

The Dragons of Duna

It was Kei-lin's task to feed the snow dragons after a trek, so he opened the cavern's heavy door and peered into the dusky interior. Four exquisite blue and silver dragons shifted restlessly inside their stalls. After filling their feeding bins, Kei-lin leaned against the wall, admiring the beasts he was tending. While dragons could be unpredictable and dangerous, winters in Duna were so fierce that travel was impossible without them. Their scorching breath could light the soggiest firewood and turn ice into drinking water. They could even sear a path through heavy mist or snow.

Kei-lin petted Te'Ana, his favorite dragon, and offered her a dried apple. Her scales warmed his cold hands. Te'Ana took the apple gently and dropped it onto the straw for her baby. The young dragon had been born in the fall just after Te'Ana awoke from her long summer hibernation. Duna's summers had been scorchingly hot and dry for the past century. The people of Duna had difficulty growing sufficient food in the parched soil. The Dunese suffered in summer, but the dragons, who drank enormous quantities of water, simply slept through the thirsty season.

The baby dragon grew quickly as spring passed and the days lengthened. The warming weather made the dragons sluggish and sleepy—except for the youngster, who became more active every day. She was unlike the others in another, more ominous way: She could not breathe fire. When she tried, she produced only smoke and ash. Kei-lin's father feared she would be useless as a trekker. "You have to get ready to hibernate, little one," Kei-lin told the young dragon one evening as they walked through the dry, brittle grass outside the cavern. "Summer is coming, and water will be scarce soon." He stroked her glittering scales gently. The young dragon sighed and exhaled a huge cloud of smoke and ash. It drifted up into the muggy air. Moments later, Kei-lin felt raindrops splashing on his skin. "Father, come quickly!" he called. By the time his father appeared, the rainstorm had passed, but drops of water still steamed on the ground.

"A rain dragon," his father said softly, gazing at the dragon in awe. "She is the first in over a century!"

MONDAY

Use the words from the story to fill in the blanks.

brittle **exquisite** **interior** **ominous** **parched** **sear**

1. The beautiful golden plate was decorated with _____ jewels.
2. The shooting star seemed to _____ a path through the night sky.
3. Rain rarely falls on the _____ deserts of Arizona.
4. Whipped cream filled the _____ of the cupcakes.
5. We gently washed the _____ teacups so they would not break.
6. The vultures were an _____ sign that something was wrong.

TUESDAY

Use details from the passage to describe the setting.

WEDNESDAY

Choose the correct answer.

1. What are the people of Duna called?

- (A) Dunites
- (B) Dunians
- (C) Dunese
- (D) Dragons

2. What genre of fiction is this story?

- (A) fantasy
- (B) mystery
- (C) historical fiction
- (D) fable

3. What is Kei-Lin's job?

- (A) training the dragons to fly
- (B) taking the dragons on treks
- (C) taking care of the dragons
- (D) teaching the dragons to make rain

THURSDAY

Write the letter of each cause next to its matching effect.

Causes

- A Duna's winters are fierce.
- B Dragons hibernate in the summer.
- C Summer is coming, and it is getting warmer.
- D The young dragon breathes a cloud of smoke.

Effects

- _____ The smoke makes rain fall.
- _____ People use dragons to travel through snow.
- _____ Most of the dragons are getting sleepy.
- _____ They don't need water when it is scarce.

FRIDAY

What do you think will happen next? Write a paragraph to continue the story.
