Lessons from a Dragon

Dragons are clever things. When I was a child, a dragon would visit me at night. By day, it would change itself into a dressing gown hanging on the door. As I said – dragons are clever things. Check your dressing gown. There might be bones in the pocket.

All this brings me to the first lesson. It is taken from an ancient dragon saying:

Lesson 1

“Meddle not in the affairs of the dragon; for you are crunchy and taste good with ketchup.”

- unknown dragon-

Hmm … I hear you say, but there are no dragons. David Whiteland, in his Book of Pages (adapted) writes:

Some will be tempted to think dragons are fictitious because – despite their size – nobody seems to have actually seen one. And so it is necessary from time to time to provide evidence: a burnt tree or two, a splintered rock, the mysterious absence of a villager. These events convince of the existence of dragons because the people do not know enough about the world to understand that dragons do not exist.”

We all have our fears. Some are rational, others are not. A number of students are new to the School and may not yet know enough about King’s to understand that many of their fears are unfounded. For the old hands, let’s make certain that these fears are dispelled by warmth and acceptance.

Lesson 2

If the lion and the dragon fight, both will die.

- unknown dragon-

One of the features of King’s is our cultural diversity. Some might be threatened by this. I see it as a strength, because it gives our community the variety necessary to ensure a Kingsman is prepared for the real world. Because it is a multi-cultural world, we must learn to operate with those that are different. We need to tread the world stage or else be condemned to insignificant roles in regional theatres. The lion of the West must not fight the dragon of the East, or else both will die. Let’s ensure that racism has no place within our community.

Lesson 3

To attract good fortune, spend a new penny on an old friend, share an old pleasure with a new friend and lift up the heart of a true friend by writing his name on the wings of a dragon.

- unknown dragon-

This is not an invitation to graffiti a dragon! It is an invitation to honour old friends. It is a request that you make new friends. And it is a plea to honour your true friends in some way. Learning is at the heart of what we do at King’s. Most of us have difficulties with some element of the curriculum. Let’s all agree to tame these difficulties. Let’s work together to carry the academic reputation of ourselves and our mates to fresh heights.

Lesson 4

May the dragon of life only roast your hot-dogs and never burn your buns.

The dragon of the West is reputedly an unpleasant beast that fully deserves its comeuppance at the hand of heroes like St George. The St George dragon was a plague-bearing beast that had to be fed two sheep a day lest it will kill the villagers of Silene in Libya. When the sheep ran out, the villagers fed their children to the dragon. When it came to the King’s daughter, Sabra, to be sacrificed, she was taken to the lake wearing a bridal gown. Just before she was devoured, our hero trotted up and slew the dragon with his mighty sword – which was called Ascalon – the name Winston Churchill called his personal aircraft in World War II. But I digress.
2012 celebrates the dragon of the East and ushers in one of the most powerful signs of the Chinese Zodiac. Occurring only once every twelve years, the Year of the Dragon introduces a pleasant reptile that roasts hot-dogs rather than burns buns. Chinese dragons are good news. They are strong, creative and energetic. They bring luck and leadership. Bruce Lee, John Lennon and Russell Crowe were all born in the Year of the Dragon.

Let’s also strive to be good news this year. Let’s also be leaders. Let’s also set big, hairy, audacious goals. I want Kingsmen to take the world by storm including the GPS and the HSC and ...

2012 is not just the Year of the Dragon, it is the Year of the Water Dragon. Water has a calming influence on what can be a rather excitable dragon. We all need to be calmed at times. We need to practise self-discipline and curb some of our natural inclinations, particularly if they run the risk of burning others by hot-headed actions.

The Chinese Dragon may be good news – but not perfectly good news. Of his 117 scales, 81 are said to be of the positive ‘yang’ essence. The other 36 are of the troublesome ‘yin’ essence – which brings me to final lesson …

Lesson 5

Never laugh at live dragons.

- J R R Tolkien -

Don’t ever think there are things that can’t harm us. Rather too many boys think they will live forever and cheat the drugs, evade the crash and dodge the bullet. Life is as precarious as it is precious. We need our young men to know that they live in an uncertain world where goodness cannot always be presumed.

The Chinese New Year started on 23 January 2012. A number of customs are commonly followed at the start of a Chinese New Year. There might be benefit in following a few of them:

- Wear new clothes. (Those of you in new school uniforms look splendid!)
- Be on your best behaviour. (Enough said.)
- Keep an empty seat at the table. (To remind us that not everyone can enjoy the King’s banquet, so let’s be grateful for what we’ve got.)
- Wear red to scare away evil. (We’ll give you a red stripe on the trousers to help!)
- Get rid of past grudges.

I wish you well in this Year of the Dragon, and trust that within it, you may enjoy great fulfilment.

Heroes take journeys, confront dragons, and discover the treasure of their true selves.

- Carole Lynn Pearson -

Dr Tim Hawkes