

Your Next Read

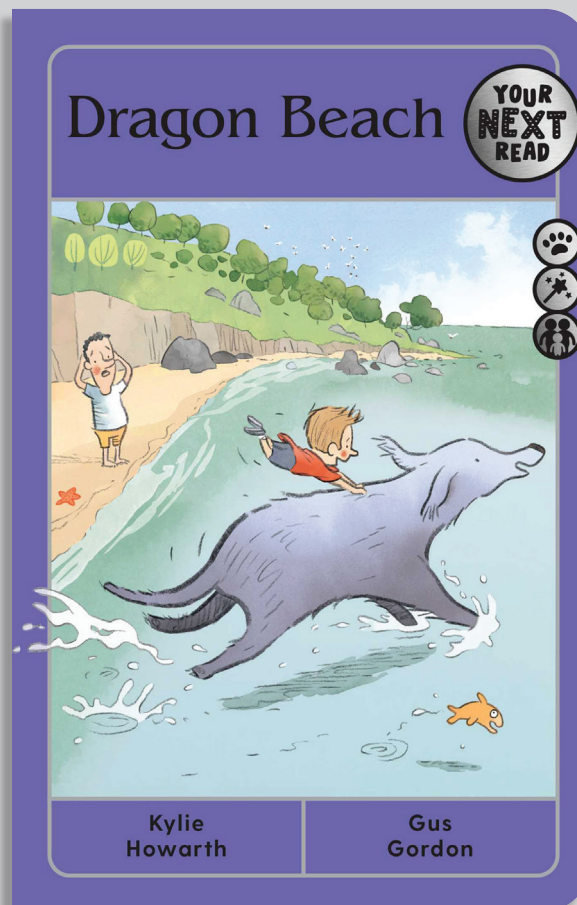
Teaching Notes



Dragon Beach

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As a teacher librarian and passionate advocate for reading, I created the *Your Next Read* teaching notes to be both curriculum-connected and educator-useful. Each set of notes is grounded in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA V9) to ensure teachers can confidently link quality literature to learning outcomes across key learning areas. My aim is for these notes to do more than tick curriculum boxes. I want them to help educators create rich learning experiences and bookish conversations sparked by stories that act as windows, mirrors, and sliding doors and invite every child to see themselves and others in new ways.

The *Your Next Read* framework also intentionally incorporates the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP). Many Australian schools draw on both ACARA and PYP approaches, and I see great value in including both. The PYP focus on inquiry, conceptual understanding, and learner agency complements ACARA's emphasis on critical and creative thinking. Together, they provide a holistic way of engaging with stories, encouraging children not only to learn to read but also to choose to read with purpose, joy, and connection.

A stylized signature of Megan Daley in black ink.

Megan Daley

Curriculum Framework

- The Your Next Read teaching notes are designed to align with the Australian Curriculum (ACARA) and the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) learning areas and outcomes. All literature and recreational reading also support both the PYP Approaches to Learning and ACARA General Capabilities and Cross-curriculum Priorities, encouraging students to think critically and creatively and to view learning as an active, dynamic process.
- The Your Next Read series aims to nurture the joy of reading, with educators playing a key role in the development of the knowledge and skills needed to access text.

These teaching notes aim to:

- Connect *Dragon Beach* to curriculum for meaningful classroom use and real-world connection.
- Prompt student inquiry, discussion, and creative response.
- Foster independent, confident, readers who read for purpose and pleasure.

By linking stories to meaningful learning experiences, these notes encourage students to inquire, reflect, and create, building the bridge between reading in school and choosing to read beyond it.

Synopsis

Jack, his dad, and their dog Franky are enjoying a regular day at Dragon Beach when Franky finds a weedy sea dragon hidden in the sand. Before Jack can stop him, Franky gobbles it up! Suddenly, Franky begins to grow. Jack realises Franky is turning into a dragon! Jack thinks having a pet dragon is pretty amazing, but not everyone agrees. Ranger Roz wants Franky taken away, while Officer Dan and the vet, Dr Boggs, test him to find out whether he's really a dog or a dragon. When Franky fails the tests, Dr Boggs says that if eating a weedy sea dragon turned Franky into a dragon, maybe eating a 'dog' could turn him back. That gives Jack an idea. He rushes to a nearby barbecue and asks for a pile of hot dogs. When Franky gobbles them up, he shrinks back into an ordinary dog. Relieved, Jack suggests a quieter trip next time... maybe to Unicorn Beach?

From the Author

Would you believe that *Dragon Beach* was based on a true story? While walking on our local beach, my dog, Moose, stopped to sniff a clump of seaweed. A girl behind us swooped in to make sure he wasn't about to eat a blowfish, as she knew they were deadly to dogs. We soon realised that Moose had found a well-camouflaged weedy sea dragon—one of the most amazing creatures I've ever seen washed up on a beach. My imagination took over from there, and I started wondering what might have happened if Moose had swallowed the weedy sea dragon.

Themes

Friendship and loyalty: Jack stays by Franky's side and works to help him

Adventure: the beach discovery, dragon ride, and town chaos drive the action

Imagination and fantasy: an ordinary beach walk becomes a magical dragon adventure

Problem-solving: Jack must think quickly to save Franky

Transformation: Franky changes physically and the story world shifts around that change

Courage: Jack faces scary and unexpected situations

Responsibility: caring for pets and making safe choices

Humour: silly and exaggerated moments make the story playful and engaging

Concepts

- **Change**
- **Cause and effect**
- **Sequence**
- **Character**
- **Setting**
- **Perspective**
- **Relationships**
- **Problem and solution**
- **Fantasy vs reality**
- **Prediction**

Getting to Know the Book (dialogic questions)

Pre-reading

Activate Prior Knowledge

- What things might you see at the beach?
- Have you ever taken a dog to the beach? What did it do?
- What animals live in the ocean?
- What do you already know about dragons?

Prediction Questions

- The title is Dragon Beach. Why do you think it is called that?
- Do you think there will be a real dragon in this story, or something pretending to be one?
- What might happen if a dog finds something unusual at the beach?
- How do you think the boy in the story might feel if his dog gets into trouble?

Vocabulary and Language Talk

- What does the word dragon make you think of?
- What does sniffing tell us about the dog's behaviour?
- What kinds of words might describe the beach setting?

Inference and Imagination

- If your pet suddenly changed into something magical, what would you do?
- Would riding a dragon feel exciting, scary, or both? Why?
- What problems could happen if a dragon came to town?

Turn-and-Talk Prompt

Turn to a partner and share:

*Was Franky better as a dog or as a dragon?
Give reasons for your opinion.*

Post-reading

Recall and Literal Understanding

- What did Franky find in the seaweed?
- What happened after Franky swallowed the weedy sea dragon?
- Who came to help Jack at the beach?
- Why did Ranger Roz want to take Franky away?
- How did Jack help Franky turn back into a dog?

Character Thinking

- How do you think Jack felt when Franky first changed into a dragon?
- Why do you think Dad stayed calm during the chaos?
- Was Ranger Roz trying to help or cause problems? Explain your thinking.
- What makes Jack a caring and clever character?

Cause and Effect

- What caused Franky to turn into a dragon?
- How did Franky being a dragon create problems in different places?
- Why did the hot dogs solve the problem in the end?
- What events in the story happened because Franky followed his nose?

Prediction and Extension Thinking

- What do you think might happen at Unicorn Beach?
- If there were another book in this series, what magical animal might Franky become next?
- What rule should Jack and Dad make for future beach walks?

Getting to Know the Book (dialogic questions)

Personal Response

- Which chapter was your favourite and why?
- Would you like a pet dragon?
- What would be fun about it?
- What part of the story made you laugh the most?
- Was there any part that made you feel worried for Jack or Franky?

Partner Discussion Prompt

Turn and talk:

*Was Franky better as a dog or as a dragon?
Give reasons for your opinion.*

Vocabulary Words

Pulling out rich vocabulary from *Dragon Beach* gives students the opportunity to notice, discuss, and use new words in meaningful contexts. The following words from *Dragon Beach* can be used for word walls, oral language discussions, writing prompts, or vocabulary notebooks, helping children deepen comprehension and transfer new vocabulary into their own speaking and writing.

- Bolted
- Clump
- Snout
- Emerge
- Expanding
- Gigantic
- Galloped
- Dart
- Breaching
- Stupendous



Dragon Beach

Curriculum Connections

ACARA Australian Curriculum Version 9

Learning Areas:

English – language. Literature and literacy

Science – (animals, habitats, observable changes, living things)

HASS – (places, beach environments, community helpers)

The Arts – (drama, visual arts, soundscapes, freeze frames)

Technologies – (designing magical creatures and habitats)

General Capabilities:

- Literacy
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal and Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding
- Intercultural Understanding
- Numeracy
- Digital Literacy

Cross-Curriculum Priorities:

- **Sustainability** – caring for beaches, marine creatures, and ocean habitats
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures** – exploring coastal Country/Place, local sea stories, and First Nations connections to ocean environments
- **Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia** – comparing dragon myths, symbols and storytelling traditions from Asian cultures

Content Descriptors:

Language, Literature and Literacy:

AC9EFLY06, AC9EILY06, AC9E2LY06

AC9EFLY02, AC9E1Y02, AC9E2LY02

AC9EFLY07, AC9E1LY07, AC9E2LY07

AC9EFLA08, AC9E1LA09, AC9E2LA09

Science: AC9SFU01, AC9S1U01, AC9S2U01

Hass: AC9HSFK01, AC9HS1K01, AC9HS2K03

The Arts: AC9ADR2E01, AC9AVA2E01

International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP)

Transdisciplinary Theme:

How we express ourselves – storytelling, imagination, creative language, drama, soundscapes, innovation writing

How the world works – animal features, marine life, transformation, cause and effect, scientific curiosity

Sharing the planet – ocean habitats, caring for marine creatures, beach environments, community responsibility

Who we are – feelings, relationships, responsibility, bravery, empathy, problem-solving

Key Concepts:

- Form – What is it like?
- Comparing dog vs dragon features, vocabulary, visualisation
- Function – How does it work?
- Why Franky changes, how the “cure” works, animal adaptations
- Causation – Why is it like it is?
- What caused Franky’s transformation and the resulting events
- Change – How is it changing?
- Physical transformation, changing feelings, story progression
- Responsibility – What is our responsibility?
- Caring for pets, beach safety, protecting living things
- Perspective – What are the points of view?
- Jack, Dad, Ranger Roz, community reactions

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Dragon Beach

Curriculum Connections

Related Concepts:

- Transformation – Franky changes from dog to dragon and back again
- Adaptation – considering how animals change to suit their environment
- Relationships – the bond between Jack, Franky and his family
- Imagination – using fantasy to extend ideas beyond the real world
- Safety – caring for pets, beaches and the wider community
- Habitat – beach environments, marine creatures and where animals live
- Problem-solving – identifying the issue and finding creative solutions
- Perspective – different reactions from Jack, Dad, Ranger Roz and the community
- Sequence – understanding how events unfold in order
- Responsibility – caring for pets and making thoughtful decisions

Approaches to Learning (ATL) Skills:

Thinking Skills:

- Prediction
- Sequencing
- Problem-solving
- Innovation writing
- Cause and effect

Communication Skills:

- Dialogic questioning
- Turn-and-talk
- Oral retell
- Freeze frame discussion
- Sharing writing

Social Skills:

- Partner discussion

- Drama collaboration
- Debate
- Group STEM challenge

Research Skills

- Investigating sea dragons
- Comparing real vs fantasy creatures
- Beach habitat inquiry

Self-management Skills

- Planning writing
- Organising story sequence
- Reflecting on character choices

Learner Profile Attributes:

- Inquirers – asking questions and exploring possibilities
- Thinkers – solving Franky's problem creatively
- Communicators – rich discussion, oral response, drama
- Caring – empathy for Franky and marine life
- Risk-takers – imaginative writing and dramatic performance
- Reflective – discussing character decisions and outcomes

Learning Activity Prompts.

1. Students become story detectives and revisit the Dr Boggs chapter.

Task:

Dog clues:

- wagging tail
- follows smells
- loves sausages
- drinks water
- listens to Jack

Dragon clues:

- gigantic size
- claws
- sea dragon body
- swims fast
- rides through the ocean

Then students answer: Was Franky really a dog, a dragon, or both?

2. At the beginning, Jack is frustrated because Franky is always sniffing and never plays the way Jack wants.

By the end of the story, that exact trait:

- leads to the discovery
- causes the adventure
- helps find sausages
- ultimately saves Franky.

Discuss the message about accepting differences.

Questions:

- Why was Franky's sniffing important to the story?
- How did the thing Jack found annoying become helpful?
- What does this teach us about pets or people being different?

3. Ranger Roz vs Jack: Different Ideas about Safety

Ranger Roz isn't just a 'bad guy'.

She represents:

- rules
- public safety
- protecting the community
- making fast decisions

Jack represents:

- trust
- emotional connection
- knowing Franky best

Opportunity to have a debate around perspective.

Questions:

- Was Ranger Roz right to be worried?
- Was Jack right to trust Franky?
- Who made the better choices in the story?

4. The final line is more than just funny – it's a classic sequel hook.

It invites:

- prediction
- imagination
- innovation writing
- series thinking
- text structure awareness

Questions for discussion:

- Why do you think the author ended with Unicorn Beach?
- How does this make the reader want another story?
- What clues tell us another adventure might happen?

Learning Activity Prompts.

5. Write the next Adventure

Prompt: What happens when Franky visits Unicorn Beach?

Students write the next chapter using the same story structure.

- Franky sniffs something unusual
- 2. a magical transformation happens
- 3. chaos follows
- 4. Jack solves the problem

6. Story Sequencing Cards

Students sequence key events from the story:

- Franky finds the weedy sea dragon
- Franky turns into a dragon
- Jack rides Franky into the ocean
- Ranger Roz arrives
- Franky visits the birthday party
- Franky turns back into a dog

Extension: Students justify why each event comes next using time connectives

3. Design Your Own Magical Beach

Students invent a new magical beach inspired by the ending:

- What magical creature lives there
- What might happen if Franky visits
- What problem could occur

Great for oral retell before writing

8. Dragon STEM Challenge

Challenge students to build a dragon that can carry Jack using:

- Blocks
- LEGO
- Recycled materials
- Loose parts

Focus questions:

- How big must the dragon be?
- How will Jack stay on safely?
- Does it need wings, fins, claws?

9. Soundscape Activity

Recreate the sounds of the story:

- Crashing waves
- Police sirens
- Galloping paws
- Dragon splashes
- Cheering crowds

Students perform the soundscape while the teacher rereads a section aloud



Educator Bookmark - Front

Note to educators: this bookmark is designed to be used as a quick prompt card for you or an adult helper. Consider it a summary of much of the content of these teaching notes to have beside you while reading.

This educator bookmark could also be sent home with a copy of *Dragon Beach* as a homework task and as a guide to parents/caregivers as to how to extend the book reading experience.



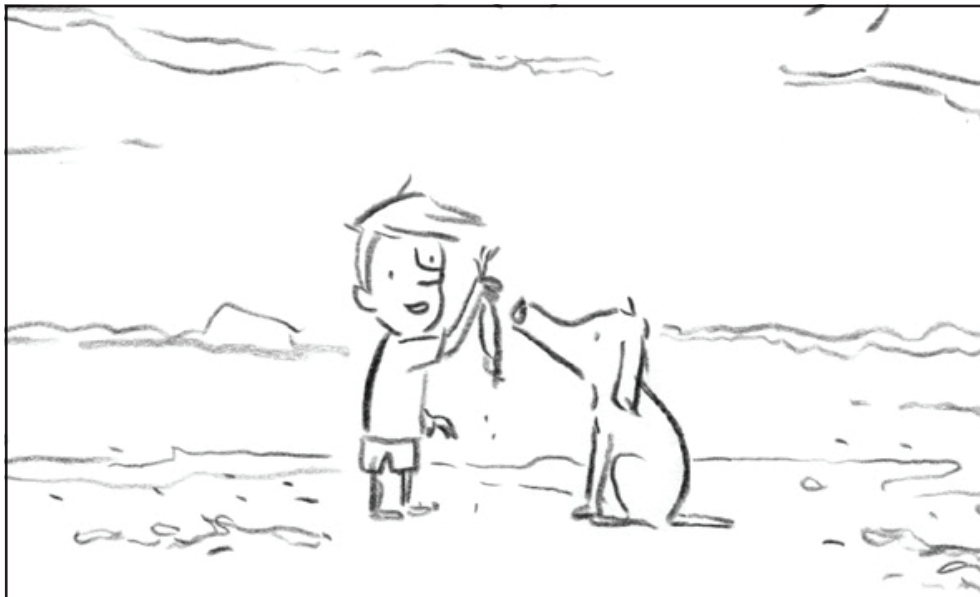
Before Reading

- Preview the title and cover. Ask: Why might it be called *Dragon Beach*?
- Activate prior knowledge about beaches, dogs, sea creatures and dragons
- Encourage predictions: What might Franky discover in the seaweed?
- Introduce focus vocabulary: sniffing, emerge, gigantic, galloped
- Encourage visualising the setting: What might *Dragon Beach* look, sound and feel like?
- Set the reading purpose: follow how Franky's discovery creates a problem

Educator Bookmark - Back

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After Reading

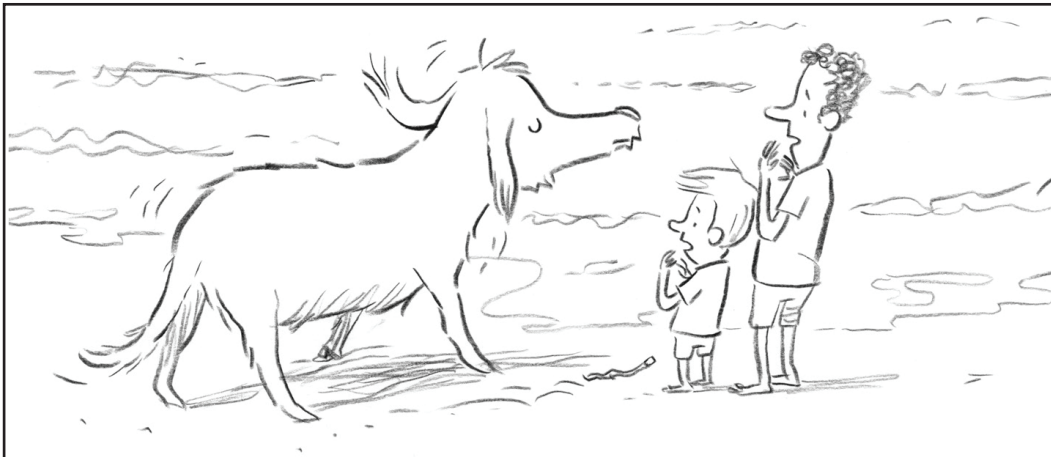
- Retell the main events in sequence from beach discover to hot dog solution (discovery – transformation – chaos – solution)
- Discuss cause and effect: What made Franky change? How was the problem solved?
- Explore Jack's feelings across the story: worried, excited, relieved
- Discuss the main themes: friendship, adventure, responsibility, problem-solving
- Revisit vocabulary through oral retell and acting out key words
- Make a prediction for the sequel: What might happen at Unicorn Beach?
- Extend into writing: students write the next Franky adventure

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Student Bookmark

Note to educators: this bookmark is designed to be photocopied (2 to an A4 page) and placed inside the front cover of *Dragon Beach* and is for independent use by a student or reading group.

If you have class sets or multiple copies of *Dragon Beach*, a laminated bookmark could be added to each copy for use in small group sessions. Laminated bookmarks can be sent home with a copy of *Dragon Beach* as a homework task.



Keep this card alongside you as you read

Dragon Beach

Before You Start

- Look at the title and cover
- Think: What might happen in this story?
- What do you already know about beaches, dogs or dragons?
- Say the tricky words: sniffing, gigantic, emerge
- Make one prediction

After Reading

- Tell someone the story in order
- What was the big problem?
- How did Jack solve it?
- What was your favourite part?
- Say one new word you learnt
- What do you think happens at Unicorn Beach?

Creative Challenge

- Draw Franky's next magical change!
- Will he become a unicorn, mermaid, dinosaur or something new?

