

Spring 2 Week 2 Guided Reading Text

George and the Dragon

One thousand and seven hundred years ago, in the time of the Roman Empire, there was, just outside the City of Cyrene in North Africa, a large stagnant, smelly pond. In this pond there lived a dragon. Whenever the dragon breathed on a person or an animal, they died on the spot.

The people of Cyrene came up with a plan. They agreed to give him one person every month, so long as he left the others alone and unharmed for the rest of the time - but how were they to decide which person to sacrifice?

The king decreed that the names of every citizen should be scratched onto pieces of pottery, and kept in a great urn. Each month, one of the names would be drawn out of the urn, and that person would be given to the dragon.

Then one day, the name of the princess was shaken out of the urn. According to the King's own law, his daughter must be sacrificed. The palace servants led her out of the city in a procession, and headed for the lake where the dragon lived.

As they were on their way, a Roman soldier came riding up to the city. His name was George. George stopped and asked why such a beautiful young woman was looking so sad. When a citizen explained, George immediately declared, "Let me slay the dragon!"

The citizens warned him that nobody stood a fighting chance against such a ferocious, plague-breathing creature but George was determined to save the princess.

The people tied her to a tree by the lake, and left her to meet her fate. George saw the dragon emerge out of the swampy waters, and he charged up on his horse and flung his spear into its shoulder. The dragon let out a piercing shriek. It was wounded, but not fatally. George managed to cut the princess free from her bonds. The dragon was enraged and rounded on his attacker. George retreated and called out to the princess to

take off the belt from around her waist and to throw it at the dragon. This she did, and by a miracle, the belt wrapped itself round the dragon's neck like a collar. Immediately the dragon became as peaceful as a lamb, and the princess was able to lead it by her belt back to the city.

The people of Cyrene knew that from then on they could live safe and unharmed.

