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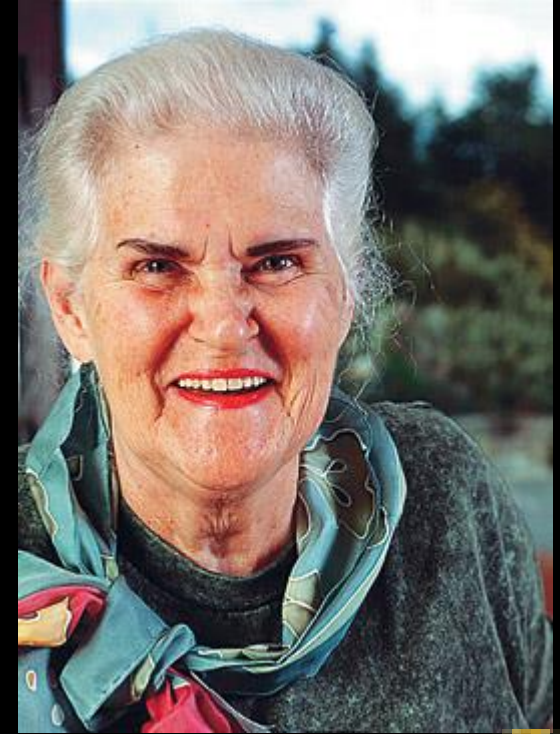
The Smallest Dragonboy by Anne McCaffrey

The Smallest Dragonboy

Meet the Writer

Born in 1926, Anne McCaffrey grew up in New Jersey. She always knew she wanted to be a writer.

Until her death in 2011, McCaffrey lived and wrote in Ireland. Her science fantasy novels about the dragons of Pern are known all over the world and have been translated into many languages.



[More about the writer.](#)

VOCABULARY



goaded

(v.) pushed or driven. A goad is a stick with a sharp point used to herd oxen.

imminent

(adj.) about to happen



VOCABULARY

perturbed (v./adj.) disturbed; troubled

confrontation (n.) face-to-face meeting
between opposing forces

alleviate (v.) relieve; reduce



The Smallest Dragonboy

Preview the Vocabulary

Which word...

1. describes someone who is upset or bothered?
2. comes from a Latin word meaning "to make light"?
3. describes a situation that might lead to a fight?
4. might describe a bully's actions?
5. could mean "on the brink" or "on the edge"?

imminent

perturbed

goaded

alleviate

confrontation



This science fiction story takes place on the planet Pern, an imaginary world where dragons help protect the inhabitants. Pern is a former colony of Earth.



Setting

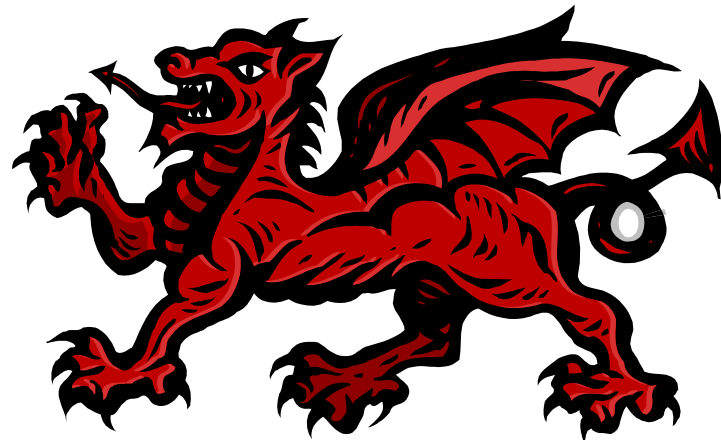
Specialized Vocabulary (Pernesian Words)



Click
here!

- numb weed
- thread
- turn
- Impression
- glow
- Weyr
- firestone
- between
- Pern
- black rock

Write a brief definition for each of the words on the list. Make something up or guess the definition if you have to.



Specialized Vocabulary (Pernesian Definitions)

- **numb weed**: a cream that numbs pain
- **thread**: toxic spores that fall on Pern, destroying anything organic
- **turn**: one year in Pern time
- **Impression**: the joining of minds at hatching time; when a dragon chooses his rider
- **glow**: a light source that can be carried by hand

Specialized Vocabulary (Pernesian Definitions)

- **Weyr**: a home of happy dragons and their riders
- **firestone**: phosphine-bearing mineral which dragons chew to produce burning death balls
- **between**: an area of nothingness and sensory deprivation
- **Pern**: a former colony of Earth
- **black rock**: like coal



More Background...



Pern was formed by settlers fleeing from space pirates during a war. The Pern colonist found that every now and then strange threadlike creatures would fall to the planet's surface, and eat everything except metal and stone.



More Background...



. The Pernesians

bioengineered fire-lizards, small creatures found on Pern. The creatures had the ability to eat the Thread. The Thread “diet” enabled the fire-lizards to grow larger and fly! The settlers soon found that their dragons could do much more.



More Background...



The dragons had telepathic powers with their riders. They could breathe fire if they ate special rocks, and the dragons could go “*between*”. The dragonriders were able to make the dragons disappear and reappear instantly! The dragons and their riders fought the Thread by burning them before they hit anything organic on the planet of Pern.



Characters



- **Keevan** the protagonist
- **Beterli** the antagonist (a bully)
- **Mende** patient, wise
- **Weyrleader** demanding, busy
- **K'last** a role model, courageous



QUICKWRITE

(Choose one.)



- ❖ *Have you ever felt there was something or someone standing in the way of achieving your goal? Write two paragraphs explaining the goal, the obstacle to it, what motivated you to get past the obstacle, and how it turned out.*
- ❖ *Have you ever felt like you didn't fit in or were left out of a group? Write two paragraphs explaining the situation, the group, and how it turned out.*



The Smallest Dragonboy

Literary Focus: Motivation



As you read "The Smallest Dragonboy," you will be asked to analyze the **motivation** of characters in the story.

Why do the characters do the things they do?

What makes them act one way and not another?

characters

The Smallest Dragonboy

Literary Focus: Motivation

Feelings, needs, wishes, pressures from family and friends—all these are forces that pull and push people from inside and outside.



Subject	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
Math	95	92	88	85	82	78	75	72	68	65	62	58
Science	90	88	85	82	78	75	72	68	65	62	58	55
Reading	92	90	88	85	82	78	75	72	68	65	62	58
Writing	88	85	82	78	75	72	68	65	62	58	55	52
Language	85	82	78	75	72	68	65	62	58	55	52	48
History	82	78	75	72	68	65	62	58	55	52	48	45
Art	78	75	72	68	65	62	58	55	52	48	45	42
Music	75	72	68	65	62	58	55	52	48	45	42	38
Physical Education	72	68	65	62	58	55	52	48	45	42	38	35
Character	68	65	62	58	55	52	48	45	42	38	35	32
Attendance	65	62	58	55	52	48	45	42	38	35	32	28
Activities	62	58	55	52	48	45	42	38	35	32	28	25
Behavior	58	55	52	48	45	42	38	35	32	28	25	22



What **motivates** you?

adventure?

The Smallest Dragonboy

Literary Focus: Motivation

The story's main character, Keevan, is smaller and younger and has to work harder than all the other boys.

As you read, ask yourself what forces **motivate** this character. Why is Keevan so determined to become a dragonrider?



The Smallest Dragonboy

Reading Skills: Making Inferences

As you read “The Smallest Dragonboy,” practice the strategy **making inferences**. ▼

An **inference** is an educated guess based on evidence. ▼

Some writers *tell* you directly about a character. When a writer uses the **direct characterization** method, you don’t need to guess or make inferences. ▼


Keevan is short.

Beterli is a bully.

The Smallest Dragonboy

Reading Skills: Making Inferences

Most writers use the **indirect characterization** method. They don't *tell*—they *show* you. ▼

As you read “The Smallest Dragonboy,” stop and answer the questions at the open-book signs  .
Look for ▼

- how the character acts
- what the character says
- how other characters respond to the character