiggin, a Queen, and a rather large magical pup have in common? They need to find the dragon that has turned their worlds upside-down . . . even if it means revealing all they want to keep hidden. A delightfully pleasing whimsical fantasy novel for readers who love Cressida Cowell or Katrina Nannestad.

RECOMMENDED FOR

7-12, Years 2-6

THEMES

quests, magic, courage, fantasy, animals, humour, friendship, monarchy

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SYNOPSIS

There are Three Great Secrets in Hallow, a country that loves secrets almost as much as it loves green jellybabies. No, I'm not going to tell you anything more about them. I am a loyal citizen of Hallow, and would never betray—

Oh, you have jellybabies?

Green ones?

Well, I suppose I could tell you a little more.

Come closer. Open your ears and your heart, and pass the green jellybabies.

I will tell you a story about an enormous magical pup, a child Queen and a very small minch-wiggin with the unfortunate title of Destroyer-of-Dragons.

A fascinating tale filled with falsehoods, fortitude and friendship (and just the right number of green jellybabies), from the award-winning author of *A Clue for Clara* and *Museum of Thieves*.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

'*Spellhound* started out several years ago as a completely different book called *Big Dog*. The main character was a very large pup, who was lost and trying to find his way home. There was a girl called Useless, an old dog called Magpie, and a dragon.

'But I couldn't make the story work, though I tried many times. In the end, I gave up on it and wrote *A Clue for Clara* and *Rita's Revenge* instead.

'But there were things about that failed book that wouldn't leave me alone. I *loved* the pup, who started out as a hellhound, and then became a Spellhound. And I loved writing about witches and dragons for the very first time.

'After finishing *Rita's Revenge*, I decided to have one more go at it. But this time, instead of just tinkering around the edges, I was going to throw most of the story out and only keep the things I really loved.

'One of the hardest parts of writing a book is finding the right voice; the right way to tell the story. I soon realised that I wanted to tell *this* story in a slightly old-fashioned way, as if there was a storyteller talking directly to the reader. A storyteller who just might turn out to be one of the characters.

'In my notebook, I wrote, "In the deepest part of the Old Forest, the Spellhounds live."

'But that wasn't quite right. I crossed it out, and wrote, "In a quiet corner of X, far from cities and towns, roads and railways, walls and witches, there lived a family of Spellhounds."

'I didn't know where X was yet. And I didn't know much about the rest of the story, or who the storyteller was. But I knew I had found the perfect beginning.'

Lian Tanner

IN CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- **Prologue:**

What is the name given for the short piece of writing before Chapter 1 begins in *Spellhound*?

Why do you think Lian Tanner started her story like this?

What mood did the first paragraph create for you? Did that mood follow all the way to the end of the prologue?

Did the prologue draw you in to want to read Chapter 1? What, in particular, drew you in?

Can you find examples of foreshadowing here?

How does the narrator differ from other stories you have read that featured a narrator.

- **Breaking the Fourth Wall:**

Breaking the fourth wall is when a narrator speaks directly to the reader. It is also known as direct address. What are your favourite examples of this in *Spellhound*? What did you enjoy most about this literary device?

- **Humour:**

'Just in time. Something raced towards them, roaring at the top of its voice. The sound grew louder and LOUDER—

'And then it was past them, tearing into the distance, leaving nothing behind but an impression of two enormous eyes and a long green snout.' (pp. 39-40)

- What makes this scene funny, in your opinion?
- Can you find other funny examples from the story where Flax and the pup mistake normal things in 'our' world for something else?
- Can you find funny examples from the story where magical things behave more like 'normal' people? [Hint: the sword]

- **Literary Techniques:**

'They walked some more.

They argued some more...

She signed more letters...' (pp 60-61)

- What literary technique does Lian Tanner use here? How does it enhance your reading of the extract?

'But he hadn't caught a single one. They dodged. They dived. They doubled back in the most unexpected fashion.

'Then they disappeared down their burrows.' (p. 152)

- What technique is used here to help readers imagine the super speed of the rabbits? Can you find this technique used elsewhere in the novel?

*'Have you ever worn shoes you could not take off, no matter how hard you tried?...
'But if you had, you might have some understanding of how I felt when that cursed collar fell from my neck.'* (p. 299)

- Is the technique used here a metaphor? Why do authors use metaphors and similes?

- **Vocabulary:**

- a) Make a list of words or phrases to describe Flax, the pup and Felicia/Rose. Find scenes from the book that made you think this about them. For instance, you might say that Felicia/Rose is bored with being a queen so she escapes from her bedroom window.
- b) Choose your favourite character in the book and explain what you liked about them.
- c) Do you think Aunt Delilah was really trying to do the right thing for Hallow?
- d) 'I Changed,' declares Uncle Edwin in Chapter 61. Explain in your own words the change that he has undergone.
- e) Have Flax, the pup and Felicia/Rose also changed by the end of the story? How has each grown and become stronger?

- **Themes:**

'In their pursuit of power, they have given up kinship and kindness, friendship and feelings.

'They have given up love.' (p. 242)

Flax, the pup and Felicia/Rose each learn the importance of these qualities while battling Aunt Delilah, Derk and Gav. Can you give an example where one character has demonstrated one or more of these qualities and how, when they did so, they won in their quest?

- **Structure:**

Many of the most famous stories in books and film share a common structure. One popular structure is called the Hero's Journey and is based on a theory by Joseph Campbell. Another is called Pixar's Story Spine. Map the major events of *Spellhound* against both methods. Do the events fit either? Is one better than the other to use? Explain your reasoning.

- **Endings:**

Compare and contrast the tone of Chapter 72 with the prologue. How are the two similar and how are they different?

- **Prediction:**

What do you think might happen to Flax, the pup and Felicia/Rose next?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lian Tanner has worked as a teacher, a tourist bus driver, a freelance journalist, a juggler, an editor and a professional actor. She has been dynamited while scuba diving and arrested while busking. She once spent a week in the jungles of Papua New Guinea, hunting for a Japanese soldier left over from the Second World War. It took her a while to realise that this was all preparation for becoming a writer. Nowadays, Lian lives by the sea in southern Tasmania.

