


Dragoons

Legends &
Lore of
Dinosaurs

A Tangled and Twisted History

Dragons have fascinated, frightened, and fired the imaginations of people around the world throughout the ages. From the mesmerizing tales of ancient bards to fearfully whispered warnings not to wander into the pitiless darkness beyond the village, these creatures were at the heart of a realm of mystery, wonder, and a challenge to the fortitude and faith of saints, nobles, knights, kings, and commoners.


What truth lies beneath this mystifying history? Where are the clues found in fragmented tales of hidden caves, lost treasures, and wondrous secrets veiled by the mists of time? Is there an answer to the question of these fabled creatures?

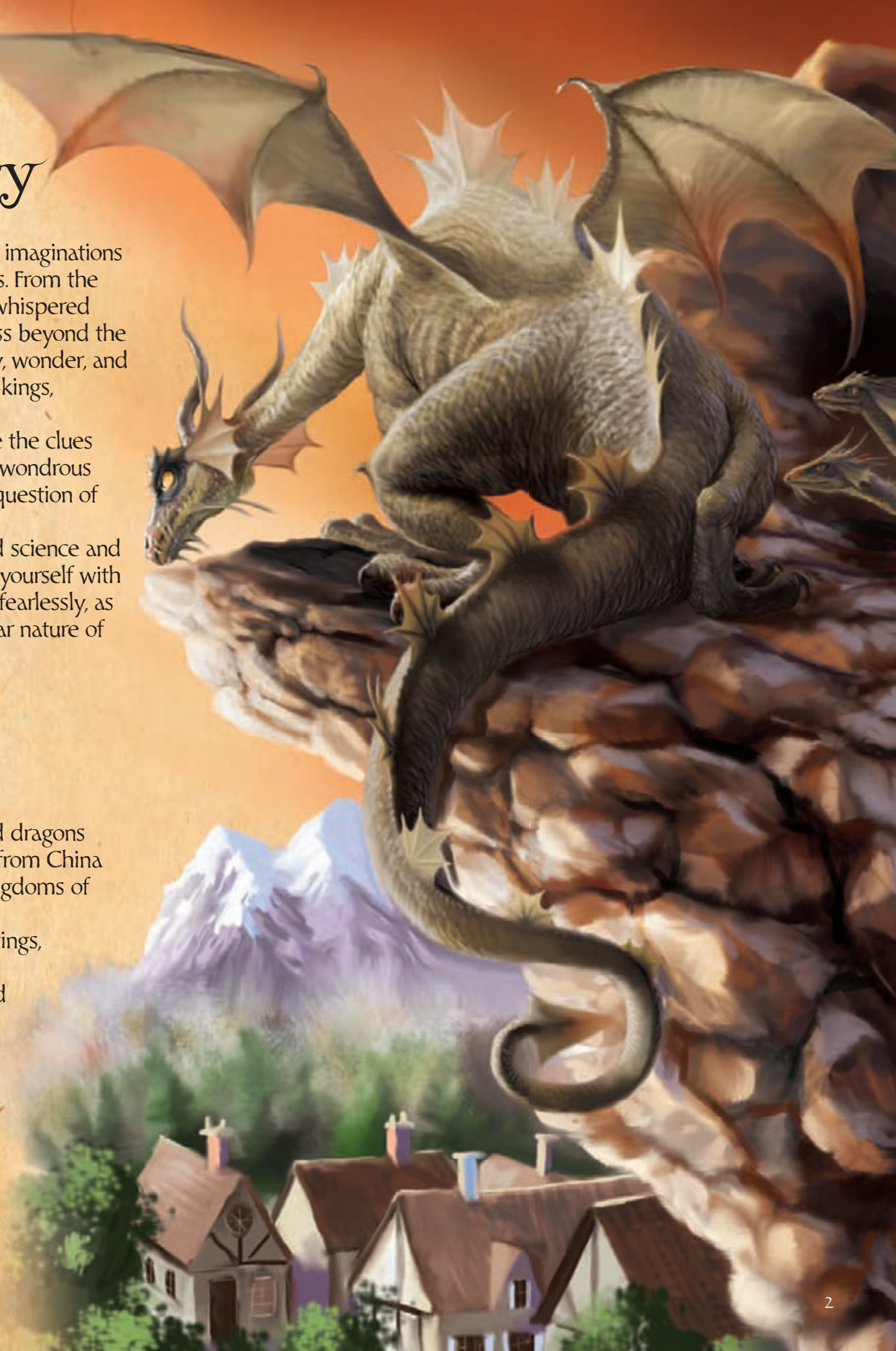
Begin at the place where truth has been shrouded by blind science and fact has been silenced for foolish mysticism and magic. Equip yourself with faith as your shield and logic as your sword. Face the creature fearlessly, as one of God's many creations, seeing at last the true and familiar nature of the beast. 

Legends & Lore

From the farthest corners of the globe, we can find dragons towering within the legends and lore of cultures from China to Australia, India to Europe, and Persia to the kingdoms of the fiercest Norse warriors.

Often depicted as a serpentine creature, with or without wings, these terrifying creatures were given names like Abraxas, Fafnir, Grendel, Brinsop, and Manasa. Some are said to have breathed fire or ice, or could even fly. Some were harbingers of good fortune and victory, while others were said to bring death and destruction in the wake of their savage fury.

Whether on land, in the air, or within the seas, tales of dragons are told with amazing descriptiveness, yet their descriptions vary despite all being commonly categorized as "dragons." The challenges in deciphering these encounters is to separate possible fact from obvious fiction, taking into account clues found in the original translations of these events. Far from being just popular myths, there are actually documented encounters with these terrifying creatures. 





Flying dragons in North America

Sacred dragons in South America



Epic dragons of Europe

Revered dragons of Asia

Enigmatic dragons in Africa


Water dragons of Australia

Myth or Legend?

Dragon legends are compelling in their sheer number and similarities from across the globe. Though the interpretation of good or evil placed on these creatures is different in Eastern and Western cultures, the fact hundreds of legends exist make their origins seem more than just imagination or fiction.

What is a dragon? From monstrous, serpentine creatures of the sea to the fire-breathing beasts that made the ground tremble when they neared, it is evident the word "dragon" isn't referring to one creature but several types of creatures. Clearly, these animals - some even able to breathe fire - were

terrifying to behold and real. They lived and died like other creatures. They were witnessed by men who spoke and wrote extensively of their encounters in cultures around the world that survive today as legends and what some believe are simple myths.

Cultural artifacts attest to the importance and power that these creatures were attributed with. From golden jewelry and heraldic symbolism, to depictions on temple walls, drinking vessels and small relics, there are reflections of creatures that are at the heart of the legendary encounters found in the crumbling ruins of the ancient world. 



The Hydra

The Greeks' description of the Hydra, the serpentine dragon and horrible guardian of the Underworld, describes an ancient, long-living creature that could regenerate its heads when cut off. The creature killed with its poisonous breath, and its lair was a cave near a lake where it was killed by Hercules as one of his penances.



Thunderbird



legendary creature among native Americans, the creature is either said to be one of a kind or part of a species of animals depending on the tribe recounting the history. Its name comes from the sound of its wings, and is said to kill reptilian beasts known as Uktena. "Those who know say the Uktena is a great snake, as large around as a tree trunk, with horns on its head, and a bright blazing crest like a diamond on its forehead, and scales glowing like sparks of fire. It has rings or spots of color along its whole length, and can not be wounded except by shooting in the seventh spot from the head, because under this spot are its heart and its life." Uktena is remarkably similar to other reptilian creatures known in northern Europe during the Roman empire. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homed_Serpent)

Real Animals



Chinese artifact from the Zhou or Han Dynasties similar to beaked dinosaurs such as the oviraptor. (courtesy of Genesis Park)

For thousands of years, the Chinese zodiac (12-year cycle) has included 12 animals - all of which are found living today except for the dragon. According to the zodiac, being born in the year of the dragon makes the individual a strong, gifted leader and a person who will accomplish great things. It is believed by those who follow these signs that the dragon's most revered and powerful traits are seen in these individuals. The dragon is presented as a real and living creature, not as a myth or fable in the zodiac.

Guarding the Gate



Dragon featured on the Ishtar Gate, constructed in 575 B.C. as part of the multi-gate entrance to the city of Babylon built by order of King Nebuchadnezzar II. The gate was once considered one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.

Ancient Art

Shang Dynasty dragon artifact remarkably like the dinosaurs called Saurolophus. (courtesy of Genesis Park)



Clues to the existence of dragons can be found not only in historical or eye-witness accounts, but in pictorial accounts as well. One of the most fascinating images is found on the ornate structure of the Khmer temple, Ta Prohm. One carved image at the temple is a remarkable representation of what seems to be a stegosaur. But there are other dinosaur-like images also found on the other side of the globe on ancient cliffs in Utah at the Kachina Bride of the Natural Bridges Monument, and in a pictograph in the San Rafael Swell similar to a pterosaur.

Flying Serpents

The Tombstone Epitaph.

April 26, 1890

Tombstone, Arizona

FOUND IN THE DESERT

**A Strange
Winged Monster
Discovered and
Killed on the
Huachuca Desert**



"A winged monster, resembling a huge alligator with an extremely elongated tail and an immense pair of wings, was found on the desert between whetstone and Huachuca mountains last Sunday by two ranchers who were returning home from the Huachucas.

The creature was evidently greatly exhausted by a long flight and when discovered was able to fly but a short distance at a time. After the first shock of amazement had passed the two men, who were on horseback and armed with Winchester rifles, regained sufficient courage to pursue the monster and after an exciting chase of several miles succeeded in getting near enough to open fire with their rifles and wounding it.

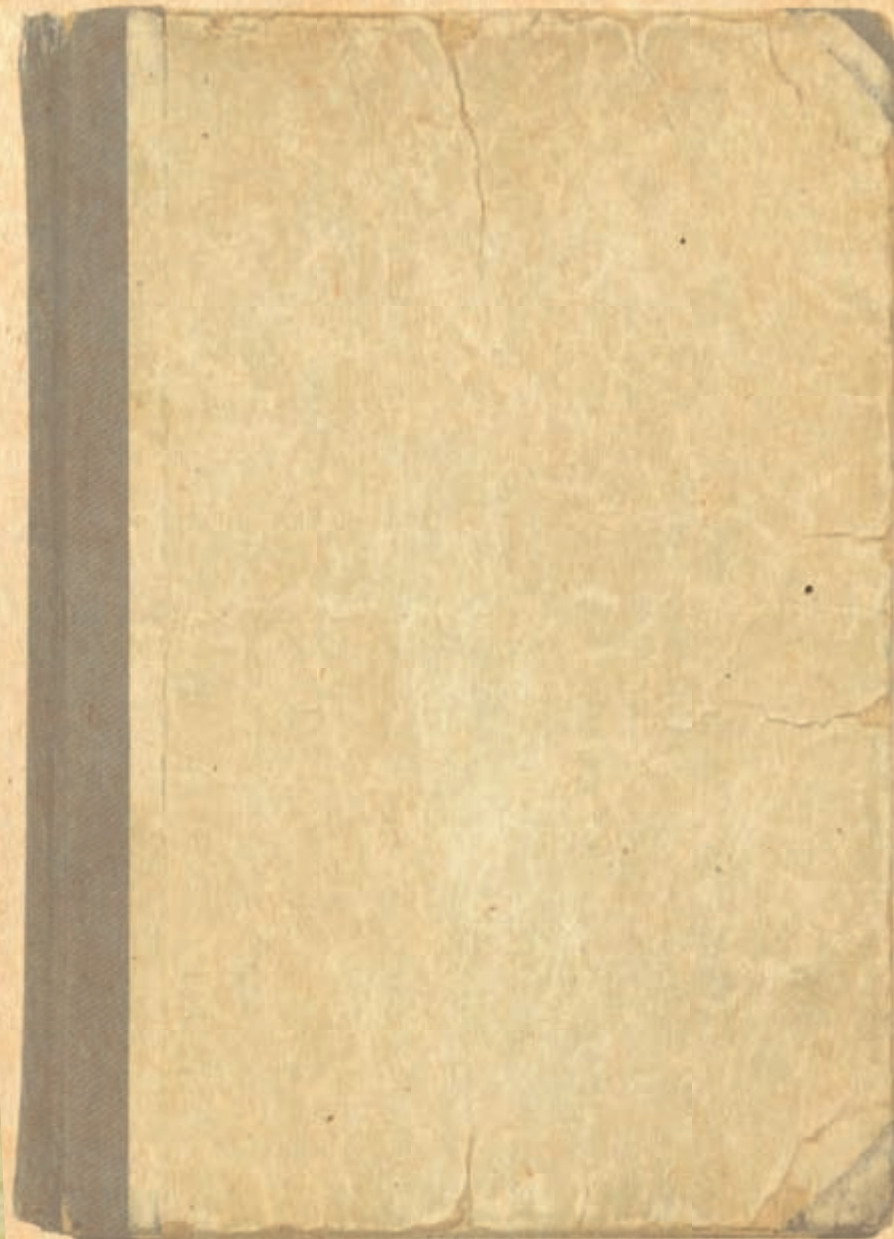
The creature then turned on the men, but owing to its exhausted condition they were able to keep out of its way and after a few well directed shots the monster partly rolled over and remained motionless. The men cautiously approached, their horses snorting with terror, and found that the creature was dead.

They then proceeded to make an examination and found that it measured ninety-two feet in length and the greatest diameter was about 50 inches. The monster has only two feet, these being

situated a short distance in front of where the wings were joined to the body. The head, as near as they could judge, was about eight feet long, the jaws being thickly set with strong, sharp teeth. Its eyes were as large as a dinner plate and protruded about half way from the head.

They had some difficulty in measuring the wings as they were partly folded under the body, but finally got one straightened out sufficiently to get a measurement of seventy-eight feet, making the total length from tip to tip about 160 feet. The wings were composed of a thick nearly transparent membrane and were devoid of feathers or hair, as was the entire body.

The skin of the body was comparatively smooth and easily penetrated by a bullet. The men cut off a small portion of the tip of one wing and took it home with them. Late last night one of them arrived in this city for supplies and to make the necessary preparations to skin the creature, when the hide will be sent east for examination by the eminent scientists of the day. The finder returned early this morning accompanied by several prominent men who will endeavor to bring this strange creature to the city before it is mutilated."



Open with Caution





Marco Polo



Marco Polo's history of exploration and exotic discovery is well-known, but few know this 13th century adventurer's own description of dragons detailed in *The Travels of Marco Polo*, (Doubleday, Garden City, NY, 1948). "Concerning a Further Part of the Province of Carajan": "In this province are found snakes and great serpents of such vast size as to strike fear into those who see them, and so hideous that the very account of them must excite the wonder of those to hear it. I will tell you how long and big they are. You may be assured that some of them are ten paces in length; some are more and some less. And in bulk they are equal to a great cask, for the bigger ones are about ten palms in girth. They have two forelegs near the head, but for foot nothing but a claw like the claw of a hawk or that of a lion. The head is very big, and the eyes are bigger than a great loaf of bread. The mouth is large enough to swallow a man whole, and is garnished with great [pointed] teeth. And in short they are so fierce-looking and so hideously ugly, that every man and beast must stand in fear and trembling of them. There are also smaller ones, such as of eight paces long, and of five, and of one pace only." Polo goes into depth on the means and methods by which these terrifying creatures are killed, and then the various body parts are used for medicinal and other purposes. "They also sell the flesh of this serpent, for it is excellent eating, and the people are very fond of it."

Dragons in the Bible and other ancient literature





Isaiah 13:22

And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

Isaiah 14:29

Do not rejoice, all you of Philistia, Because the rod that struck you is broken; For out of the serpent's roots will come forth a viper, And its offspring will be a fiery flying serpent.

Isaiah 27:1

In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

Isaiah 30:6

The burden against the beasts of the South. Through a land of trouble and anguish, From which came the lioness and lion, The viper and fiery flying serpent, They will carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys, And their treasures on the humps of camels, To a people who shall not profit;

Isaiah 34:13

And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls.

Epic and Deadly Encounters

An ancient Anglo-Saxon account of the heroic Beowulf has him slaying fierce dragons that are plaguing the King of Dane. One dragon was named Grendel, and Beowulf kills both Grendel and its mother, another dragon. As an old warrior half a century later, Beowulf again successfully battles a dragon, but dies of injuries from the encounter. In *Beowulf, A New Translation* by Seamus Heaney (Seamus Heaney, W. M. Norton and Company, New York, 2000) we see the terrifying descriptions of the dragons Beowulf faced.

Regarding Grendel's claw:

"Every nail, claw-scale and spur, every spike and welt on the hand of that heathen brute was like barbed steel."

(Heaney, p.67)

After Beowulf had slain both Grendel and Grendel's mother it says of another type of dragon that became a menace to their lands:

"He ruled it well for fifty winters, grew old and wise as warden of the land until one began to dominate the dark, a dragon on the prowl from the steep vaults of a stone-roofed barrow where guarded a hoard; there was a hidden passage, unknown to men, but someone managed to enter it and interfere with the heathen trove."

(Heaney, p.151)






Explore the links between dragon myths and the reality of dinosaurs through vivid illustrations, interactive pages, and fascinating insights!

Did you know?

- ✦ There are dragon legends in nearly every culture, from China to Australia, India to Europe, and Persia to the kingdoms of the fiercest Norse warriors
- ✦ Eyewitnesses to these last dinosaurs include Job in the Bible, Alexander the Great, and Marco Polo
- ✦ Drawings on cave walls and on ancient art show images that closely resemble beaked dinosaurs and flying pterosaurs

Re-visit history as you trace the tracks of these creatures throughout cultures in Asia, the Americas, Europe, and more, learning the facts, and revealing the fallacies of dragons. Whether battling saints or terrorizing medieval castles, these creatures provide a fascinating link to man's earliest history, as well as a shadowy mystery now found only in the pages of ancient texts. 

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