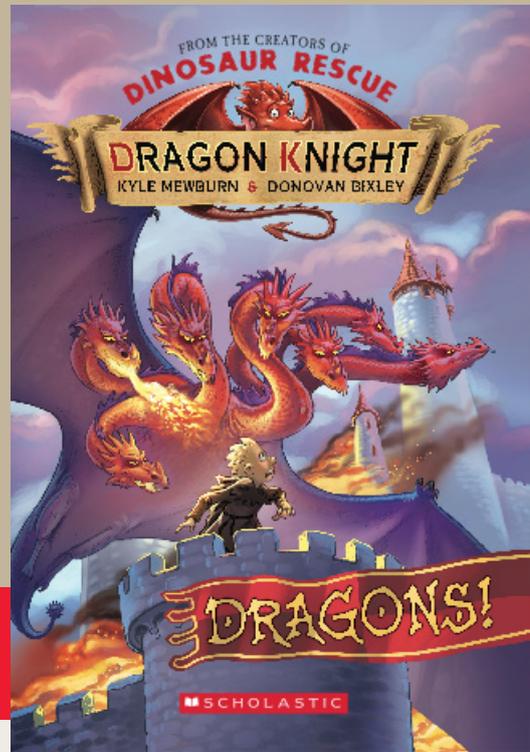


# Dragon Knight: Dragons!

Text by Kyle Mewburn

Illustrations by Donovan Bixley

- Reading • Writing • Art
- Science • Maths



## About the Book

*Dragon Knight: Dragons!* is the fourth title in a hilarious new series for young readers. The book's adventurous hero, Merek, is a shape-shifting dragon disguised as an ordinary boy. At the start of the book, the town's knights and soldiers are ineffectively trying to fight off an invasion of ferocious seven-headed dragons, known as cyclorgs. Meanwhile, Merek is desperately trying to work out how to return the cyclorgs' stolen golden doubloons to them without being seen. The story then goes back in time to explain how this situation evolved. The day had started in a normal manner with Merek attending Knight School in the castle. That morning, the students had been taught the art of falconry by their new flatulent and intimidating teacher, Sir Rocco. Many hilarious events occurred, but it was when a falcon flew off in fear that they realised the cyclorgs had arrived. Merek managed to negotiate with the cyclorgs, promising to return their gold to them. He knew that the corrupt Sir Crumble had stored it in the castle treasury. Luckily, the guards were absent, having abandoned their posts in the kerfuffle, so Merek was able to locate the gold, but there was too much to carry. Just when he thinks all hope is lost, he comes up with the idea of shape-shifting into a giant mole and tunnelling out of the treasury, causing the gold doubloons to fall into tunnel and out into the open.

## About the Author and Illustrator

Kyle Mewburn is the author of more than 40 children's books. His works have been published in nine countries and have won numerous awards. His titles include *Old Hu-Hu* (winner of the 2010 New Zealand Post Children's Book of the Year award), *Kiss! Kiss! Yuck! Yuck!* (Best Picture Book and Children's Choice at the 2008 NZ Post Book Awards) and *Melu* (Children's Choice at the 2013 NZ Post Book Awards). He is also the author of the popular series *Dinosaur Rescue*, his first collaboration with Donovan Bixley. Originally from Brisbane, Kyle now lives with his wife in Central Otago.

Donovan Bixley is a talented artist with a wide range of styles. His work brings another dimension to Mewburn's text, often adding additional humour to enhance the storyline. Donovan has illustrated a number of picture books with Scholastic, including *Phoebe and the Night Creatures*, and the popular Kiwi titles *Wacko Kakapo* and *The Tuatara and the Skink*, as well as *Monkey Boy*, his debut comic novel as both an author and an illustrator. Donovan lives with his wife and family in Taupo.

## Writing Style

The *Dragon Knight* series comprises hilarious junior novels that will appeal to young boys (and plenty of young girls) in the 7-to-10 age group. Large dollops of disgusting details and toilet humour will make the most reluctant reader eager to turn the page. These 96-page novels based on fact and fantasy are set in the Middle Ages. They are broken into chapters, and every two-page spread is brought alive with action-packed illustrations. There are also maps, diagrams and humour-filled 'fact' boxes that allow young readers to learn about many components of non-fiction text in a fun way. Like the other titles, *Dragon!* begins at the most dramatic part of the story (three fierce seven-headed dragons, known as cyclorgs, are circling the castle, intent on destruction), and then goes back in time to explain how the situation developed. It is written in the past tense with short, highly descriptive sentences that bring the scenes to life.



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# Shared Learning and Discussion Points

## ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Look at the cover. Is this the first book by this author and illustrator? Is it the first in the series? How does having favourite authors or series help you make book choices?
- Look at the dedication page. How do the illustrations here tell a story without words?
- What hints do the humorous names and the illustrations give us about the style of the book. (pp.4–7)
- What are cyclorgs? Do you think they are likely to be good characters or bad characters? Why? (p.9)
- Why do you think the knights and soldiers just stood still instead of fighting as they had been trained? (pp.10–11)
- Look at the illustration on pages 12 and 13. What is the Angel-maker Arbalest? Why are people cheering?
- Look at the castle diagram on pages 14 and 15. How is the castle built for defence against attack? Are its defences likely to stand up against cyclorgs? Why or why not?
- Merek is a shape-shifting dragon, but he is not a cyclorg. What do you think he is doing with the sacks? (pp.16–17)
- Why have the guards abandoned their post? (p.17)
- Merek thinks the world would be a much happier place without gold. Why does he think this? Do you agree? Why or why not? (pp.18–19)
- Look at the different coins on pages 20 and 21. Have you ever seen coins from other countries? Describe how they were similar or different to our coins.
- The author has given us a little more information about what Merek is up to. What do you think Merek is doing now? Why doesn't the author tell us at the start? (p.21)
- Are the coins we use today made of gold? What do we use gold for today? Which of the reasons on pages 22 and 23 are still important?
- Why is the chapter title on page 24 important to read? What does it tell us that helps us understand the story?
- Why did Merek go upstairs rather than help Egbert? (p.25)
- What sort of game are the boys playing? (pp.26–27)
- Games like this are funny in stories, but if you played them near stairs in real life, the outcome could be very serious indeed. What could go wrong? (p.29)
- Why do you think Brin isn't joining in the game? There are several possible reasons. (pp.30–31)
- Merek knows that Brin is really a girl, but there is still something about her he doesn't know. What is it? [It is to do with the identity of her father.] (pp.32–33)
- The name Sir Rocco is another joke. What does it mean? Look up 'sirocco' in a dictionary or online. (p.35)
- What might the name The Wind of Death mean? (p.35)
- How do the names Sir Rocco and The Wind of Death really relate to this character? (p.36)
- Why is the term 'a-salted' funny? How is the real word spelt? Use a dictionary if you need to. (p.38)
- Which medieval riches really existed? Which didn't? Which do we still value today? (pp.38–39)
- What is a gauntlet? What is its purpose? (pp.40–41)
- Why was it not a good idea for Merek to smile at Percy and show him that he felt sorry for him? (p.41)
- What was the feathery cannonball? Why did the author call it that? (p.43)
- How could a falcon prevent enemies from sending messages? (p.45)
- Why do you think the birds wore leather hoods? (p.47)
- Why did Merek feel sorry for the birds? Would you have felt sorry for them too? (p.49)
- Merek doesn't seem as concerned about saving the pigeons. Do you think this is fair? Why or why not? (p.53)
- What do pages 54 and 55 tell us about how easy it was to learn falconry?
- What things have gone wrong for Percy so far in the story? How might they affect his behaviour later on? (p.56)
- Why might Sir Rocco's falcon have flown off? (p.59)
- How does the illustrator show us what Merek did after seeing the cyclorgs? (p.61)
- Can you work out the puns in these names: Sir Bragalot, Sir Vivor, Sir Prise and Malodour? What other funny names can you find? (pp.62–63)
- Did the author invent all of these monsters? Use reference books or the Internet to find out. (pp.64–65)
- Why do you think Merek has shape-shifted back into his dragon shape? (p.67)
- How has the illustrator shown us the difference in size between Merek and a cyclorg? (pp.68–69)
- What is a blind spot? (p.68)
- What colour do we associate with anger? Why? How has the author made use of this? (p.70)
- Why was it a mistake to change into an elephant? (p.73)
- How do you think Merek plans to help the cyclorgs? (p.75)
- Are all dragons bad? How do you know? (p.76)
- What is the relationship between the cyclorgs? What did they do wrong? (pp.78–79)



- Is Merek taking a risk trying to negotiate with the cyclorgs? How has the illustrator shown this? (pp.80–81)
- What is Merek’s problem? (p.82)
- What do you think his solution will be? (p.84–85)
- Which sense is Merek relying on to find his way? (p.88)
- Why doesn’t it matter if no one knows Merek saved the village? Would you like to be an unknown hero? (p.91)
- Would you prefer to have Merek’s dad or the cyclorgs’ dad? Why? (p.92)
- *How to Drain Your Dragon* is a play on words. What series of books does it allude to? (pp.94–95) (*How to Train Your Dragon* by Cressida Cowell)
- How will the cyclorgs get the doubloons home? Why doesn’t Merek want to see how they get them out? (p.94)
- Why do you think Merek is hungry for worms? (p.96)
- Do you think the problem with the sacks will go away? How might we find out? (p.96)

## Activities

### ACTIVITY 1: THE CYCLOGRS’ PERSPECTIVE

Reread pages 78 and 79 with the class. Discuss the story from the cyclorgs’ point of view. Talk about how they might have felt justified in damaging the castle because their stolen gold was inside it. How else could they have handled the situation? Because cyclorgs are so much bigger than people, they might not feel bad about killing people any more than people feel bad about killing flies.

Encourage the students to rewrite the story from the cyclorgs’ perspective. Make sure they realise that this means they cannot include details that the cyclorgs were not aware of, such as the fight in the classroom. When the students have finished, pair them up and ask them to read their stories to one another.

### ACTIVITY 2: SUPER DISGUSTING SIMILES

Point out some of the similes in this book. For example:

- Merek’s relief evaporated like spit in a frying pan (p.21)
- His nose was as sharp as a dagger (p.33)
- he cut them off faster than a slit throat (p.45)
- swatted out of the air like a troublesome fly (p.68).

Discuss how these similes make the text both more fun and easier to understand. Next, provide the students with some sentence starters and encourage them to create similes of their own. You could use:

- Brin was braver than ...

- Percy was meaner than ...
- The filthy dragon smelled as ...
- Merek’s luck ran out like ...

At the end, allow students to share their best sentences with the class.

### ACTIVITY 3: COINS OF THE REALM

Tell your students that the coins on pages 20 and 21 are real coins from history. Research these coins as a class using the Internet or reference books. Then ask any students from other countries overseas to tell the class about the sorts of coins and notes used in their countries. If appropriate, some students could bring in coins and low-denomination notes to show the class.

With the common use of credit and debit cards these days, many students are less familiar with coins and notes than children from earlier generations. Use these sessions as a springboard to discuss currency. The pdf at [http://www.rbnz.govt.nz/notes\\_and\\_coins/explaining\\_currency.pdf](http://www.rbnz.govt.nz/notes_and_coins/explaining_currency.pdf) will provide plenty of information to teach your students about the features of New Zealand money.

During maths class, provide groups of students with plastic or cardboard coins and notes, and assist them in learning how to create different amounts, e.g. \$15.45 (addition). Also, help them understand how to make change (subtraction). As appropriate, make clear the links between decimal currency, decimals and the place-value system.

### ACTIVITY 4: INVENT A DRAGON

Discuss how Merek and a cyclorg are both dragons, but they differ in size, appearance, skills and temperament. Create a list of features for Merek in dragon form and another for a cyclorg. Use the book to find details, such as ‘scales to prevent damage from arrows’ and ‘a clubbed tail to use as a weapon’.

Encourage your students to invent their own dragon. They should first create a list that describes such things as its size, colour, shape, diet, special skills and temperament. Encourage them to make sure each feature has a purpose. For example, some students might choose to have a green coloured dragon so it is camouflaged, while others might choose to have a bold red-and-black patterned dragon that frightens off predators.

Model drawing a dragon and then using leader lines and labels to explain each of your dragon’s features. Add a title to create an informative diagram. The students can then create their own diagrams. Display the finished diagrams on the wall for students to look at.

Written by Mary Atkinson



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