



DRAGON CHARMERS - #2 VALLEY OF SILVER BY LINDA MCNABB

A Classroom English Unit

Non-stop action, adventure, magic, fantasy and an easy-to-follow plot all combine to make Linda McNabb's *Valley of Silver* an absolute winner. *Valley of Silver* is the second book in the Dragon Charmers series and is a classic example of the fantasy and magic genre which will appeal instantly to children of a wide age-range (9 - 12 years). *Valley of Silver* is perfect for a class teacher-read book and as an individual reader. It will appeal equally to both boys and girls. Colourful characters, both good and evil, leap off the pages and it is a perfect example of how the use of clear and simple prose can add a strong visual language dimension to the story. Students will immediately feel they are right there - caught up in the continuous action.

Story synopsis

Logan, Alyxa (his best friend and a young girl who is a dragon charmer), wizard Zared, the friendly white dragon Silverhorn, Prince Myles and his blue dragon Braveheart, have just sealed the fearsome red dragons inside a mountain with a magic spell. The people of Radolk Falls are no longer slaves to the red dragons who will kill all humans by setting fire to the world in attempt to make it more habitable for red and gold heat-loving dragons. Logan has much on his mind. He now knows that his parents were King and Queen of Radolk Falls. They were taken to safety by Silverhorn, who was charmed by the wizard into forgetting where he took them to ensure their safety. Logan also knows that Zared is, in fact, his grandfather and that he is now Prince of Radolk Falls. The people of Radolk Falls, rather than being grateful for their freedom, want Logan, his friends and the two dragons to leave.

The one red dragon who escaped the spell has alerted the other red and gold dragons who live across the ocean, under the earth in the Rift. They are planning to free the entrapped dragons, capture Logan and make him use his powers with his silver sword to carry out the final fiery destruction of the world. Logan and friends need the help of someone with magic powers - in particular, Logan's mother - to help foil this evil plot. As the aging Zared has again lost his memory, Silverhorn demands to be charmed by Alyxa so he can remember where he once took them. Silverhorn and Braveheart set out, taking Logan, Alyxa, Djana, Miles, Erik, and Zared to find Logan's parents and the Rift.

Logan locates his long-lost parents and sister Shayan, at Silver Haven - a silver mining town very close to the Rift. Silver dust and silver arrows have protected the inhabitants from the red and gold dragons: silver will turn them to stone if they are touched by it. As dragons are terribly attracted to gemstones, Logan, and his friends and family hatch a plan to magically turn ceramic pots into gems, fill them with the dragon heart plant's white explosive powder and silver dust. Alyxa, Djana and Shayan combine their magic powers and work the spell. Attracted by the 'gems', the dragons are tricked into taking them down into the Rift. The dragons play with the 'gems' by throwing them up into the air. When eventually the pots are smashed, huge explosions occur and the Rift is

sealed and the dragons are trapped underground. The silver released will ensure they do not dig their way out. Is this the end of the danger posed by the fearsome red and gold dragons?

Teaching, learning and discussion activities

- Discuss the rights and wrongs of dragon charming. Why do the students think Alyxa was reluctant to use her ability to charm Silverhorn? What did Silverhorn's unselfish action say about how he felt that humans and dragons should co-exist with each other? Have students write a summary of all the ways in the story that demonstrate unselfishness, co-operation and genuine respect between dragons Silverhorn and Braveheart and the human (wingless) characters. Compare these traits to those of the red and gold dragons.
- Re-read the first seven pages of the book. Develop the idea that the word pictures used by the author to describe Zared's laboratory are so clear that we can actually see it as if we are there ourselves. Challenge students to paint a picture of the laboratory or a floor plan from the descriptions given.
- Talk about the recent popularity of fantasy movies (*The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, Lord of the Rings* etc.) and that the action and characters in *Valley of Silver* would make an exciting fantasy and action movie. Tell students that groups will be challenged to shoot their own video movie of one scene from the story.
- Introduce the idea that throughout the story there are vivid word pictures describing the locations where the action takes place, making it easy to imagine the setting. The first task is to make scaled-down film sets (in the classroom, hall or corridor) where the action takes place. Using painting, mural and construction skills, each group chooses a location, **eg**
 - *Red Mountain where the dragons are sealed in*
 - *the trading area of Bartertown*
 - *the mining village of Silver Haven*
 - *Goldenwing's cave in the Rift*
- After set construction is complete, challenge groups to complete the following tasks:
 - *write a screen play of one of the scenes or actions that took place at the location of their created set*
 - *design costumes for the actors*
 - *design and construct necessary props for the scene, eg cardboard dragons that can fly with pulleys, magic swords ...*
 - *compose sound-picture type music to accompany the scene.*
- Assign parts to actors and hold rehearsals before shooting of the video begins. After editing, have a 'world premiere'.