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WORLD OF WONDER

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DRAGONS

These serpents of legend are found in stories from around the world. For centuries, many people really believed that these monsters existed. Tales of these mythical creatures may have been inspired by the bones of ancient dinosaurs.

Common dragon traits

Dragons from many cultures share similar traits. Most have snakelike or lizardlike attributes. To identify a dragon, students of mythology rely on a list of common traits.

- Reptilian appearance with skin of scales
- Breathes or spits poison or fire
- Has red eyes
- Lives in or is associated with water
- Influences storms, rain and wind
- Has ability to fly (with or without wings)
- Displays magical or supernatural powers when alive; when dead, its remains keep their magic properties
- Guards treasure, knowledge or other resource and will fight to the death to defend it
- Spinal nodes running down the back and tail

Less common traits:

- Birdlike appearance
- Ability to change into another animal or human
- Holds a powerful position (is a god or a servant to one)

One of the oldest dragon myths can be traced to an ancient Babylonian creation myth from 4,000 years ago. When a giant sea dragon called **Tiamat** was cut in two, she created the sky and earth. Tiamat was considered to be the mother of all things, including the gods of Babylon.

Some dragons breathe fire; others breathe ice.

Fafnir is a German dragon.

Chi Lung Wang is a Chinese dragon.

Grabak is a Norse dragon.

Leviathan is a biblical dragon.

Red-colored stones are sometimes called "dragon stones."

Dragons from the Middle Ages often have wings, horns and four legs and can breathe fire.

Some dragons speak in riddles, but some are not very clever.

The **Lernean hydra** is a Greek serpent with many heads that grow back if cut off.

Order of the Dragon
This emblem was used by the famous Dracul family of Romania, including Dracula!

SOURCES: World Book Encyclopedia, World Book Inc.; <https://www.britannica.com/>; <https://kids.kiddle.co/Dragon>; <https://www.factretriever.com/>; <https://www.softschools.com>



This endangered sea horse is known as the **leafy sea dragon**, aptly named because it certainly looks a lot like a dragon.

In a name

The word **dragon** is derived from the Latin word *draconem*, which means "huge serpent." A female dragon may be called a **drakaina**, the feminine form of the ancient Greek word *drakōn*.

Good or evil

In Christian traditions, the dragon is a symbol of evil. Legendary heroes slay dragons to save villages and gain territory or to find dragon treasure.

In Asia, the dragon is often a symbol of supernatural power with power over water and fire. It is also associated with wisdom, strength and hidden knowledge. Dragons are said to bring good luck to people who are worthy of it.

Did you know?

It has been surmised that dragon legends are found in nearly all cultures because humans are universally afraid of snakelike creatures.

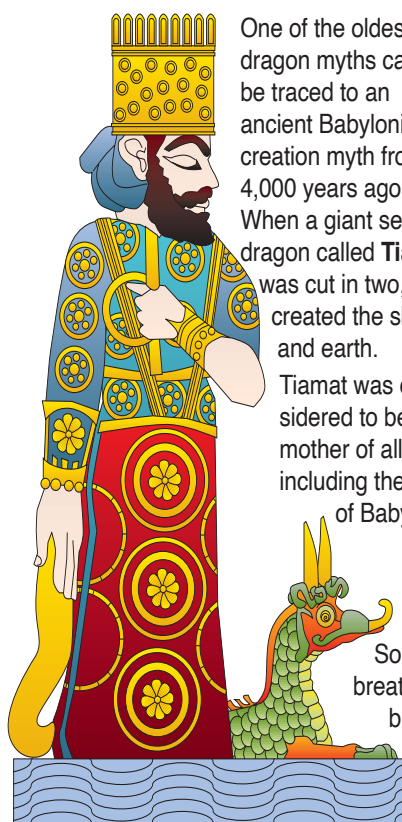
In the Chinese zodiac, the fifth year is the Year of the Dragon. Couples often plan their weddings and pregnancies to coincide with the Year of the Dragon.

Of all the dragon slayers, St. George is probably the most well-known.

One of the most iconic dragons in literature is **Smaug** from J.R.R. Tolkien's classic novel *The Hobbit*.

In the Harry Potter world, the heartstring of a dragon can be used as the core of a magic wand.

Welsh heroes in medieval poetry were called **Pendragon**, meaning "dragon warrior" or "head chief." The legendary King Arthur's father was known as Uther Pendragon.



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