

Topic Page: [Dragons](#)

Definition: **dragon** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Mythical scaly lizard, snake or fire-breathing monster. Often depicted with wings, talons and a lashing tail. In some traditions it has many heads, or changes shape at will. Sometimes, such as the tale of St George and the dragon, it is used symbolically as the personification of evil. In China and Japan, the dragon is identified with a beneficent force of nature.

Summary Article: **dragon**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Mythical reptilian beast, often portrayed with wings and breathing fire. An occasional feature of classical legends such as the rescue of Andromeda, dragons later held a central place as opponents of gods and heroes in Vedic, Teutonic (Siegfried), Anglo-Saxon (Beowulf), and Christian (St George) mythologies, possibly accounting for their heraldic role on medieval banners and weaponry.

The Red Dragon is familiar as the badge of Wales. In English heraldry the dragon was originally indistinguishable from the **wyvern**, a dragonlike creature with a long tail instead of hind legs, but from Tudor times dragons were usually depicted with four legs. In Christian art the dragon is linked with the devil; but in traditional Chinese belief it is a benevolent monster, a symbol of divinity and royalty, and an omen of prosperity, associated with storms and rain.

Chinese dragons The creatures were first mentioned as early as the 3rd millennium BC when a pair were seen by the Yellow Emperor. A five-clawed dragon became the symbol of imperial authority and many of the emperor's possessions were given related names, including the **dragon-throne**, **dragon-boat**, and **dragon-steps**. Four **dragon-kings** were believed to rule the four seas and to bring rain. In times of drought, the dragon-king would be propitiated by offerings at temples by the sides of wells.

Greek dragons In Greek mythology the dragon is represented as an unrelenting sentinel; Ladon, offspring of the monster Typhon and Echidne (half woman, half serpent), guarded the golden apples tended by the Hesperides, and another sleepless dragon watched over the Golden Fleece sought by Jason and the Argonauts. The Hydra, a beast with nine heads, was slain by Heracles (Hercules).

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