

Saint George and the Dragon Unit Study

Book by Margaret Hodges

Literature based unit study prepared by Melissa Crabtree

Bible

Armor of God -

This book presents an excellent opportunity to learn about the armor of God. Read together Ephesians 6:10-18. Make a list of the six pieces of armor that are mentioned. Help your child gain an understanding of this metaphorical armor and how truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Spirit help us make good decisions each day.

Character-

The Red Cross Knight displays exemplary character. He perseveres through his battle, in spite of his incredible weariness. He also fulfills his promise to the Fairy Queen as opposed to foregoing that commitment and beginning his reign as king immediately. He earns his name, Saint George, only *after* he has proven himself worthy of the title.

Science

Sulfur -

Sulfur is the chemical element with the atomic number 16. Biblically (and in this book), it is also referred to as brimstone. Sulfur itself is odorless, but when combined with many other things, it offers the familiar smells of rotten eggs and burnt matches. (And if your student really wants to know, it is responsible for much of the smell of flatulence.) It is used in gunpowder and is found in meteorites.

Dragons –

Throughout history dragons have depicted all that is evil in the world. The slaying of a dragon was allegorical of slaying sin. They have also been symbols of power, sovereignty, and in China, good fortune. Have you wondered if dragons ever really existed? The Bible mentions dragons and/or dragon like creatures many times, sometimes metaphorically, and sometimes not. Read Job 41 to your child and compare that creature with the one in our story.

There are animals today that are called dragons, such as the Komodo dragon, the bearded dragon, and the water dragon, but none of these resemble the dragons of long ago.

If dragons did exist, what kind of animals were they? They would have been reptiles: cold-blooded, egg laying, hairless, vertebrates that breathe through lungs.

Let's look at a dragon's anatomy further. The dragon in our story can fly into the sky with the knight because he has wings. It was the wing of the dragon that St. George first wounds. Dragons have very sharp claws. What did the dragon do with the claws? (Grabbed the Knight) What did the knight do to one of the claws? (Cut it off) Do you remember the dragon's long tail? It had two sharp stings on it and when the Knight was trapped by it he cut the end off. What is special about the dragon's mouth? It breathes fire, almost killing St. George. How did St. George finally kill the dragon? (By running a spear through its mouth.) Draw a picture of a dragon and label all of its parts.

Go Along Books:

My Father's Dragon by Ruth Stiles Gannett

How Many Dragons Are Behind the Door? By Virginia Kahl

Beowulf (choose any version)

Social Studies

This story obviously lends itself to a study (as deep or shallow as your student would like it to be) of Medieval Times, Middle Ages, Dark ages, feudal society, knights, castles, dragons, chivalry and the list goes on! I would encourage you to get several non-fiction children's books from your library to delve further into whichever areas you wish to study. The photographs, diagrams and illustrations are imperative in understanding much of the times.

History-

The middle ages were the time period between AD 400 to 1500. Be sure to put it somewhere on your timeline! (Knights did not begin to wear metal body armor until after 1300, so that might be a good place to put some memory of Saint George.)

This time in history was characterized by a feudal society. In a feudal society, the king awarded land grants to his most important nobles, his barons, and his bishops, in return for their contribution of soldiers for the king's armies. At the lowest of society were the peasants (also called serfs or villains). In exchange for living and working on his land, the lord offered his peasants protection.

Knight's Armor-

The Red Cross Knight's armor was obviously quite critical to his success in fighting the dragon. The basic pieces of a knight's armor are:

1. Helm (Helmet)
2. Gorget (covers neck)
3. Pauldrons (cover shoulder)
4. Spaulders (Cover upper arm and outer elbow)
5. Chainmaille (Gusset -inner elbow)
6. Vambrace (cover forearm)
7. Gauntlets (cover wrist and hand)
8. Breastplate (cover chest)
9. Faulds (Tassets - cover hipbones)
10. Kneecup (cover kneecap and upper leg)
11. Greaves (cover lower leg)
12. Sabatons (Solorets – cover feet)
13. Coif (chain mail covering for head worn under helmet)
14. Arming Cap (tie that keeps coif attached)
15. Gambeson (shirt)
16. Haubergeon (Hauberk – chain mail tunic worn under plate armor)

Becoming a Knight-

A noble's son began as a pageboy in a noble's family. They taught him how to behave well. Then he worked as a squire, a servant to a knight. The knight taught him all about armor, weapons, and riding horses. His lord would deem the squire a knight when he had proven he was brave.

[Homeschool Share's Knight Lapbook](#)

Chivalry-

Knights were expected to behave in certain ways. He had certain duties to perform to:

- 1) His countrymen and fellow Christians. He had to be a servant to his lord, be courageous and brave, fair, and protect the weak and poor.
- 2) God. He would have to be faithful to God, protect innocent people, be faithful in his church, be giving, and always obey God (over his lord in real life).
- 3) Women. He would have to serve a lady, perform acts of bravery to win her heart, be gentle and gracious to all women, marry her and protect her forever. This is the root of chivalrous behavior such as standing when a woman enters the room, opening a door for a woman, helping her remove or don her coat, carrying her load, and many other things.

Spend this week training your son to be chivalrous. Be silly about it and maybe reward him for all of the chivalrous things he does spontaneously. Help him see how behaving chivalrously is a way to honor and respect his mother and sisters, as well as the men/boys around him.

Castles-

The first castles were built in AD 900. They were originally wooden and called "keeps." About 100 years later they began to be built of stone and had walls that were 3 feet thick or more! They usually included towers, a keep (the strong, central tower), a chapel, the gatehouse (where the guards lived), the great hall (where everyone ate and servants slept), the kitchen, and the stables. They were surrounded by a moat that could only be crossed using the drawbridge. A castle would house several families and have additional houses built in it for others. Castles were built as fortresses for protections during battle, houses, or prisons.

The Red Cross –

Saint George was the Red Cross Knight, his shield marked with a red cross on a white background. This cross grew to be symbolic of neutrality and was later called the Geneva cross. The Geneva Convention was an international agreement signed at Geneva, Switzerland in 1864 outlining the wartime treatment of prisoners and the sick and wounded. From this agreement was formed the Red Cross, an international organization that fights, like George against the dragon, to serve the sick, injured, and homeless in times of war and in times of peace. The members of this organization wear the same Red Cross that was worn by Saint George. Your children may enjoy learning more about the American Red Cross and its founder Clara Barton. A good book about her is Clara Barton, Founder of the American Red Cross by Augusta Stevenson, in the Childhood of Famous Americans series.

Language Arts

Poetry -

Saint George is taken from the epic poem, *Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser. The poem is considered a celebration of virtues. The Red Cross Knight's story is told in Book II, Canto I. Check out the book from your library and read the original story of Saint George with your student!

Legends -

A legend is a story about mythical or supernatural beings or events. Based on the details of this story, is this a legend? How do you know? (What are the mythical or supernatural characteristics of the story?) The dragon is an obvious one, but can your student find more? (Don't forget to look in the pictures for things not necessarily mentioned in the text!)

Have your student write and illustrate his own legend to share.

Vocabulary -

Noble -(noun) A member of the nobility

-(adjective) Having or showing qualities of high moral character, such as courage, generosity, or honor

Foe -An adversary or opponent

Hideous -Repulsive, especially to the sight

Couched -To lower (a spear, for example) to get ready for an attack

Brandished -To wave or flourish (a weapon, for example) menacingly

Severed -cut off a part from a whole

Math

Calendar-

Saint George had to give knight's service to the Fairy Queen for six years. How many months is that? How many weeks? How many days? How many seasons? (How has your life changed over the past six years? How might it be different six years from now?)

The Middle Ages were from 400 to 1500 AD. How many years is that? How many centuries?

Art

Caldecott -

This book received The Caldecott Medal in 1985. The Caldecott Medal is awarded to the artist of the most distinguished American Picture Book for Children published in the United States during the preceding year. The award goes to the artist, who must be a citizen or resident of the United States, whether or not he is the author of the text.

Trina Schart Hyman has won The Caldecott Medal for *Little Red Riding Hood* in 1984, *Saint George and the Dragon*, and Caldecott honors for *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* by Eric Kimmel in 1990 and *A Child's Calendar* by John Updike in 2000.

Great Art –

There are many artists throughout the years that have created paintings portraying Saint George and the Dragon. One of the most famous artists is Raphael. Raphael lived in Italy from 1483 to 1520, and he painted during the Renaissance. Even as a child he painted like an accomplished artist, and by the time he was in his twenties he was so famous that the Popes commissioned him to paint the Vatican and St. Peter's cathedral. Look at a picture of Raphael's rendition of Saint George and the Dragon.

Coat of Arms –

Knights wore a coat of arms to identify themselves. Have your student create his or her own coat of arms.

Materials and information on this website may be used for your own personal and school use. **Material may not be shared electronically or be used for resale.**

© Homeschool Share