



The Dragon's Boy

Jane Yolen

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"In order to gain wisdom, you must learn to read inter linea, between the lines."

Artos doesn't know who his parents are, just that kindly Sir Ector and Lady Marion took him into their castle when he was a baby. Though Sir Ector raises him as one of his sons, Artos never feels he truly belongs. The other boys of the castle -- Cai, Bedvere, and Lancot -- make fun of him and never invite him to join in their games.

One day, while searching for Sir Ector's missing brachet hound in the fens around the castle, Artos stumbles across a musty cave in a hill where a very old dragon lives. Though he is afraid, he is drawn to the beast by both the dragon's knowledge and his promise to teach Artos the game of wisdom. With the dragon's guidance, Artos begins the slow journey to his destiny-one that he never dreamed could belong to him.

Notable 1990 Children's Trade Books in Social Studies (NCSS/CBC)

The Dragon's Boy Details

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Author : Jane Yolen

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From Reader Review The Dragon's Boy for online ebook

Sharon Tyler says

The Dragon's Boy by Jane Yolan is a children's chapter book in the Arthurian tradition. Artos is a lonely and regularly teased boy in the castle of Sir Ector. One day he is tasked with chasing down a dog that has run off and somehow ends up in a mysterious cave where he meets a dragon that offers him wisdom. Despite his fear, Artos becomes the dragon's student and learns things he never imagined. Artos receives wisdom of all kinds from the dragon, but still wants to be recognized as a worthy friend by the other boys of the castle. Many lessons need to be learned, in many different ways, to complete the learning required of Artos Pendragon.

I am firmly of the opinion that Jane Yolan is an author that would have to put serious effort into writing something that isn't wonderful. Combine that with my love of Arthurian legends, and The Dragon's Boy could not lose. This book offers a new look at Arthur, or Artos's, early life and his relationship with Sir Ector and Old Linn (Merlin). I liked that Artos was a young man that new his mind, and thanks to the wisdom of 'the dragon' and his own common sense, saw through most of the faults of the other boys. However, like most going through the preteen and teen years, he still wanted to fit in even when the crowd was doing something he did not want to be a part of. The book offers a coming of age ideal with the hints of adventure soon to come. The twist of the dragon and possibilities for the future really made the book even better.

The Dragon's Boy is a book that I would recommend to all readers that love Yolan's work, have a love of Arthur, enjoy coming of age tales, and enjoy stories about being true to yourself. I really enjoyed this book, and the experience was made even better with the personal history of Yolan and some of her photographs that were included at the end of the book.

Terry says

What to do about books for younger readers who can manage adult words and aren't ready for adult topics? This is an interesting possibility, if not a must read. Yolen's take on the Arthurian legend is original and doesn't avoid fifty-cent words, yet the content is completely appropriate for the second grader I read this to. (There's a tiny bit of sword play, rich allusions, and no real peril, violence, or evil.)

Unfortunately, the ending didn't seem to satisfy my seven year old (too open ended and too big a stretch from what seemed to be coming), and I thought the final chapter was too melodramatic, too vague and too pat - if it is even possible for an ending to be all three at once. While I don't regret it, I think I'll look for other things next go around.

Johan Barrios says

If I had to sum up the main character in one word than that word would be persistent. I would call the main character persistent because when he first met the dragon the main character was very scared but he always came back to talk to the dragon and receive some wisdom.

What is the most interesting scene in the novel? What did the writer do to catch your interest?

the most interesting scene in the book The Dragon Boy the boy went to look for his lost dog but he could not find him but he still did not give up he still kept trying till he was really tired so he found this it was warm inside kind of like a furnace so he sat and waited when he got up he noticed he could not see the castle so he sat to think then all of a sudden he heard a giant growl that startled him.

Corinne Wilson says

13-year-old Artos stumbles across a cave while searching for Sir Ector's hound, and the thundering voice of a dragon ropes him into stew in exchange for wisdom each week. Slowly Artos begins to rethink his world and his place in it, just as he finally wins the respect of larger knights-to-be who have been pummeling and teasing him for years.

This is a great book to hand to readers who can handle advanced vocabulary but aren't ready for mature content (or middle school boys). A short read that can easily be mistaken for an early reader, Yolen's story is an original tale of King Arthur that gives a nod to the traditional stories and preserves the same flavor, but has almost none of the same events. A good story in its own right, it would make for good classroom discussion on how it compares to the original legends as well.

Wayne McCoy says

Young Artos lives in Sir Ector's castle and is shoved around by the other boys. One day, while tracking down a wayward hound, he discovers a cave that has a dragon living in it. The dragon offers him wisdom in exchange for pots of gravy and meat.

It's a grand tale of young King Arthur with some familiar characters. He doesn't become king by the end of this book, but he's well on his way to understanding how to lead people. He gains some understanding of himself and the people around him as well.

I enjoyed it and found it clever and engaging. The character of Artos changes quite a bit over the short length of the book and Yolen is a masterful storyteller. There are some nice surprises in the lessons that Artos learns throughout the book.

Included in the ebook is a note by the author about how the book got written along with a nice personal history of Jane Yolen with photographs. According to the author, she has a sum of books of 335. If you've never read anything by her, you owe a look at her work.

I was given a review copy of the book by Open Road Integrated Media and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for letting me review this book.

Gale says

“Uncoiling the Mythos of the Pendragon”

A master at creating and recreating the mythos of the Arthurian legend (see MERLIN'S BOOKE) Jane

Yolen offers readers an original tale from the youth of Arthur—with tantalizing hints of his legendary future. Thirteen-year-old Artos, the orphaned fosterling of Sir Ector, finds himself the youngest of a band of unruly, illiterate but nobly-bred bullies—who barely accept him. In danger of growing up to be one of the wild bunch one day Artos stumbles upon a case who very existence he did not suspect. Unwilling but ever more curious he soon becomes drawn to its unseen occupant: a harsh-voiced old dragon. For reasons best known to himself this Master of Riddles has chosen young Artos to reveal his wisdom--acquired over more than one lifetime.

In this 120-page novella Artos gradually realizes that there are many kinds of wisdom—from diverse and even contradictory sources—some of which he must puzzle out for himself. Book learning, reading between the lines of one's life path or one's own palm; court protocol and courtyard smarts—not to mention navigating the intricacies of the human heart. Christened with a new, mysterious patronymic epithet Artos must ultimately mature in order to don with dignity the surname of Pendragon—son of the ancient dragon whom he has finally grown to respect and even to love.

The literary pacing changes in the last two chapters, where plot and action become secondary to more serious dialogue. With oblique references to Arthur's future glory in Celtic legend Yolen includes several pages of deep introspection which may challenge interest of younger readers. Yet we can never get enough insight into the creator of the dream of Camlann—a shining milieu which has captured the imagination of Western civilization for centuries—from the twilight of the Roman era right up to our present age. The world will long cherish and prove the richer for Arthur's legacy of chivalric justice before the Dark Ages.

(August 27, 2011. I welcome dialogue with teachers.)

Mark Buxton says

My name is Artos, and I've mostly enjoyed my life as a foster child to Sir Ector and Lady Marion. However, I've discovered a dragon living in a nearby cave who has promised to teach me wisdom each day. I'm able to read, unlike my illiterate brothers, but I don't understand what the dragon meant when it said I need to learn to read inter linea. It also called me Artos Pendragon, but I don't remember my real parents. I used one of the dragon's gems to buy a wonderful sword, and after that, my brothers finally accepted me as an equal. However, I ran to tell the dragon about my sword, but the cave was empty. Where did it go? I appreciate all of the knowledge I've gained, but I'm angry that the dragon left without telling me. Now what do I do?

This book was based on a short story written by the best-selling author. It was surprising that a plot containing a dragon didn't have much action or suspense. The story was about the growth of Artos's character. He was feeling like the forgotten child in the family and wanted to be welcomed by his three brothers. The dragon's teachings gave him confidence, and he was clearly more intelligent than the other boys. Even as Artos became closer to his brothers, he realized their differences. He had more compassion for others and cared about their feelings. In the end, this short story left me wanting more. The last pages of the book introduced the next phase of Artos's life, and I suspect it would have made an entertaining tale.

Kimbolimbo says

I checked this out for my nephew because I was tired of reading his Animorph reviews. Now that I have finally read it I feel embarrassed that I pushed this book on him. Not one of Yolen's best. It wasn't a bad book really, but when reading it as if I was 9 years old I realized that it was a very confusing and dull book. The language and subject matter was more for a teen-ager. So my gripe might be more with the library system for putting in the Juvenile section when it should have been put in the Young Adult section.

So, one thing I could not tell was whether this book was pro- or anti- Christianity. And was it pro- or anti- the existence of dragons? I am not sure. A fantasy book that included Christian references and faeries but twisted it all up in such a way that it made me wonder what the motivation for this book might really be since it wasn't fun and exciting and creative enough to be a purely a fantasy book about dragons.

Bill Tillman says

When I agreed to review *The Dragon's Boy* for Open Road Media, I checked off the book due to its title. I did not know Jane Yolen, so this the first book of her's I read.

Turns out Jane is a prolific writer in both SF & Fantasy and a self confessed Aurther-holic.

This is a charming tale about the boy Artos and his longing for more from life. Old Linn wants to give it to him but chooses a unique way of doing so. Artos discovers a cave in a lonely tor with a resident dragon. he trades lessons in order to gain status within the castle.

This is an old fashioned page turner that you will not want to put down till the end.

Juushika says

Artos, foster son at a distant castle, encounters a dragon who offers him the gift of knowledge. This is fairly slight, in both conceptual and length; the plot isn't surprising, and it's not a hugely ambitious retelling of Aurtherian mythos. But it speaks well to the intended audience--sometimes in bald moral statements, but Artos's character growth is approachable and sympathetic. I also enjoy how Yolen handles historical fiction, how she balances the romanticized and unromanticized, the lived experience and the mythic tone.

Jennifer says

THE DRAGON'S BOY is a sweet, short retelling of the King Arthur mythos. It's similar to the Disney movie "The Sword In the Stone" but it reshapes things like Merlin and that sword in subtly different ways. For such a short book, there's quite a large twist at the end, but it's an interesting one. Sick of being bullied by the older boys at Sir Ector's small castle, Artos is happy to find a dragon who offers him wisdom in exchange for pots of gravy with meat. Artos complies, and learns, but soon is able to take his place with the other boys and ignores the dragon and its wisdom for a while. Of course, Artos eventually wants the dragon's help, but what he finds there is not what he expects. This is a short story, so we don't see how Artos incorporates his hard-earned lessons, but they are good ones, presented in novel ways. If you are a fan of King Arthur mythology, you'll enjoy this quick reimagining of how he gained the wisdom to become great.

Received as a free digital ARC via Netgalley and the publisher.

Pamela says

A good, solid reworking of the Arthur mythos. I have immense respect for Jane Yolen and her (massive!) body of work, but for some reason, I am never as in love with the works as I wish I could be. So with *The Dragon's Boy*. I really enjoyed the thoughtfulness and depth of the meditations on wisdom and belonging, but the story still felt too short. It's really more of a novella.

I did like how Yolen recast some of the usual suspects of the Round Table--Bedivere, Lancelot, and Kai.

If only this had been a hundred pages longer ... it would have been fantastic.

I received an ARC of a new edition of this book (originally published years ago) from NetGalley and the publisher, in exchange for my honest opinion.

Cheryl says

Not sure how this got on my shelf, as I thought I'd sworn off Arthur stories. But it is Yolen, who is always worth checking out. And it's short. So even though it covers only Artos's childhood, and doesn't illuminate more of the subsequent bits of the legend for me, I don't feel like it wasted my time. And there is a tiny hint of Lancot's character, and a bit more of the other boys'.

Kayla Eklund says

Ever since I was a kid, I have loved Jane Yolen's books. When I was about thirteen years old, I picked up *Sword of the Rightful King*. It's the first King Arthur retelling that I remember reading. I remember loving it so much that I read it in about two days because I couldn't put it down. Recently, I came across a book by her called *The Dragon's Boy* and wanted to give it a try to see if I still love her books as an adult. I thought it was just okay.

I have to admit, if I would have been the intended audience about twenty years ago, I think I would have loved *The Dragon's Boy*. As is, I thought it was just an okay book. I liked it, and found it fun to read. However, it didn't blow me away. I've read books that are a lot better about King Arthur over the years. I also found all of the characters to be unlikable. The main character, Artos, was a brat for most of the book. He was very selfish, and a jerk to those around him. The only side character that I really liked was Lady Marion, and she wasn't in the book very much.

Even though I didn't find *The Dragon's Boy* mind-blowing spectacular, I did enjoy it. Once it ended, I wanted to know more about the author's interpretation of the relationship between Linn and Artos. I might have to read/re-read some of Jane Yolen's other King Arthur books and refresh my mind on her take on the tale. I think this would be a good book for children that are interested in the King Arthur legend, but have never read anything about it before. It's a great beginning stepping stone to other King Arthur retellings.

Theresa says

The Dragon's boy

by Jane yolen

Artos Pendragon is learning to be a knight, a foundling that has been raised in Sir Ector's Beau Regard castle, but finding a secret cave leads to unexpected knowledge. His friendship with this new impressive friend changes his life forever. Teaching him lessons that will help him be accepted by Cai, Lancelot, and Bedvere the other apprentices of the castle. A great story to share with your students who are struggling with coming of age conflicts. Jane Yolen is a great children's author whose stories teach life lessons to children in a story that allows the reader to explore their view of the world.
