

Dragons in a Bag

Elliott, Z.



Jaxon's mother is forced to send him to live with a mysterious older woman, only to discover that this lady is not the grandmother he thought she was, but rather, a keeper of secrets...and of dragons. Jaxon embarks on a magical adventure in this urban fantasy with interesting characters, complex conflicts, and unconventional perspectives. Appropriate for intermediate students, "Dragons in a Bag" is suitable for independent reading or as a class read-aloud. The story's African American characters may invite discussions about race as it is represented in various genres and stories, and the magical elements within lend themselves well to inspiring creative thinking and writing activities.

Collections ARC-BC Novel

Subject English Language Arts

Grades 4-7

Primary Identifier 9781524770457

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Resource Evaluation

CURRICULUM FIT

Does the resource support BC curriculum?

Extensively

This product supports the Core Competencies of the BC curriculum:

- Communication
- Creative Thinking
- Critical thinking
- Positive Personal and Cultural Identity
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility

This novel aligns well with the intermediate Big Ideas in Language Arts around “language and text being a source of creativity and joy,” a way to “help understand ourselves and others in our world,” “understanding text from different perspectives,” and “questioning what we hear, view and read as a way to become educated and engaged citizens.” In regards to Language Arts content coverage, it provides a great example of a fantasy or adventure story for learning about different genres of stories and could be used in activities to explore reading strategies, the use of setting, and conventions. This novel could open up discussions of the representation of all literature and other media.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM USAGE

“Dragons in a Bag” could be used in various ways in a classroom. It would be a great novel in the intermediate classroom for independent reading tasks. It could be an example of a fantasy or adventure story in an exploration of different genres of stories. It would make a good read-aloud novel and would also be a great addition to a classroom library for students to read for pleasure. This novel could also be used as a springboard to a discussion around representation of different races and demographics in different genres of stories, as it is a rare example of an urban-set fantasy story with African American characters.

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Social Considerations Comments:

There are no social considerations for this book.

GENERAL CONTENT

Content

Is the resource engaging?

Extensively

Is the content current for the intended curriculum and grade?

Extensively

Is the content accurate for the intended curriculum and grade?

Extensively

Is the content timely and important for student broad understandings?

Extensively

Audience:

Is the content appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?

Extensively

Does the resource provide opportunities for creative and critical thinking?

Extensively

Can the content be differentiated?

Moderately

Is the level of detail appropriate?

Extensively

Is the language use appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?

Extensively

This novel is written with consideration of the intended audience. Its setting in an urban area makes this story contemporary for students today, and the concept of magic definitely lends itself to creative thinking in the classroom. Students who read this book could be inclined to explore more unconventional plots in their own writing; the idea of a fantasy story written from a young, urban, African American child's perspective, who has a non-traditional family structure, will also encourage young readers to look at other stories with a more critical eye. This book could be read in partners or as a read-aloud when differentiation is required.

TECHNICAL DESIGN

Does the resource make effective use of the medium?

Extensively

Is the location of illustrations appropriate?

Extensively

Is the resource easy to use?

Extensively

Is the use of font, text size and presentation uniform?

Extensively

Are extraneous elements/illustrations kept to a minimum?

Extensively

“Dragons in a Bag” has a colourful and eye-catching cover that gives a few clues about the story. The book also has a few well-placed, black-and-white illustrations throughout the novel that help the reader to create images in their mind of key stops in the main character's adventures. The font size and layout make the novel easy to read, and there are no extraneous elements or illustrations to detract from the story.

PRINT NOVEL

Does the text show insight into the complexity of the human condition?

Extensively

Does the text broaden students' experiences and understanding?

Extensively

To what degree is this text stylistically rich?

Extensively

Plot description:

“Dragons in a Bag” is the story of a young man named Jaxon, who learns about parts of his mother's life story during a time of crisis for his family. His single mother is forced to leave him with a woman she calls Ma, who he believes is his maternal grandmother, with whom his mother no longer has a relationship. He quickly learns that this mysterious older woman is not actually his grandmother but in fact holds family secrets and some dragons. She takes Jaxon on a magical dragon adventure, introduces him to some interesting characters, and in the end, Jaxon must choose whether he will walk away from this magical world—like his mother did—or embrace it for himself, risking his ties with her.

Related Comments:

This book takes place in present-day Brooklyn, and it is a complex story with a few layers of conflict. It is a well-written story, in which the reader feels as if they get to know the characters well, learning their fears and motivations. The reader learns about the conflict happening in Jaxon's homelife, the conflict between his mother and other characters, and the conflict in his

new world of magic, all helping to create a rich fantasy/adventure experience for the reader.

Genre:

- Adventure
- Contemporary
- Fantasy

Literary Highlights:

- Complex conflict
- Rich Characterization

Type:

Novel

Visual Highlights:

Novel

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Readability:

- At intended grade level(s)

There is a sneak peek of the sequel, “The Dragon Thief,” at the end of the book. Awards won include NPR Best Book of the Year, ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Book, A Kirkus Reviews Best Book of the Year, A Chicago Public Library Best Book of the Year, Manitoba Young Reader's Choice Award, Silver Birch Express Award, Pennsylvania Young Reader’s Choice Award, the

Virginia Readers' Choice Award, the Michigan Great Lakes Great Books Award, and the Beehive Book Award in Utah. The author, Zetta Elliot's, website: www.zettaelliot.com has information about her, why she writes, some essays about her books, her blog, and a link to a YouTube video of her reading out the first three chapters of the book.

Resource URL

<https://focusedresources.ca/en/k-12-evaluated-resource-collection/dragons-bag>