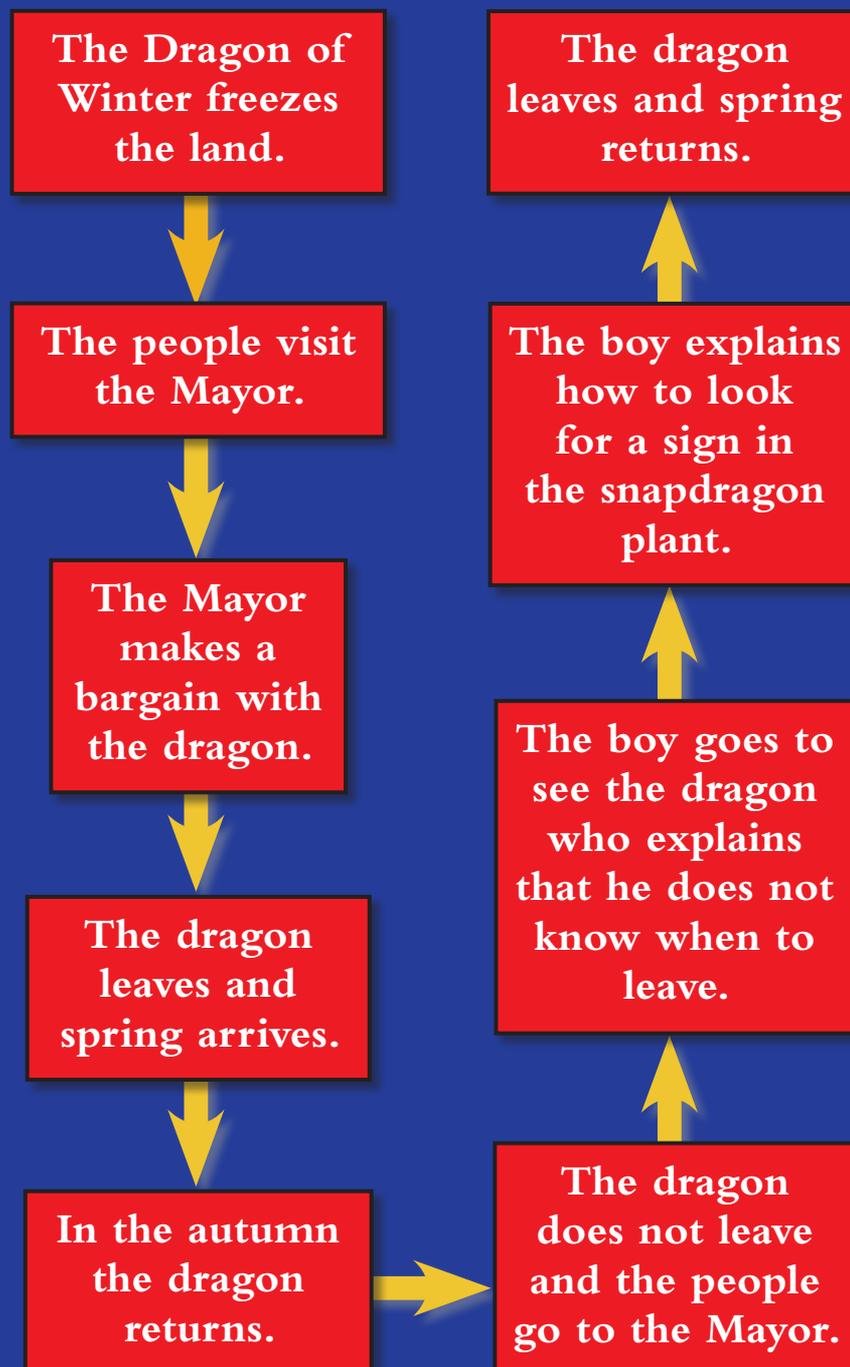


Storyteller

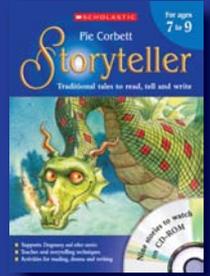
The Snapdragon Plant

This flow chart shows the key stages of the story 'The Snapdragon Plant' retold by Taffy Thomas. It is taken from *Storyteller For ages 7 to 9* by Pie Corbett (Scholastic, £20 PB).



The Snapdragon Plant

Retold by Taffy Thomas – taken from *Dragonory and other stories* for 7–9 year olds compiled by Pie Corbett (Scholastic, £5.99 PB)



It was an iron winter. The Dragon of Winter had curled itself around Moel Fammau, with its icy scales and tail sliding down into the Welsh Borders, Cheshire and beyond. The rivers Mersey and Dee were frozen solid; even part of the sea was frozen.

The ground was so hard that Mr Rose, the gardener, couldn't plant his plants or harvest his carrots or cabbage. Ships couldn't sail into the port of Liverpool with food from foreign parts. All the people who lived in that part of England fell on hard times.

So they went to the pompous Mayor and said, "You are going to have to do something about this." The Mayor said he would go and reason with the dragon and persuade him to go elsewhere.

He put on his climbing boots and warm clothes. Slipping and sliding, he climbed up Moel Fammau until he was staring into the icy blue eyes of the Dragon of Winter.

He said, "You are making my people very unhappy. They are not getting enough food and they are freezing. I am afraid you are going to have to go away."

And the dragon said, "But I love it here. I like the people here. I had no idea I was making them unhappy."

"I'm sorry," said the Mayor, "but you are going to have to go elsewhere."

And the dragon said, "Well, where might I go?"

"You could fly away to the frozen north and live on the ice cap with the polar bears and the Eskimos," replied the Mayor.

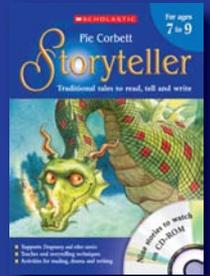
A tear came in to the dragon's icy blue eye. "But I like it here," he said.

"Well, I can see you are very unhappy," said the Mayor, "so we will have a compromise. What we will do is this: you can stay here for part of the year, and we will call that Winter; the time that you spend in the frozen north, we will call Summer; the time when you are flying north will be



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called Spring; and the time when you are coming back, we will call Autumn.”

That was agreed and the Mayor returned down the mountain to the towns and villages. He told his people he had solved the problem. They were delighted, and said, “Well done, Mr Mayor,” because they knew that Mr Mayor had been very brave to climb



the mountain in that weather.

The next day the Dragon of Winter spread its white leathery wings and flew into the sky and headed for the north. The day after that, the sun came out bright and strong. Mr Rose, the gardener, could get back to work in his garden, the fishermen could

go out and fish in the Dee and the Mersey, and ships from afar could again bring food into the docks in Liverpool and Birkenhead.

All the people had smiles on their faces and all was well. When autumn came it started to get cold again, and again the Dragon of Winter returned to its favourite place and curled itself around the peak of Moel Fammau. All the people were cold, but they thought, “That’s all right, because he’ll fly away before too long.”

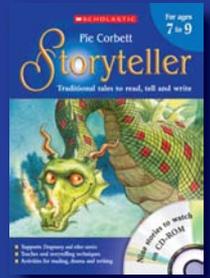
But when it came time for winter to end, the dragon was still there. Again the people went to the Mayor, and the Mayor said, “That dragon is very, very naughty. It has not kept to our agreement. The dragon is bad.”

A little boy in the crowd stood up and said, “No, the dragon is not bad, because I really like throwing snowballs and sledging in the snow. And I like wearing warm jumpers and hearing stories by the fireside in winter.”

But all the people said, “Look, we are starving again. Something has got to be done.”

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And the little boy said, “I’ll go up and have a word with the dragon.”

“Could you – a small child – do better with the dragon than me?” said the Mayor.



“Please let me try,” said the little boy. He put on his best boots and his warmest clothes and climbed the mountain until he was staring into the dragon’s icy blue eyes.

He said, “You’re not supposed to be here now. You should have flown to the frozen north and the sun should be out. Although I really like playing in the snow and the ice when you are here, I also enjoy mucking about in

the garden with my Uncle Joe in the summer.”

The dragon said, “Look, I am ever so sorry if I have upset you again, but I am a little confused. You see, I don’t know when I am supposed to go.”

“Let me help you,” said the boy. “When I am in the garden with my Uncle Joe, we plant a plant that shows us when it is the spring and summer. We call that flower a snapdragon because, if you look at it, it has a face like yours. And if I squeeze it and its mouth opens, I can make it talk just like you. So if you keep your eye on the garden, when you see that plant growing you will know that it is time to head to the frozen north; that it is your sign.”

The dragon thanked him, smiled, stretched its white leathery wings, and again headed for the polar ice cap and the white bears of the frozen north.

And the little boy put on his thinner clothes and went out in the garden to play with Uncle Joe and plant those plants that we call snapdragons.

