



TOPICAL TIDBITS

January–March 2016

Volume 5 Issue 1

Dragons

Stories and legends about dragons have been around for thousands of years. People used to think that dinosaur bones were dragons because they didn't know of any creature large enough to have such bones. Legends and myths were told about these fantastical creatures who often had magical powers.

In the East, dragons symbolize luck, wisdom, and power. Eastern dragons are viewed more as a protector than a villain. In folk tales they are often portrayed as good and intelligent. Instead of being hated, people worship them in shrines and temples. Chinese believe they are descendants of the dragon who is the god of rain. Children who are born in the year of the dragon are said to be natural leaders who are unafraid of challenges and willing to take risks.

Dragons in the West don't have such a favorable reputation. They are often portrayed as bloodthirsty, fire-breathing monsters who hoard gold and ravish towns. Brave men are often called upon to fight these dragons and rescue captives. Western dragons often live in dry places like deserts and caves while the ones in the East tend to live near water.

You might like to start a collection of Eastern and Western dragons. Below is an example of one from the East. Enjoy this issue about dragons!



This Year of the Dragon souvenir sheet is from Christmas Island, a territory of Australia. Notice the water below the dragons. How many dragons do you see?

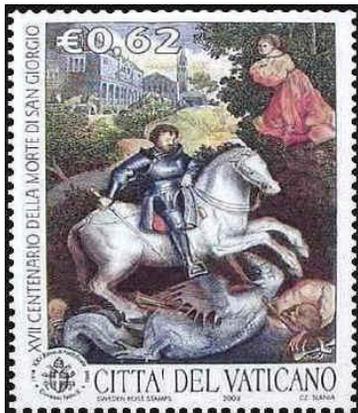
Legendary Dragons



Maleficent, from *Sleeping Beauty*, is one of the most awful of all Disney villains. Because she is an evil sorceress, she can transform into a black and purple dragon. Prince Philip, with the help of three good fairies who enchant his sword, is able to defeat Maleficent in the end. He rescues Princess Aurora and they live happily ever after.



Described as "a most specially greedy, strong and wicked worm," Smaug is the dragon in J.R.R. Tolkien's book, The Hobbit. Smaug laid waste to a dwarf kingdom and then spent the next 150 years guarding the magnificent treasures he captured. A party of elves led by a hobbit tries to get the treasure back. You will have to read the book to see if they are successful!



St. George, the patron saint of England, was born in Turkey during the 3rd century. According to legend, there was a fierce dragon terrorizing a town. To appease him, the villagers fed him sheep but when those ran out, the dragon demanded that they feed him maidens. Soon the king was in despair because the only maiden left was his daughter. He promised her in marriage to any knight who could save her. Can you guess what happened next and who saves the day?



In Greek mythology, King Triptolemus was a lesser god who was a favorite of Demeter, the goddess of the harvest. Demeter gave Triptolemus a chariot with winged dragons in which he traveled over the earth with seeds of wheat spreading the knowledge of agriculture.

Charity Stamps

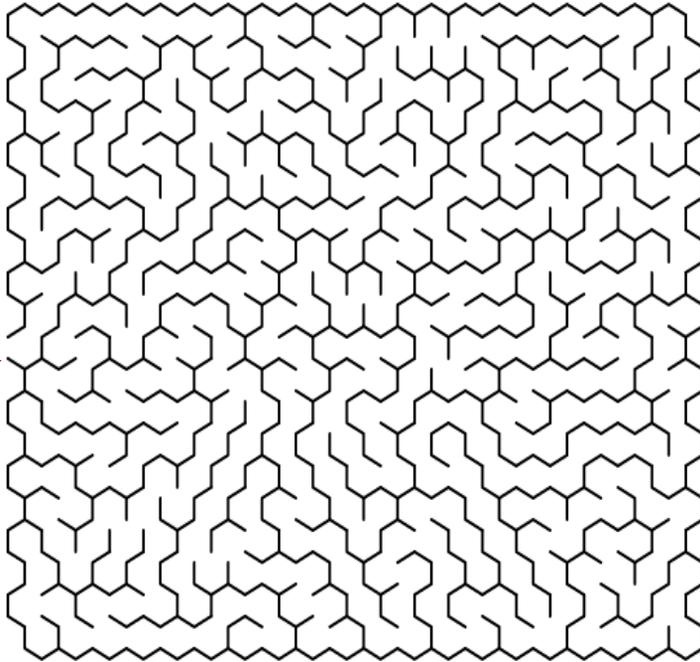
These charity stamps show knights fighting dragons. On the stamp from Denmark (with red border), the dragon represents alcohol and the dragon on the Polish stamp (on the right) represents tuberculosis. These stamps were used to raise money to help win the fight against these "dragons."



Dragon Fun

An A-maze-ing Adventure:

Can you help this brave knight find the dragon that has been terrorizing the village?



Enter →

→ Exit

Q: What did the dragon say when he saw St. George in his shining armor?

A: Oh, no, not more tinned food!

Q: Why do dragons sleep during the day?

A: So they can fight knights!



The legend of the Trutnov dragon tells the story of a bold 11th century knight named Trut who defeated a terrible dragon in battle. This 1952 stamp from Czechoslovakia shows the exciting fighting. You might like to color the stamp.

Dragons

