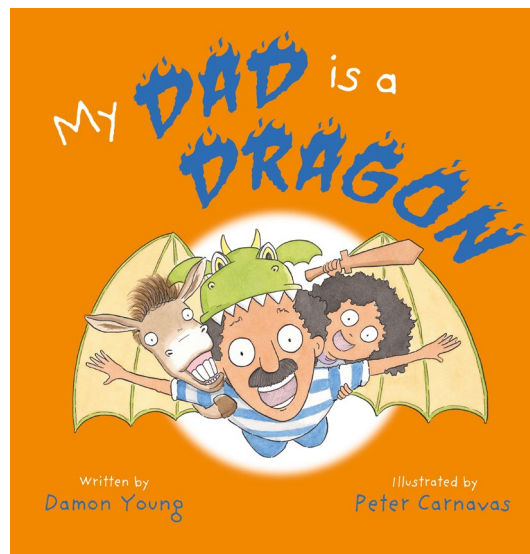


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MY DAD IS A DRAGON

Written by Damon Young,
illustrated by Peter Carnavas



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian
in context with the Australian curriculum
(English)

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SYNOPSIS

My Dad is a Dragon explores the worlds of four very different dads. Together with Peter Carnavas's clever illustrations, Damon Young's signature wit and lyrical verses invite readers to explore the amazing role fathers play in everyday life. Especially if they happen to be dragons!

THEMES

- Fathers
- Alliteration
- Rhyme
- Rhythm
- Dragons

WRITING STYLE

My Dad is a Dragon is written in first person, present tense. Like the other titles in this series, it uses rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and clever illustrations to immerse readers in rich text, both written and visual. With scope for text-innovation and exploration of language features and visual literacy, it has broad applications for both early childhood and middle readers.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading, discuss fathers. Share with a friend what is unique about your father. What are his hobbies? What are his favourite foods? What are his special talents? What do you love most about him?
- Based on the title and front cover, discuss the sorts of things this father is likely to do in *My Dad is a Dragon*.
- Look carefully at the end covers. In the role of the donkey, write a series of diary entries about life with the dragon dad.
- Before reading, share just the written text with students, leaving off the last line of the dragon dad's verses. Ask students to complete the last line, being sure to adhere to the rhyming pattern.
- As you read *My Dad is a Dragon*, take note of all of the references to dragons, fire, smoke etc. Discuss the way in which the illustrations add meaning to the text, and how as good readers, we have to slow down and 'read' the pictures.
- Discuss the use of rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and other poetic devices. How do these add to the mood and pace of the story?
- In *My Dad is a Dragon*, we are introduced to four very different fathers. Create a Fakebook Profile of each father using the following site <https://www.classtools.net/FB/home-page>. Include:
 - What they collect

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- What they do for a job
 - What they say when things go awry
 - How they transport their children
 - Their bedtime rituals
- Create a Fakebook Profile for your own dad using the above criteria.
 - Imagine you are one of the fathers. Write a series of blog posts about your week.
 - Take note of the cameo appearances from other characters in the series, such as the ninja nanna, the pirate pop, the beast brother, the superhero sister and the magician mum. Why have they been included in the text?
 - Discuss the sepia-coloured vignettes that tell us more about the dragon dad, as well as the narrator. What are we being told via these vignettes? How do they help us to gain a better understanding of the story?
 - Each of the fathers has a 'sidekick' in the form of an animal. Discuss the role these sidekicks play in *My Dad is a Dragon*.
 - Write a reflection about the relationship that you share with your dad.
 - Using ideas from *My Dad is a Dragon*, write a story about one of the fathers in the text.
 - Create a word wall for display in the classroom using vocabulary from *My Dad is a Dragon* such as sabres, scimitars, designing, tough etc.
 - In small groups, recite my *My Dad is a Dragon*, putting emphasis on enunciation, timing and tone. Perform this text at assembly.
 - Research further what either the bridge-designing dad or the bee-keeper would do in their roles. Using an app such as *Explain Everything*, talk us through their day at work.
 - What does your dad do at work? Interview your dad and create your own verse about his job.
 - Take note of the alliteration in each verse. When writing your own verses, use this same device.
 - In the role of the little girl, write a journal entry about a dragon-flight with your dad.
 - Using a suitable graphic organiser, compare *My Dad is a Dragon* with one of the other books in the series such as *My Nanna is a Ninja*, *My Pop is a Pirate*, *My Brother is a Beast*, *My Sister is a Superhero* or *My Mum is a Magician*. How are they similar to and/or different from one another?
 - Create and illustrate another verse suitable to include in *My Dad is a Dragon*.
 - Create your own story that celebrates cousins: *My Cousin is a ...*
 - As a companion text, read Briony Stewart's *Kumiko and the Dragon* trilogy, a beautifully written set of novellas suitable for any age group.

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AUTHOR MOTIVATION – DAMON YOUNG

With *My Dad is a Dragon*, I wanted to celebrate the many ways to be a dad. There are architects and bee-keepers. There are dads who love the seaside, and dads who love Lego (until they step on it). And they all love their kids.

As always, I wanted to highlight diversity of ethnicity and lifestyle, and to pack as many jobs, hobbies, and family customs into the book. I also made sure there are plenty of fun rhymes, alliterations, and rhythms – to make the language as stimulating as possible. Children's picture books should be entertaining for kids *and* adults.

Our brilliant illustrator Peter Carnavas (a ukulele-playing dad who was born with a cloth cap on) has drawn all kinds of dads, with all kinds of backgrounds and personalities. And our dragon dad? Well, he's a Greek guy who likes opera, chocolate, hot peppers, amazing cubby houses – and wearing his awesome dragon costume. And if you look closely, you'll also find a dad who looks suspiciously like me – complete with cool swords, bald head, and a Tasmanian beachside view.

ILLUSTRATOR MOTIVATION – PETER CARNAVAS

It's always a joy to illustrate Damon's books, and *My Dad is a Dragon* was fun from start to finish. I drew inspiration from my own family (especially my dad's moustache) for the dragon dad, and I fulfilled a long-held dream to feature a donkey in a picture book. This book is essentially a celebration of dads, in all shapes, sizes and ethnicities, and I hope the illustrations bring these characters to life: from the toy-car obsessed architect dad (with pet pelican), to the skater dad (with pet hedgehog), and the Damon-inspired sword-wielding dad (with pet sun bear). And keep an eye out for all the other Damon Young/Peter Carnavas characters that sneak into the book, including some cuddly toys at the end.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Damon Young is a philosopher and writer. He's the author of several popular nonfiction books, including *The Art of Reading*, *Distraction*, *Philosophy in the Garden* and *How to Think About Exercise*. He's also the editor of *Martial Arts and Philosophy: Beating and Nothingness*. Damon's books have been published internationally, and translated into several languages, including Dutch, Spanish and Turkish. He's written columns and opinion for *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian*, the ABC and BBC, and he's a regular radio guest. Damon has also published poetry and short fiction. He lives in Hobart with his wife, Ruth, and two editors (also known as children). www.damonyoung.com.au

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Peter Carnavas writes and illustrates books for children and the grown-ups in their lives. He has made many picture books, including *Jessica's Box*, *Last Tree in the City* and *The Children Who Loved Books*. He won the 2016 SCBWI Crystal Kite Award, an Australian Book Industry Award in 2017, and his novel *The Elephant* won a Queensland Literary Award in 2018, as well as being shortlisted in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards and the CBCA Awards. He is a popular presenter in schools and his work has been translated into many languages, including Italian, Portuguese, Korean and Dutch. Peter lives on the Sunshine Coast with his wife, two daughters, a dog called Florence and a cat named Harry. www.petercarnavas.com