

Dragons

REAL MYTHS AND UNREAL CREATURES

FEATURED DRAGONS

The film brings the legends of fantastic creatures from across the globe to life on the giant screen. Here is a glimpse of the dragons featured and their significance.

TIAMAT (tee-yah-maht)

Tiamat has been around since the beginning of time and is known as the goddess of salt water (or the oceans). According to Babylonian mythology she mates with the god of fresh water, Apsû (ahp-soo) to create a multitude of fantastic offspring. Legends say the noisy children cause the parents to declare war and Tiamat is eventually hit by an arrow shot from her own great-grandson, the storm-god Marduk. This causes her body to break into pieces from which they form the heavens and earth. Dungeons & Dragons popularized Tiamat as a multi-headed dragon in the 1970's role-playing game.

WYVERN (why-vern)

A Wyvern is a European dragon that has wings and hind legs but no forelegs as seen in most traditional dragons of Western culture. Wyverns are true tetrapods (four limbs or feet) similar to vertebrates. This legendary winged creature has a reptilian body and is often seen as a sea-dwelling creature with a fish tail. Tales of Wyverns also depict them breathing fire and possessing a venomous bite.

FAFNIR (faf-neer)

This story from Norse Mythology (Icelandic) stems from the late 13th century. Fafnir, one of two brothers, plots to take the fortune of his father, Hreithmar. Once he steals his father's house of glittering gold, he uses his power to turn into a Lindworm (a dragon without wings or hindlegs) to guard the treasure and keep his brother Regin away from it. Eventually Fafnir and his

scheming brother Regin are both foiled by Sigurd, a courageous man of noble heritage and his magical sword, Gram.

In Western mythology, dragons often protect valuable items and treasures, which is why they're associated with greed. Recent examples of this are Smaug, the dragon found in *The Hobbit*, and the wyvern guarding the underground vaults of Gringots Bank in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

WELSH & ENGLISH DRAGONS (Red & White Dragons)

Old Welsh tales use the Red Dragon to symbolize the resistance of the Welsh people to a group of powerful invaders. The story became so popular and such an important part of Welsh culture that the Red Dragon made its way onto the modern day flag of Wales.

Versions of this story use King Ludd and King Leffelys trying to solve the critical problem of two dragons terrorizing the peasants by their constant battles and shrieks.

Links to Arthurian legend can also be found in tales where Merlin explains to King Vortigern that his repeatedly collapsing castle is failing in its construction because it is being built on burial site of the Red and White Dragons.

CHINESE DRAGONS

In oriental mythology, dragons convey a positive image, contrary to their cousins in the West that are usually terrible creatures. Asian dragons give advice and bring good luck.

Asian dragons are also frequently associated with power. They symbolize kings and emperors, have magical powers such as wingless flight, and power over the weather, especially floods, rainfall and hurricanes. They are sometimes thought to inhabit every drop of water.

There are many legends that group dragons into overarching concepts: great human virtues, great human qualities, and more. Asian dragons can change into human beings at will. And they are known for having long life spans, which makes sense given that their maturity process can take thousands of years to complete.

JÖRMUNGANDR (pronounced yur-mun-gan-der)

The names in this tale from Norse mythology may be familiar to those who enjoy the Thor character made famous in comic books and movies.

Born in Asgard to Loki and Angrboda, this giant sea-dragon (and problem child) is cast out by Odin and banished into the oceans of Middle Earth. There, Jormungandr begins feasting on whales, growing so big he can encircle the entire world and bite his own tail. In fact, the story suggests that if he awakens and lets go of his tail, “Ragnarök” (the end of the world) is upon us.

RYUJIN (ree-yoo-gin)

Ryūjin, also known as Ōwatatsumi, is the deity of the sea in Japanese mythology. This Japanese dragon, symbolized by the power of the ocean, had a large mouth and was able to transform into a human shape.

Ryūjin lives in a palace under the sea built out of red and white coral, from where he controls the tides with magical jewels. He was the father of the beautiful goddess Otohime who married the hunter prince Hoori. The first Emperor of Japan is said to have been a grandson of Otohime and Hoori's. Thus, Ryujin is said to be one of the ancestors of the Japanese imperial dynasty.