

A CLASSROOM GUIDE TO THE **DRAGONBREATH** SERIES BY URSULA VERNON

YOU'LL LAUGH UNTIL
SMOKE COMES OUT OF
YOUR NOSE!



Captivating
Curriculum Connections,
Gripping Discussion
Questions, and Awesome
Classroom Activities
await you inside!

DIAL BOOKS

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DANNY DRAGONBREATH
5th Grade
4/01

Whoa! The
Dragonbreath
series meets
Core Curriculum
Standards/National
Standards for
grades 3–8.

Dear educator,

Welcome to the fantastical world of Danny Dragonbreath! As the only mythical creature in a school for reptiles and amphibians, nothing seems to come easy for Danny. But, thanks to a fearless attitude, a faithful best friend, a little creative thinking, and a knack for attracting trouble, Danny always finds a way to battle the beasts and come out on top. By integrating illustrations with text, the Dragonbreath books are perfect for read alouds, small groups, or independent reading.

Even though Danny is a dragon, his imagination, heart, and subtle humor make his everyday struggles with bullies, homework, and school (oh, let's not forget rabid hot dogs, ninja frogs, and gigantic bat monsters) relatable to your students' lives.

This classroom guide is designed to support the books and extend students' reading skills. The discussion questions and activities for each individual book encourage greater comprehension, as well as providing readers with the tools needed to construct and examine the story.

We know that you will love the Dragonbreath books as much as we do, and find a permanent home for them on your bookshelf. Be forewarned though, they won't sit there long!*

GEE, THAT'S
SURPRISING!

THE
DRAGONBREATH
BOOKS ARE MY
FAVORITE!



*The Dragonbreath series may cause excessive reading.



DRAGONBREATH



Danny Dragonbreath is the only mythical creature at a school filled with reptiles and amphibians. He can't breathe fire like a normal dragon. The school bully keeps stealing his lunch. And now Danny has to rewrite his report about the ocean and use, *ahem*, actual research. His loyal but nerdy best friend Wendell suggests the library. But Danny has a way better plan.

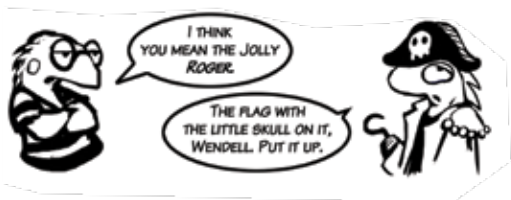
- Even though he practices all of the time, Danny cannot breathe fire. Was there ever something that everyone else could do that you couldn't? How did it make you feel? How did other people treat you?
- Big Eddy is always picking on Danny and Wendell. Do you think it is smart of Danny to give Big Eddy his lunch? Do you think how Wendell responds is smart? If you were in Danny or Wendell's shoes what would you have done?
- Danny waits until the last minute to finish his homework. Instead of doing a report on the ocean, he makes up a fictitious animal. How does not doing his homework on time lead to near disaster?
- What makes Danny and Wendell such good friends? Would you be friends with Danny? Would you be friends with Wendell?

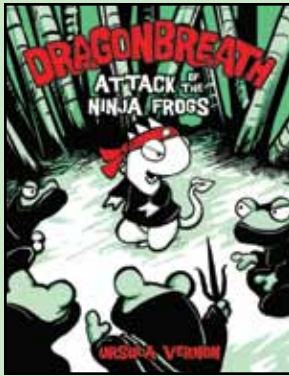


Awesome Activities

- Danny's dream about being a pirate is rudely interrupted by his beeping alarm clock. Pretend you and your friends are all pirates. Assign everyone a pirate name and a job to do on the pirate ship. Draw and label a picture that shows what an average day at sea would be like for you and your jolly crew.
- In the Sargasso Sea, Danny and Wendell stumble upon the lost city of Atlantis. Research Atlantis, then make a map of where you think Atlantis is located. Be sure to include a map key, compass rose, nearby landmasses, oceans, and a description of what you think Atlantis looks like.

- Danny's school lunch springs to life as mutant potato salad. Write and illustrate a short story about your lunch coming to life and taking over your school cafeteria.





DRAGONBREATH

ATTACK OF THE NINJA FROGS



Danny Dragonbreath finds school rather dull. But when ninja frogs try to kidnap the new foreign exchange student and claim she's the rightful ninja queen, things get a bit more interesting. As Danny wisely says, "we have a ninja problem!" Luckily Danny has seen a whole lot of kung fu movies and is ready for anything. Well, almost.

- Danny teases Wendell for liking Suki. Was there ever a time when you were scared your best friend was going to replace you with someone else? How did you handle it?
- Danny's love for comic books and kung fu movies pays off for him big time. Was there ever a time when something you liked to do helped you out? How could playing sports help you out of a jam? How could playing musical instruments help? What about reading books?
- Ninja frogs mistake Suki for their queen. Would you want to be a ninja queen or king? Would there be anything exciting about being a queen or king? Has anyone ever mistaken you for someone else, or called you the wrong name? How did it make you feel? What did you do about it?
- When Danny needs help with his "ninja problem," he goes to his great-grandfather for help. Talk about a time when you needed a family member's help with something. Why is it sometimes good to get an older person's perspective on things?

Extraordinary Discussion Questions

Awesome Activities

- Design a movie poster for *Attack of the Ninja Frogs*. Be sure to include all of the characters, a release date, and a tagline to promote the movie.
- What if Suki did not return to Japan? Write and illustrate an alternate ending to *Attack of the Ninja Frogs*

(the last 4 pages) that tells what would happen to Danny and Wendell if Suki stayed.

- Using pictures from old magazines and your own illustrations, create a scrapbook page from Wendell to Suki so that she can remember her time at Herpitax-Phibbias School for Reptiles and Amphibians. Make sure to include words, phrases, and exciting scenes from the time they spent together.





DRAGONBREATH

CURSE OF THE WERE-WIENER



Danny Dragonbreath knows that school lunches can't be trusted. But even Danny is surprised when his hot dog bites his best friend, Wendell. Suddenly Wendell is having strange cravings, sprouting back hair, and itching like he's never itched before. Could Wendell be morphing into a... were-wiener?

- After Danny has a dream about “being in a dark forest, and something was wrong,” he feels like something strange is about to happen to him and Wendell. He has a premonition. Was there ever a time when you had a premonition about something? What did you do about it? Did your premonition turn out to be right?
- Wendell's mother buys him things like a shower curtain with the solar system on it and periodic-table bandages. Was there ever a time when a family member embarrassed you? What did you do? How did you feel?
- After Danny finds out that he doesn't have any relatives in Transylvania who could help him, he has to come up with a back-up plan. Was there ever a time when your first attempt at doing something did not work out? What did you do?
- In order to defeat the rabid hot dogs, Danny and Wendell have to seek out help from Danny's old lunch—mutant potato salad. Was there ever a time when you were paired up with someone you didn't know, like, or were afraid of? How did you handle it? Did working with that person change your opinion of him or her?



- Pretend that you are a scientist who just discovered a were-wiener. Make a list of all of the symptoms a person would get if he or she were bitten by it. Then make a list of ways people could protect themselves from the rabid food.
- Herpitax-Phibbias School for Reptiles and Amphibians is in need of a new lunch lady. Write and illustrate an advertisement for this position. In order to avoid faulty advertising, be sure to hint at the mutant food problem, but don't come right out and say it—you don't want to scare potential applicants away!
- Write a book review about *Curse of the Were-Wiener* for your school newspaper. Write about what you liked about the book and why you would recommend it to the other students at your school. Remember not to spoil the ending for the people who have not read it yet.





DRAGONBREATH

LAIR OF THE BAT MONSTER



Danny and his best friend Wendell are exploring bat caves out in the Mexican jungle, when things take a rather... unexpected turn: A giant bat monster kidnaps Danny! Of course Wendell responds very calmly: “Call the Army! Call the National Guard! Call the Green Berets!” Now it’s up to Wendell to hunt down the bat monster—before she permanently adopts Danny as her bat monster baby.

- Danny and Wendell rescue a bat from the pool filter. Was it safe for them to take the bat home? Was there anything else they could have done to help the bat instead? Have you ever helped an animal in need?
- Danny does not panic when he is carried off deep into the jungle by Camazotz. He stays calm and tries to think of an escape plan. Talk about a time when you were scared. How did you feel? What did you do? How did you overcome your fear?
- Camazotz’s cave is filled with gold. If Danny, Wendell, and Steve had taken the gold, what should they have done with it? If you found a cave filled with gold, what would you spend it on? Would you keep it all for yourself, or share it?
- Steve spends his life in the jungle studying and trying to help bats. What are some things you could do to help endangered animals? If you could be an animal researcher like Steve, what endangered animal would you like to help? If you lived in the remote jungle, what would be some obstacles you’d have to overcome?

Extraordinary Discussion Questions

Awesome Activities

- Design a travel brochure for Camazotz’s cave. Be sure to include pictures, places of interest, and things to do while visiting the area.
- As a mythical creature, Danny has access to a very interesting and vast bus system. Create a bus map of your town with a

mythical creature line that has stops at fictitious places that you have always wanted to visit. Include a little blurb about the location and an illustration of what you think it looks like.

- Visit www.batcon.org to research some cool bat facts, look at amazing pictures, and find out how you can help save bats. Then create a bat awareness poster highlighting what you learned, debunking bat myths, and encouraging other people to help endangered bats thrive.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ursula Vernon (www.ursulavernon.com) is the author and illustrator of the Dragonbreath series, as well as *Nurk: The Strange, Surprising Adventures of a (Somewhat) Brave Shrew*. The daughter of an artist, she attempted to rebel and become a scientist, but in the end couldn't fight her destiny. She lives in Pittsboro, NC, where she writes, draws, and creates oddities.

A Q&A WITH URSULA VERNON!

Q: What sparked the idea for Danny Dragonbreath?

A: Well, I was thinking about school, and misfits. There's so many stories about kids that don't fit in at school, and at the same time, I was thinking about mythology. At first I had an image of a school for mythological creatures, but it seemed like everybody would be a misfit there, so I started thinking about dragons, and the sort of school where a dragon wouldn't fit in...

Q: Would you say you're more like Danny Dragonbreath or like Wendell? (Or are you more in the ninja frog camp?)

A: Oh, I'm definitely a Wendell most of the time. "This can't be safe! Are you sure this is legal? I don't like the way that chicken is looking at us!" My enthusiasm for weird facts, however, is pure Danny.

Q: Was there ever something (like breathing fire) that you ever desperately wanted to do but couldn't?

A: I have never in my life managed to turn a cartwheel. Doesn't really have the squid-stopping power of breathing fire, though...



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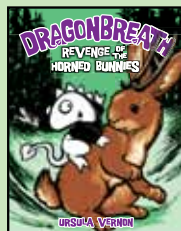
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impossible to put down!**

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IS AN
UNDERSTATEMENT!

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SOUND LIKE MY LIFE
IS DANGEROUS, OR
SOMETHING!



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