



MUSHROOM

# E-MAGAZINE

Celebrating Students' English Language Learning

Date: February 2025

Issue: 01 (the prototype)

**THIS ISSUE'S TOPIC:  
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**





## CONTENTS

Editor's Introduction .....	2
New Year, New Project .....	2
Student Articles.....	3
Symbolism of the Dragon and the Snake .....	3
Student Articles.....	4
Dragon .....	4
Student Articles.....	5
How Dragons Turn into Snakes .....	5
Student Articles.....	6
CATS.....	6
Solenodon.....	6
Student Articles.....	7
The symbolism of snakes in different cultures.....	7
Student Articles on mushroom-scholars.org .....	8
Smaug.....	8
Teacher's Advice .....	9
Reading is very Important.....	9
Word Puzzle Fun.....	10
Riddle 1 .....	10
Riddle 2 .....	10
Comic Club .....	10
Fox Detective .....	10
In the next issue... ..	11
The Next Issue's Topic is.....	11
Useful Vocabulary .....	11

### NEW YEAR, NEW PROJECT

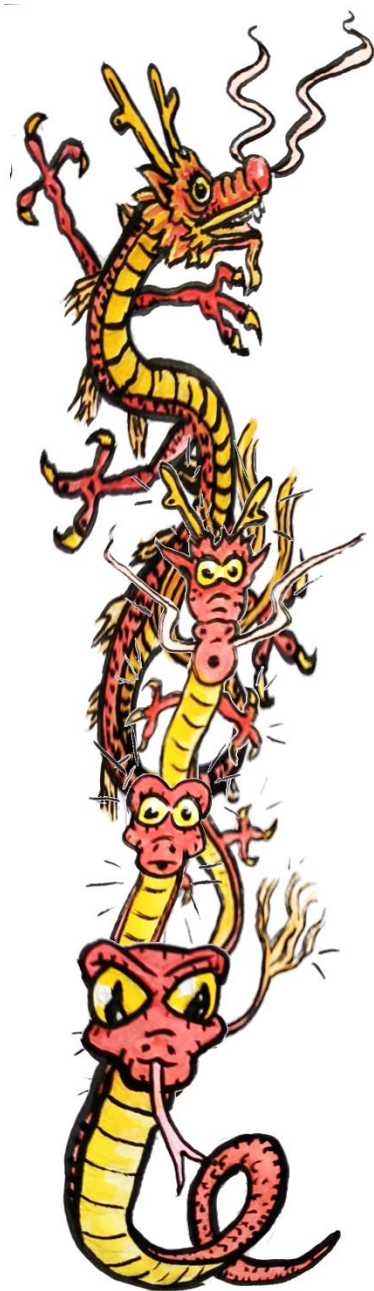
By Dr Terrett

As we welcome a new year, it is the perfect time to begin new projects. This magazine is one such project—a celebration (活动) of students' English language learning.

In this first issue, you will find writing, art, and reflections (反思) from my own students. However, I hope to expand (扩展) future issues to include work from any students who wish to share their English learning journey with others.

The transition (迁移) from one year to another is full of meaning. In the Chinese zodiac (十二生肖), we are moving from the Year of the Dragon to the Year of the Snake. These two creatures have very different symbolic (象征性的) meanings in different cultures. Dragons are often seen as powerful (强大的) and lucky in China, while in Western stories, they are sometimes greedy (贪婪的) and dangerous. My Grade 6 students, who have been reading *The Hobbit*, are very familiar with Smaug, the boastful (自豪的) and treasure-loving dragon. Snakes, on the other hand, can symbolize wisdom (智慧) or danger depending on the culture. Some of the student work in this magazine explores (探索) these ideas.

That's enough from me—please enjoy this collection (集合) of student creativity. I hope you find it inspiring (启发人心的) and look forward to sharing more in the future!



### SYMBOLISM OF THE DRAGON AND THE SNAKE

By Vincent, Grade 6, from Suzhou

Our first article introduces the symbolism of the dragon and the snake in different cultures.

#### The Symbolism of the Dragon and the Snake in different cultures.

In many cultures around the world, dragons and snakes are important symbols, but they often have very different meanings depending on where you are.

In Chinese culture, the dragon is a symbol of strength, power, and good luck. Unlike dragons in Western stories, which are often seen as dangerous, Chinese dragons are viewed as kind and helpful creatures. They are believed to bring good harvests and rain, making them a symbol of prosperity and happiness. The Chinese dragon is often seen as a protector of people and is tied to the emperor, who was thought to have a special connection to these powerful beings.

On the other hand, in Chinese culture the snake is seen in many different ways. While it can symbolize danger and trickery, it also represents change and growth. This is because snakes shed skin, which is seen as a way of showing how people can change and grow. Snakes can also be symbols of wisdom, although they are sometimes feared or mistrusted.

In Western (maybe middle eastern) cultures, dragons are usually viewed as fierce and destructive creatures. In stories like those of St. George and the Dragon, the dragon represents evil and is something that must be defeated at all costs. Meanwhile, snakes also have mixed meanings. In the Bible, the snake is often linked to temptation and evil, like in the story of Adam and Eve. But snakes can also represent healing and knowledge, like in Greek mythology where snakes are connected to healing gods.

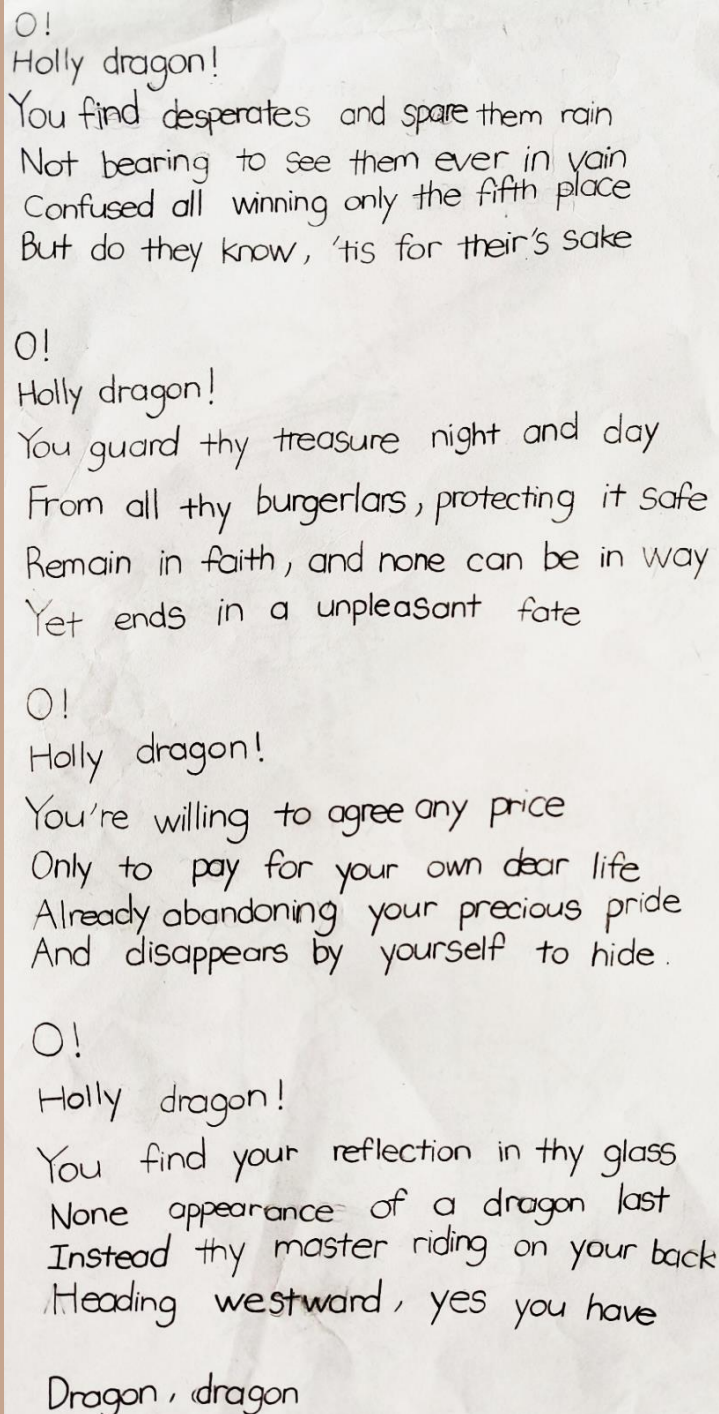
In conclusion, while dragons and snakes are both powerful symbols, their meanings change depending on the culture. They can represent everything from wisdom and healing to danger and destruction.

## Student Articles

### DRAGON

By Mary, Grade 6, from Suzhou

It was the end of the year of the dragon and the students were studying *The Hobbit*. In this wonderful poem stanzas 1, 3 and 4 are about dragons in Chinese mythology and the dragon in stanza 2 is Smaug. The holly/holy pun may have been inspired by Christmas, which was when the students were working on this dragon themed project.



O!  
Holly dragon!  
You find desperates and spare them rain  
Not bearing to see them ever in vain  
Confused all winning only the fifth place  
But do they know, 'tis for their's sake

O!  
Holly dragon!  
You guard thy treasure night and day  
From all thy burgerlars, protecting it safe  
Remain in faith, and none can be in way  
Yet ends in a unpleasant fate

O!  
Holly dragon!  
You're willing to agree any price  
Only to pay for your own dear life  
Already abandoning your precious pride  
And disappears by yourself to hide.

O!  
Holly dragon!  
You find your reflection in thy glass  
None appearance of a dragon last  
Instead thy master riding on your back  
Heading westward, yes you have

Dragon, dragon

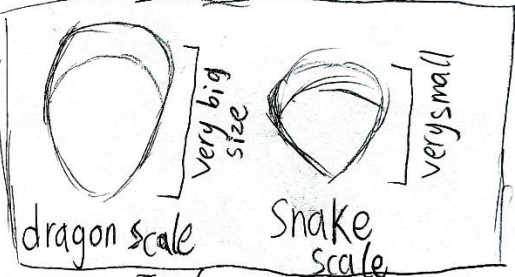
## HOW DRAGONS TURN INTO SNAKES

By Gabbie, Grade 6, from Suzhou

This short story creatively explores the transition from dragon to snake.

How Dragons turn into Snakes

Have you ever noticed that snakes are just limb-less dragons? well that's because they are! During the transition from the year of the dragon to the year of the snake, dragons have the option to become snakes to stay in the center of attention for another year. Most dragons prefer being a dragon than a snake though. The few dragons who transform into snakes goes through a process similar to a caterpillar's but in reverse. First, they chew off their arms and legs. Dragons have special methods to stop the bleeding quickly. Next, they shed their skin like a snake to remove their horns and to replace their scales. After that, the dragon-snake thing decide whether or not to keep it's fire (which turns into venom somehow). Finally, you've got a snake!



dragon scale      Snake scale

Facts:

- In chinese folklore(?) Chinese Dragons start out life as a snake
- Around 20% of the dragon population turn into snakes every year
- Dragons are real!!!

(If you're a dragon reading this and you want to become a snake too, keep in mind, becoming a snake is permanent!)

## Student Articles

### CATS

By Chali-Ray, Grade 4, from Suzhou

It is common for people to enjoy a show during the festive season. Here is a primary school student's report on experiencing the musical CATS.

we went to "cats", and it was awesome. I saw lots of acrobatics. And, The live music is much better than the video, because it is live music, with a band backstage. Mummy's favorite part was "Bus". In my opinion, it was all great. Like, perfect.

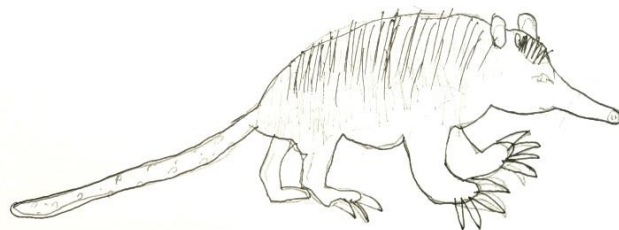


### SOLENODON

By Chali-Ray, Grade 4, from Suzhou

As well as enjoying CATS, this student prepared a research report for his grandfather about an unusual animal that is considered to be a living fossil.

Class: mammal  
Size: 28-32 cm  
feature: long snout, naked scaly tails, clawed feet.  
lives: lowland dry forest and highland pine forests.  
diet: bugs and small reptiles.  
behavior: nocturnal, can climb, can't jump  
life span: 11 years  
predators: owls



# Solenodon



### THE SYMBOLISM OF SNAKES IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

By Terry, Grade 7, from Suzhou

Snakes have held deep symbolic significance across civilizations, representing a spectrum of meanings from wisdom and renewal to danger and deceit. Their ability to shed skin often ties them to transformation, while their venom adds an element of duality—both life-giving and deadly.

#### *China: Wisdom and Transformation*

In Chinese culture, the snake is associated with intelligence, cunning, and strategic patience. As one of the twelve zodiac animals, it represents individuals who are analytical and composed, striking at the right moment. In Daoism and Buddhism, the snake symbolizes spiritual transformation, subtly influencing fate in ways that are less direct than the commanding dragon.

#### *Fertility and Renewal*

Many cultures link snakes to fertility and the cycle of life. The Hopi people of North America performed an annual snake dance to bring rainfall and ensure agricultural abundance. In Hinduism, the coiled serpent **Kundalini** represents latent spiritual energy, waiting to awaken within an individual.

#### *Guardianship and Protection*

Ancient Egyptians viewed snakes as both divine protectors and symbols of sovereignty. The **uraeus**, a cobra emblem on pharaohs' crowns, signified their divine right to rule. The goddess **Wadjet**, often depicted as a serpent, was a guardian of Egypt and its rulers.

#### *Healing and Medicine*

In Greek tradition, snakes were linked to medicine and healing. The **Rod of Asclepius**, featuring a serpent entwined around a staff, remains a global medical symbol today. The Greeks recognized the duality of snake venom—it could be both a poison and a cure, reinforcing the idea of balance in life.

#### *Christianity: Deception and Redemption*

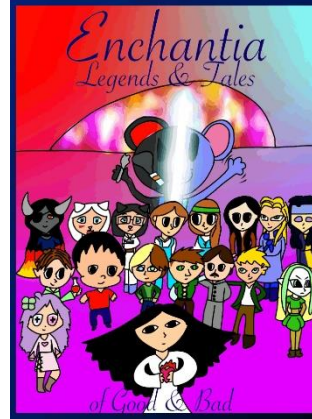
Christian symbolism largely paints the snake as an agent of deception. In Genesis, the serpent tempts Eve, leading to humanity's fall from grace. Yet, paradoxically, the **bronze serpent** raised by Moses in the desert was a source of healing, reflecting the ambivalent nature of snake imagery in religious contexts.

#### *Conclusion: A Creature of Contradictions*

The snake's symbolism is anything but fixed—it is revered and feared, seen as a healer and a destroyer, a guardian and a trickster. Across civilizations, it remains an enigma, embodying the complexities of nature, wisdom, and power. (written with the help of ai)







**Enchantia**  
**Click here to read our fantasy novel**

**PENNY DREADFUL** Click here to read stories of crime and mystery set in the Victorian Era

Read the first two chapters of a student's fantasy story inspired by Percy Jackson:  
[A Rip in Mythology Chapter 1](#)  
[A Rip in Mythology Chapter 2](#)

## SMAUG

By Lanyi-May, Grade 6, from Suzhou

# Smaug

*Smells and feels your air*

Smaug likes riddles. Does not like dwarves or burglars.

Not that intelligent, he actually shows Bilbo his weak spot while bragging.



The bells were ringing in the Dale,  
The men looked up with faces pale,  
The dragon's ire more fierce than fire,  
Laid low their towers and houses frail.

The mountain smoked beneath the moon,  
The dwarves they heard the tramp of doom.  
They fled their hall to dying fall,  
Beneath his feet, beneath the moon.

*Big fat dragon  
Perfect for dinner parties!  
Where you are the main course!  
I'm scared*

*Or rather, the starter. He's very big.*

Very cruel and nasty. Doesn't even do anything with the treasure he killed most of the population of Dale to get.

Gets his comeuppance when *BARN-HMM-HIS-PYH-HMM*. (Sorry, don't want to spoil the story)

The pines were roaring on the height,  
The wind was moaning in the night.  
The fire was red, it flaming spread,  
The trees like torches blazed with light.

*"Five feet high the door and three may walk abreast."*

### THIS ISSUE'S GUEST TEACHER



#### DR M A TERRETT

I'm not really a guest teacher because I am the editor of this magazine, but I should still introduce myself.

I have worked as an English teacher and examiner for many years. Before that, I was an artist and did some early web design. So, working on this magazine and building the Mushroom website combines my interests.

### READING IS VERY IMPORTANT

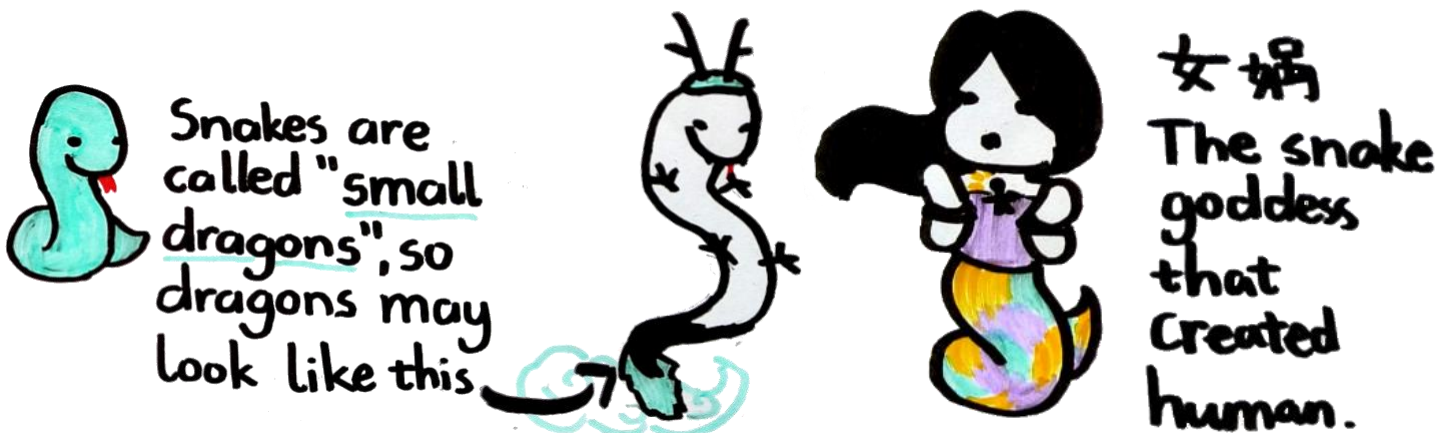
By Dr M A Terrett, teacher at OCAC, Suzhou (and Mushroom ☺)

In this section, I want to share some advice for students learning English. My advice is simple: read as much as you can. The more you read, the bigger your vocabulary will become. You will also start to recognize common sentence patterns, which will help you with grammar. As you get better at reading, studying will become easier and less stressful.

Reading also helps you learn new things and make connections between different topics. Reading can help inspire you and spark your imagination.

Reading is important because it is closely linked to success in school.

That's all from me! I hope this magazine encourages you to read more, and I look forward to reading more of your work in the next issue.



Snake artwork by Dido, Grade 6, from Suzhou

# FOX DETECTIVE

By Ella, Grade 6, from Suzhou

# FOX DETECTIVE CASE #1 THE STOLEN COOKIES BY ELLA HU



STARRING



FOX DETECTIVE!!!



## Word Puzzle Fun

In China, the Lantern Festival marks the end of the Spring Festival holiday period and, as well as making and lighting lanterns, people traditionally enjoy solving riddles. So, the puzzles in this first issue are riddles.

### RIDDLE 1

*What stays in one corner but travels around the globe?*

### RIDDLE 2

*What's as light as air but even the strongest man cannot hold it for more than a few minutes?*

*You can find the answers on the last page.*

## In the next issue...

### THE NEXT ISSUE'S TOPIC IS...

SPRING

&

SHAKESPEARE

After Spring Festival comes the spring, so let's celebrate the coming of spring in our English language learning work.

The 24<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> March is Shakespeare Week in the UK and 23<sup>rd</sup> April is celebrated as Shakespeare Day, so it seems a good opportunity for us to celebrate this important poet who is recognised as the greatest playwright in the English language.

### USEFUL VOCABULARY

Here are some words that are useful for discussing the spring and Shakespeare:

Blossom (开花)

Bloom (盛开)

Bud (花蕾)

Breeze (微风)

Birth (出生)

Rebirth (重生)

New growth (新生长)

Sunshine (阳光)

Meadow (草地)

April showers (四月小雨)

Poet (诗人)

Poem (诗歌)

Play (戏剧)

Playwright (剧作家)

Tragedy (悲剧)

Comedy (喜剧)

History (历史)

Theatre (戏剧)

Stage (舞台)

Actors (演员)

"From you have I been absent in the spring,  
When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,  
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything."

(From Shakespeare's *Sonnet 98*)

#### Answers to the Riddles

Riddle 1 = A stamp    Riddle 2 = Breath

Send student work for the next issue: [e-magazine@mushroom-scholars.org](mailto:e-magazine@mushroom-scholars.org)

Share articles, stories, artwork, puzzles, jokes, comics, etc.



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WeChat connection coming soon...

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