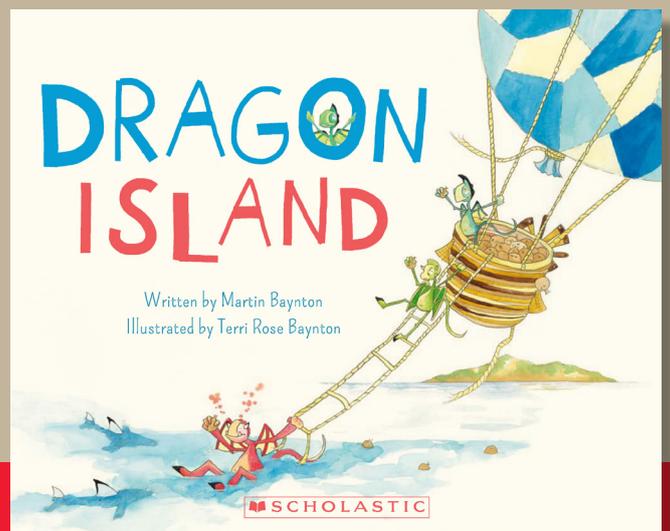


Dragon Island

By Martin Baynton

Illustrated by Terri Rose Baynton



- Reading • Writing • Health
- Presenting • Art

Synopsis

Dragon Island was populated with dragons of all sorts, sizes and colours. The one thing almost all the dragons had in common was a love of violence and destruction. Norman, however, preferred making things to breaking them. He tried to convince the other dragons to live peacefully and often took care of them when they hurt one another. The other dragons called him names and ignored his requests to change their ways. When Norman made a large patchwork bag and a wicker basket, Geraldine Green and Redhot Robert called him Muddlehead.

On the day of the annual race to Coconut Island, the toughest dragons flapped their wings and took flight. Norman took a different approach. He transformed his patchwork bag and wicker basket into a hot-air balloon and sailed over to Coconut Island. Then, using a net he had made, he scooped up a large number of coconuts, giving himself the edge in the competition. His desire to win didn't prevent him from showing kindness, though, and on the way back he rescued Geraldine Green and Redhot Robert, both of whom had got into trouble along the way.

Norman won the competition and was awarded three wishes. He asked for no fighting, no breaking and no burning. When the dragons ridiculed and refused his requests, Norman realised he could never change them. He returned to his hot-air balloon, ready to leave. Just before he took off, a small speckled dragon rushed up to him. The young dragon wanted to join Norman in 'making, not breaking', but was unsure if he could do it. Norman told him he had already made a friend, and they left together.

About the Author

Martin Baynton dreamed of writing children's books as a child and went on to do that and much more. Originally from England and now living in New Zealand, he has been a writer, illustrator, actor, scriptwriter and playwright, among other things. He has written more than 30 children's books and created two animated television productions: *Jane and the Dragon* and *The WotWots*, both of which earned international success. He has a son and a daughter who have both followed in his creative footsteps.

About the Illustrator

Terri Rose Baynton is a script writer for children's television, a watercolour artist and a children's book author. Her last book, which she wrote and illustrated, *Bear Branches and the Cloud Conundrum*, was shortlisted for the children's book awards in both New Zealand and Australia. This is her first collaboration with her father, Martin.

Writing Style

Dragon Island is a deceptively simple picture book with a powerful and important message. It is a metaphor for issues relating to bullying and violence. Norman is not the norm in his community. He values peace and creativity amid creatures who care only for violence and destruction. As a result, Norman is ridiculed and ignored. In the end, he realises that the best thing he can do is leave, and it is then that he discovers he has impressed and influenced one other dragon.

The narrative has a humorous tone and fast-moving pace. It is written in the past tense with much lively dialogue. Alliteration, rhyme and repetition create a poetic effect, e.g.,
“Wings are not for weaving!” roared Robert.
“Wings are for snapping and flapping!”

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Which sorts of dragons can you see in the first picture? (pp.2–3)
- What do most of the different dragons have in common? How is Norman different from the other dragons?
- What sorts of things has Norman made? Which would have been useful and which would have been fun? (pp.6–7)
- What was the one thing Norman couldn't make? Why do you think the other dragons ignored him?
- How did Norman help the dragons? Were they grateful?
- How did the other dragons treat Norman? How do you think that made Norman feel? (pp. 10–11)
- Why did Norman ignore their rude comments?
- How does Norman plan to win the race? What advantage does he have over the other dragons? Why?
- Why was race day different from all the other days?
- What do most of the dragons do with their claws, wings and breath? What does Norman do? (pp. 10–11 and 18)
- Norman had made a basket, a balloon, a windmill tail and a net. How were each of these things useful to him?
- Why do you think Norman stopped to help Geraldine Green and Redhot Robert? Would they have done the same for him? Did Norman do the right thing? Why?
- On page 28, Norman says, “Nobody listens, nobody learns.” Was he right about this?
- What finally made Norman decide to leave the island? Was he right to leave? Why?

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: RHYME AND ALLITERATION

Dragon Island contains many fun examples of rhyme and alliteration. Ensure your students understand that alliteration is when nearby words begin with the same sound (but not always the same letter, e.g., *Phoebe's fabulous feet*). Ensure they also understand what rhyme is.

Together, read the book once more, charting examples of rhyme and alliteration as you go. Display the charts where the students can see them, and model writing your own paragraph about dragons using these and other words to create rhyme and alliteration. When the students are ready, allow them to write their own description of *Dragon Island* using rhyme and alliteration where they can. Continue to work with those who find this task challenging.

Once the students' finished writing has been proofread, ask them to write a good copy and to illustrate it. They could then present their texts to the class.

ACTIVITY 2: LOOKING AT BULLYING AND VIOLENCE

Discuss Norman's situation with your students. Help them notice that Norman is not a passive victim, but that he has many strengths. Norman follows his own interests and does not give in to peer pressure. He is vocal about what he would like to see change without being aggressive or nasty himself. When all his efforts to improve the situation on the island fail, he chooses to leave. This is a demonstration of self-care.

Together create a class chart on ways to prevent and deal with bullying. Include such things as:

- respecting difference and diversity
- speaking up when bullying occurs, whether you are the victim or a witness
- not laughing at or encouraging bullying behaviour.

To build your own understanding of bullying and to initiate greater, school-wide changes, see <http://pb41.tki.org.nz/Deter-bullying> or other reliable resources.

ACTIVITY 3: WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

At the end of *Dragon Island*, Norman and the speckled dragon headed off to explore the wider world. Discuss with your students what might have happened next. Then encourage them to write the next chapter in Norman's adventures.

Encourage those who are able to do so to think about the structure of their narrative. These students could follow a simple story arc by writing: an introduction, rising action building up to a climax, a resolution and a conclusion.