

CRESSIDA COWELL

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR

DRAGON



Resources for KS2
Teachers & Librarians



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Cressida Cowell's aim, as Waterstone's Children's Laureate and beyond, is to encourage every child to read for enjoyment and get something out of books. Her popular *How to Train Your Dragon* series – packed full of adventure, excitement and, of course, dragons – is one which will do exactly that!

Cressida has a passion for developing the creative intelligence of children and she believes that reading allows the reader to grow three superpowers:

- ▶ **Creativity**
- ▶ **Empathy**
- ▶ **Intelligence**

These classroom ideas are based around the 12-book series and are designed to inspire these superpowers by exploring children's imagination and allowing their creativity to come to the fore.

About the Series

Hiccup's father is chief of the Hairy Hooligan tribe on the Isle of Berk, where dragon fighting is a way of life. Despite his father's position, Hiccup is a misfit who feels ill-equipped to become the leader everyone expects him to be. But when he teams up with a tiny but very brave dragon called Toothless, he discovers powers of heroism he never knew he possessed ...

Spanning over a series of 12 hilarious, action-packed books, we follow Hiccup on his journey of adventure and self-discovery.

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Creativity

▼ Activity One: Design a Dragon

Book One: How to Train Your Dragon

Read Chapter 2 (pg 28–end of pg 37, ‘Even though it was only half grown, it was surprisingly heavy’.)

When his class is going through their Dragon Initiation Program, Hiccup mentions a range of different dragons that he has studied – and some that he hasn’t! You are going to be designing your own Viking dragon that Hiccup might find in the Dragon Nursery during his challenge.

- **Part One:** Children to look at example of the ‘Gronckle’. Every dragon will have strengths and weaknesses. What would you want your dragon to have? Start by considering which strengths you want your dragon to have . . . but also which weaknesses it is prone to!

Dragon Feature:	Strength:	Weakness:

- **Part Two:** Use the style of illustrations from the book as inspiration to create your own dragon design!

Consider:

- ▶ What does your dragon look like?
- ▶ How could you show its strengths and/or weaknesses in the image?



Creativity

- **Part Three:** Create a fact file, just like the one you have looked at for the Gronkle. You are going to need to decide on a score out of 10 for all the following categories:

Fear Factor ▶ _____ **Size** ▶ _____
Attack ▶ _____ **Disobedience** ▶ _____
Speed ▶ _____

Remember, these need to match up to the strengths and weaknesses you decided on for your dragon!

♦ Activity Two: Recipe for a Hero

This activity can be linked to any book from the *How to Train Your Dragon* series.

As we see through the series, heroes don't always look how we expect them to! What would you need to include in a recipe for a hero?

- **Part One:** Hiccup is an unlikely hero who proves that being frightened isn't the same as being a coward. What qualities does he have that help him become the hero of the story?

As a class, discuss the qualities you need to become a hero. For example, courage and kindness.

What else makes a good hero? What makes an EXCELLENT hero? Does every hero need to have the same qualities?

- **Part Two:** Now, on your own, write in the cauldron what you would need to include if you were creating a hero. What do you think, from the class discussion, are the five most important elements?
- **Part Three:** Using the qualities you have chosen in your cauldron, write out a recipe for a hero!



Recipe for a Hero!

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Creativity

▼ Activity Three: Viking Battle

Book Two: How to Be a Pirate (pages 133–137)

In this section, Hiccup and the other Vikings have to fight the Skullions and there is a very effective Attacking-while-Defending manoeuvre used!

- **Part One:** In groups, create a freeze-frame of the Vikings being attacked by the Skullions.

As you are tapped on the shoulder, say aloud what you would be thinking and feeling as this is happening. How might the Vikings react?

- **Part Two:** Thinking about how the Vikings can defeat the Skullions, create your own move to beat them!

First, you need to create a name for your move – what will they be doing?

Next, you can create the movement! How will the Vikings complete it?

▼ Activity Four: Design a Dragon Egg

This activity can be linked to any book from the *How to Train Your Dragon* series.

- **Part One:** In the series, each species of dragon has its own unique kind of dragon egg – all in different colours, shapes and sizes!

Use the grid below to start designing your very own dragon egg.

Colours	
Pattern	
Texture	
Size	
Special powers	



Creativity

- **Part Two:** Now decorate an egg – this could be real or papier maché – to bring your dragon egg design to life.

Note: if using real eggs, make sure they are ‘blown out’ before you get started.

- **Part Three:** Once everyone’s decorated eggs are finished and dried, ask your teacher or a member of the class to hide them around the classroom or the school garden.

The class can then go on a dragon egg treasure hunt!



Empathy

▼ Activity One: Perfect Pairs

This activity can be linked to any book from the *How to Train Your Dragon* series.

- **Part One:** Toothless and Hiccup have to work as a team throughout the series to help each other, not only be successful, but to be accepted too.

What other literary pairs can you think of? For example, Winnie the Pooh and Piglet.

Can you think of any other literary pairs?

How do they complement each other?

Characters	Book they are from	How do they fit well together?



Empathy

- **Part Two:** You are going to create your own pairing – a perfect team! What personality traits would each need to have to complement the other?

What are they going to look like? Will they be similar, or from different species altogether like Toothless and Hiccup?

Character 1

Character 2



Empathy

▼ Activity Two: Anti-Bullying Charter

This activity can be linked to any book from the *How to Train Your Dragon* series.

- **Part One:** At the start of the series, we see Snotlout as a mean, bullying cousin of Hiccup who calls him 'useless' and takes the breed of dragon which, by rights, should be Hiccup's as son of the chief.

What tells you about Snotlout's personality and how he treats Hiccup in the following extract?

'I'm going to get one of those Monstrous Nightmare ones with the extra-extendable claws. They're really scary,' boasted Snotlout.

'Oh shut up, Snotlout, you can't,' said Speedifist. 'Only Hiccup can have a Monstrous Nightmare, you have to be the son of a chief.' Hiccup's father was Stoick the Vast, the fearsome chief of the Hairy Hooligan tribe.

'HIC-CUP??' sneered Snotlout. 'If he's as useless at this as he is at Bashyball, we'll be lucky if he even gets one of the Basic Browns.'

The Basic Brown was the most common type of dragon, a serviceable beast but without much glamour.

'SHUDDUP AND GET INTO LINE YOU MISERABLE TADPOLES!' yelled Gobber the Belch.

The boys scrambled into their places, baskets on their backs, and stood to attention. Gobber walked along the line, lighting the torch that each boy held in front of him from the great flare in his hand.

Which part of the extract shows that Snotlout doesn't have respect for Hiccup?

As a class, create an 'anti-bullying' charter – how should we treat others that we meet?



'Anti-bullying' Charter





Empathy

▼ Activity Three: Guide to Owning a Dragon

Book One: How to Train Your Dragon (Chapter 18, pages 208–213)

How do you think the Vikings should care for their dragons? They are a team and should look after each other.

You are going to create a 'Guide to Owning a Dragon', telling people how they can care for their creature. Maybe, if you designed your own dragon as an earlier activity, you could write one specifically for your new breed!

▼ Activity Four: Pirate Training

Book Two: How to Be a Pirate (page 90, Pirate Training Timetable)

- **Part One:** Study the Pirate Training Timetable and imagine how you would feel if you had to complete all these sessions. How do you think Hiccup would feel becoming a Viking Pirate?

Which sessions would he most look forward to? Which sessions would he be most worried about?

- **Part Two:** You are going to have a go at creating your own game of 'Bashyball'. What will the rules be? Decide them as a class and create your own game – then play it together!
 - **Part Three:** How do we show empathy during and after sport? Sportsmanship helps us do this. Write three key rules for being a good sportsperson.
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Guide to Owning a Dragon

Introduction:

What You'll Need

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3

Top Tips



Intelligence

▼ Activity One: Mind Mapping

Book Two: How to Be a Pirate (Chapter 5, pages 51–57)

- **Part One:** Discuss as a class, what about the coffin makes the Vikings want to open it?

Create a mindmap together:

- ▶ What else might you find that says ‘Do Not Open’ on it?
- ▶ What could be kept inside each of these objects?

- **Part Two:** Design your object that says ‘Do Not Open’. This could be on paper, but you could also create a 3D version which can keep something inside!
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▼ Activity Two: Viking Fact File

Relevant to any book within the series.

These books are set in fictional Viking times and Hiccup and the tribe have to take part in all sorts of Viking events in order to be made tribe members. This includes flying dragons, sailing, sword fights and feasts!

You are going to create a fact file all about the **real** Viking times.

- **Part One:** Research key facts about the Vikings.

- ▶ When did they live?
- ▶ What was their way of living?
- ▶ What countries did they come from?
- ▶ How did they spend their leisure time?

Part Two: Create a Viking Fact File about your own Fictional Viking – but base it on the facts that you have discovered!



Intelligence

▼ Activity Three: Write Your Own Chapter

Book One: How to Train Your Dragon (Chapter 15, pages 191–195)

- **Part One:** Read through the chapter together – what are the key points? Summarise what has happened in a nutshell (only 10 words!).
- **Part Two:** The next chapter is called ‘The Fiendishly Clever Plan Goes Wrong’.

But ... you are not going to read this!

Instead, using the summary of the previous chapter you are going to write your own chapter. What do you think will happen next?

First, you need to plan your chapter. What will the main plot point be? What happens to Hiccup and his fellow tribe members?

Main plot point:	
Opening of Chapter:	
Problem:	
Ending: (Solution or cliffhanger?)	



Intelligence

- **Part Three:** Write your chapter.

If you complete it, could you draw your own illustrations, too?

▼ Activity Four: The Natural World

The series has a focus on the natural world and our relationship with it. Book 2 (pages 173–174) mentions a cavern with fossilised dragons – it could possibly also have stalagmites and stalactites, too!

- **Part One:** You are going to grow your own stalactites, using [this science experiment](http://www.sciencekidsathome.com/science_experiments/growing_stalactites.html).

http://www.sciencekidsathome.com/science_experiments/growing_stalactites.html

What do you notice as they grow? Take photos at the different stages to see what they look like!

- **Part Two:** Now you have grown your own, use them as inspiration to create a piece of artwork featuring the cavern that Hiccup would have gone into, using chalk or oil pastels. Think about the patterns that you would see on the walls – could you include fossilised dragons in the walls, too?



Meet the Characters



Hiccup



Toothless



Camicazi



Fishlegs



Stoick



Snotlout

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