

New York Times bestselling author of *STORY THIEVES*

JAMES RILEY

THE DRAGON'S APPRENTICE

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Ciara lives in the village of Skael under the thumb of the Warden (ugh), who enforces the rule of the Emperor (double ugh). When she kinda, sorta gets her mom arrested for possessing a book written by an apprentice of the legendary Dragon Mage, Ciara accidentally uses the maybe-dangerous, definitely forbidden book to summon one very cranky dragon.

Scorch is none too pleased—he's been asleep for a thousand years, and now he's been awoken by a tiny and very annoying human who claims to have found his apprentice Bianca's journal. Now Scorch is stuck in a world he barely recognizes, with no sign of Bianca or his friend the Dragon Mage, and a brand-new apprentice who is way too eager to learn magic.

The only problem is, according to Ciara, nobody but the Emperor is allowed to use magic. Well, there are a few other problems, like the fact that the Warden's soldiers are after Ciara, and she and Scorch can't stop bickering long enough to make a plan. But if they can find a way to work together, they just may be able to rescue Ciara's mom and unravel the lies of the Empire.



Themes: Fantasy, Adventure, Humor



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Riley is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the Half Upon a Time series, the Story Thieves series, the Revenge of Magic series, the Once Upon Another Time series, and the new Dragon's Apprentice series. He was born in Connecticut, where he lived for only a short time before moving to . . . well, quite a few states. He currently lives in Boston, Massachusetts, because that's where his cats are. He has three of them. Other people think that's a bit much.



PRE-READING

DON'T READ THIS BOOK!

The back cover of *The Dragon's Apprentice* desperately warns us not to read it! Most readers will ignore this warning since the book is full of elements young readers love: a protagonist their age, magic spells, an Emperor who forbids the teaching of magic, a dragon, and the chance that this dragon “*might* be willing to help rescue Ciara’s mother and free her village from the Emperor and his Warden.” Take any two of these elements and write a persuasive paragraph arguing FOR someone to ignore the warning and read this book.

MOTIVATIONS

Motivation is the reason why we do something. Motivation is what drives us to try to achieve a certain goal. One of the reasons readers are drawn to specific characters is that we understand and care deeply about the WHY behind their actions. In the summary on the back cover, we are told about Ciara’s motivations. Take any two of these and describe why you think her goals might be difficult to achieve.

SOMETIMES YOU CAN JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

We know from the jacket copy that Ciara is trying to enlist the help of a dragon, but the front cover shows us an illustration of a dragon that doesn’t look entirely happy to have been summoned to help. What visual clues do you see that support this? Why do you think the dragon might look this way, and how might that make Ciara’s goals harder to achieve? Create a simple T-chart, with the left side containing the visual clues and the right side showing how they will complicate Ciara’s plan to learn magic and rescue her mother.

WHAT’S AN APPRENTICE?

We know from the book’s title that someone will become an apprentice to a dragon. Throughout history, apprenticeships have been crucial to the success of families, towns, and the future of whole occupations. Visit Apprenticeship Facts for Kids | KidzSearch.com and respond to the following questions:

1. What is an apprentice?
2. Why is it beneficial to become an apprentice?
3. Choose any one of the examples in the Apprenticeship Media section and explain both what you see in the picture and how the picture is an example of an apprenticeship.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BIANCA'S JOURNAL

Before each chapter there is a brief excerpt from Bianca's journal, which Ciara says has "chosen her" and stays with her throughout the book. The excerpts usually have two elements to them: an important truth and something funny that shows us who Bianca was. Take any three of these excerpts and answer the following questions:

1. What is the truth that Bianca is trying to tell here?
2. Explain what you find funny about each quote, in your own words.
3. Explain how each excerpt is a preview or explains in some way what the chapter is about.
4. Explain how the message of each excerpt evolves from the beginning of the novel to the end.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY

In the prologue we learn that the Dragon Mage asked Bianca and her friends to keep a journal so people in the future could read about creating magic. In doing this, the Dragon Mage signals that knowing the history of something is important and should be saved for future generations. Do you think history is important? Why? Make a list of things that we can learn from the past.

JOURNALING

Can you remember what happened to you a year ago on this date? Unless something special happened, you probably can't. One way to help remember the past is to keep a diary or journal. We know the Dragon Mage instructed her students to keep a journal

so people in the future could understand how the first people learned magic, but there are many other reasons to keep a journal. How could writing down your day-to-day thoughts benefit you or others in the future? If you're working with a partner, take turns sharing your thoughts with them.

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

Chapter one gives readers a lot of details about Bianca and the struggles she's going to face in the novel. It's the readers job to take these details and start to think about how all the pieces in the story fit together. Consider the following details learned from chapter one of *The Dragon's Apprentice*, and discuss these elements with another reader.

- Who are the only people in the book who are ALLOWED to use magic? Why do you think this is?
- What disease are many of the villagers, including Ciara's mother, suffering from?
- What is the cause of this disease? What stands in the way of a cure?



CHARACTERS CAN COME FROM ANYWHERE

When an object that is not human is given the powers or sensibilities of a human it's called an anthropomorphization (an-throw-puh-more-fy-zay-shun). One of the most intriguing examples is Bianca's journals. Explain how the book's actions are anthropomorphic.

MINOR CHARACTERS ARE IMPORTANT

Although Ciara is the main character, James Riley creates an interesting web of minor characters who add layers to the story.

Without interesting minor characters, a story can feel less real to the reader. In a T-chart, explain the motivations of each of the following characters on the left side (labeled "Motivations") and what stands in their way of accomplishing their goal on the right side (label that "Conflicts").

Meg	Ciara's mother
Meg's father	The Drakes
The Warden	Prince Aiden
The Emperor	Herman
Scorch	

THE DRACONIC CODEx

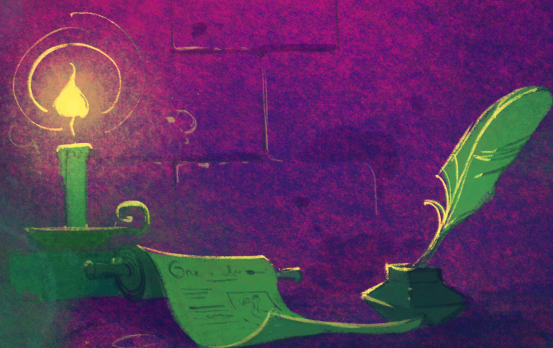
The Draconic Codex is a book that the first Emperor, Cillian, wrote. It serves as a history of the people of the village of Skael. Throughout *The Dragon's Apprentice*, Ciara tells us that the *Codex* is keeping the villagers oppressed. One of her goals is to destroy the book and its lies. However, later in the story we learn that the book contains lies as well as some important truths. What are three of these lies, and how have they been used to keep the villagers oppressed? What are three important truths it contains that surprise both Ciara and Scorch?

THE PIGSTY/THE DUNGEON

Early on in the story, Ciara has to run from the Drakes, the Warden's men, who are after her. She runs into a pigsty and falls into the slop. Draw a picture and write an explanation to go along with it, showing Ciara in the pigsty or running from the Drakes. You can also draw a picture and write a caption showing what you imagine the dungeon where her mother is being held is like.

SANCTUARY

A sanctuary is a place of safety or refuge, a place where someone is kept from harm. Many places such as churches, libraries, or even your own room can act as a sanctuary. In *The Dragon's Apprentice*, the word *sanctuary* is used in a very different way. Explain how the sanctuary that the villagers are working hard to build is really the opposite to our understanding of a sanctuary. Alternatively, describe a safe place in your life and why it's a sanctuary for you.



POINT OF VIEW

As a writer, you can choose which point of view (POV) you write from. The first-person POV uses the pronoun “I,” and can be very powerful because the reader may strongly identify with the main character. It can also be limiting because you only see and hear things from one person’s perspective. The second-person POV uses “you,” but is rarely used since the writer can only address the reader directly. Third-person POV is used most by writers because they can get in the heads of multiple characters, allowing the reader to experience multiple perspectives. MOST of *The Dragon’s Apprentice* is told from Ciara’s point of view, but starting in chapter four, the author shifts several times throughout the book to Scorch’s POV. Why do you think the author brings the reader into Scorch’s head? Why is it important that he do it at this point in the story? How do you think the book would have been different if we heard the story from the Warden’s POV?

SPELLS: PART ONE

One of the joys of the story is watching Ciara learn magic. After casting her first few spells, Ciara is surprised to find herself drained of energy and falling asleep. Why do you think the author decided to limit the power of a person casting a spell? What in your life takes a lot of energy and leaves you feeling drained and maybe even sleepy afterward?

SPELLS: PART TWO

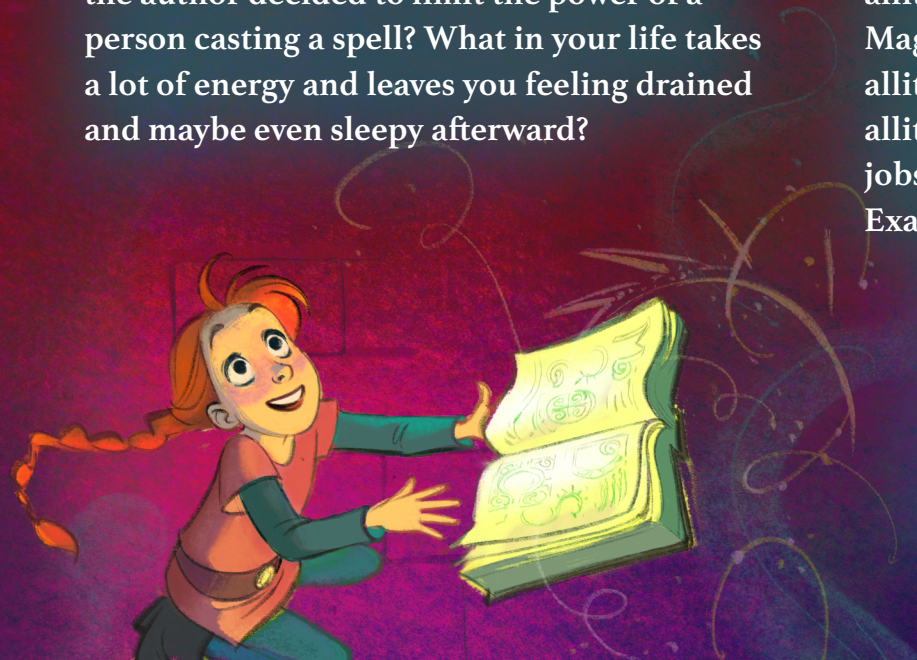
In chapter thirteen, Scorch explains to Ciara that the straight lines in spells from Bianca’s journal represent solid objects, things that don’t change or move, and curved lines represent living things, things that are constantly changing and moving. He also explains that line length, thickness, and curve all matter tremendously when casting a spell. Ciara has to learn these small differences in meaning for the spells to be effective. What are some things in your life that are examples of the straight lines, things that are constant and don’t change? What are some examples of things that are curved lines, things that constantly change and move? Share three examples for each line type. For example, a straight line could be when the bell for when school starts, whereas a curved line could be how many of your green beans you choose to eat.

LET’S BE ALLITERATIVE!

Alliteration is a literary device that uses repetition of initial consonant sounds in two or more nearby words. Most of the time the first two letters are the same, like “Cathy’s cats,” but as long as words start with the same sound, like “kids’ coats,” it’s considered alliterative. Scorch likes Ciara to call him a Magister, meaning “magical mentor,” which is alliterative. See if you can come up with other alliterative phrases for the following roles or jobs in the book.

Example: a soldier could be a “strict securer.”

Soldier	Friend
Warden	Mother
Villager	Father
Dragon	Sister
Apprentice	Brother
Emperor	



INFLUENCE

Teachers can have a great impact on their students, and a “teacher” can be almost anyone. Ciara says to Scorch, “When we met, I was just a point with nowhere to go. But you showed me how to move off in a new direction.” Up until this point, Scorch has resisted being called a teacher by Ciara. Explain what Ciara means in the quote by giving examples of the things that Scorch has taught her. Has there been a time when you have acted like a teacher to someone else? What did you teach them? How did that make you feel?

THEME

A theme is a “universal idea, lesson, or message explored through a work of literature.” Different readers can experience the same themes in stories, though oftentimes the lesson that resonates most with a reader is dependent on their own unique life experiences. In eight words or less write down one of the themes that resonated with you while reading *The Dragon’s Apprentice*.

BRAIN VS. BRAWN

Something that greatly upsets both Ciara and Scorch is the way the Dragon Mage Tia is portrayed by the Emperor. Scorch knows, and Ciara learns, that Tia was very intelligent, and that her mission was to make peoples’ lives better through the casting of benevolent spells. When Ciara and Scorch discover how the Emperor speaks of her and that she is shown carrying a flaming sword in pictures, they both get upset. Why do you think they are so upset by this?

ARE REVENANTS REAL?

A revenant is a spirit or reanimated corpse. For much of the book, Ciara and Scorch think that the Emperor is using the idea of revenants to scare the villagers into doing what he wants, but later on they find out that revenants may be real. Explain what Ciara and Scorch learn from *The Draconic Codex* about revenants, and describe what is revealed to the reader by Prince Aiden in the Epilogue.

FAIRNESS

In chapter eighteen Ciara says to Scorch, “My parents used to tell me that life isn’t fair, so I needed to get used to it. Shouldn’t that be the goal, to *make* it fair for everyone?” How does making life fair for everyone make things better for all of us?

MARTYR

A martyr is a person killed or sacrificed for their beliefs. Explain how the Dragon Mage Tia is a martyr.

PREDICTIONS!

The Dragon’s Apprentice is the first book in a series. Make some predictions about what you think will happen in the next book.

Respond to the following questions:

- Will Scorch and Ciara find Tia?
- Will we learn the truth of the revenants?
- Will Ciara teach others magic, and will that help to overthrow the Emperor, OR is it true that only an heir of Bianca can learn magic, and if others do, they will conjure revenants?
- Will Scorch ever see his brother and sister dragons?



EXTENSION EXERCISES

DRAGONS

Why are dragons so popular? Even in our modern world of technology, readers are still drawn to them. What is so fascinating about them? Where did the idea of dragons first come from? Use the link below to watch a video about dragons. For each segment of the video, write a summary of what you learn.

youtu.be/QgQed7NUM3Y

BOOKS ABOUT DRAGONS

If you liked this book, there are many other great books about dragons written for young adults that you might be interested in! Write a review of *The Dragon's Apprentice* and share

it with your local library or bookstore to help other dragon lovers find it. After you've shared your review, ask the librarian or bookseller to share a list of similar books about dragons so you can keep your reading adventure going.

COURAGE

Ciara shows great courage in her quest to try and change her town, find a cure for Skael Cough, get to know a dragon who is not always happy to help, and learn how to cast spells. We witness courageous acts every day, both in real life and in stories. What has someone around you done that shows great courage? What have you done that is courageous?



Greg Shafer has twenty-seven years of experience teaching in Florida middle schools and holds three degrees from the University of Florida. As a National Board Certified Teacher, Mr. Shafer has taught middle school drama and language arts and served as a peer evaluator as part of a \$100 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to Hillsborough County Public Schools.

