

## Dragonrider

1. Ryan had wanted to be a dragonrider since he'd first seen a magnificent, red dragon flying over his village when he was just a two-year-old. Back then, he hadn't known how hard it was to become one of these legendary riders. Now, as he entered his second year of a ten-year training, he knew exactly how hard it was.
2. Each trainee rider was assigned to work for one rider and dragon. Trainees woke early and worked hard until dusk. Ryan had been assigned to Florian, a fearsome gold rider with a bad-tempered gold dragon named Nightfire. It was hard working for Florian, a malicious man who enjoyed using his whip to control trainees and dragons.
3. Ryan dragged the bucket of small animals he'd caught yesterday to Nightfire's pen. Nightfire had a big appetite, which meant Ryan had to catch a lot of animals . . . and clean up huge piles of steaming waste. Ryan didn't mind. Despite Nightfire's temper, Ryan respected the majestic dragon and treated it with kindness.
4. "Greetings, Nightfire," said Ryan as he entered the pen. Instead of tipping the meat on the floor like other trainees, Ryan threw each piece for Nightfire to catch. Nightfire seemed to enjoy this game as it snapped the meat in its strong jaws. Ryan chatted away as he started cleaning the pen, hoping Nightfire wouldn't send any fireballs his way.
5. He was still chatting when Florian burst into the pen, scowling.
6. "Why isn't Nightfire saddled?" he yelled, whip in his hand. "I told you I was flying today! It seems my whip needs to teach you yet another lesson!" Florian raised his whip to strike Ryan.
7. A burst of fire shot across the pen. Florian screamed as the fireball disintegrated his whip and burned his hand. Nightfire roared and shot another fireball towards Florian, who ran from the pen. He knew what this meant. Nightfire had chosen a new master.
8. Nightfire lowered its head in front of Ryan and snorted softly. Ryan touched the golden head, then climbed up onto the strong neck. As Nightfire leaped into the air, Ryan realized that kindness and respect were far more powerful than cruelty.



1. Which word in Paragraph 2 means *enjoys hurting others*?  
(a) *bad-tempered*      (b) *malicious*      (c) *fearsome*
2. In Paragraph 3, it refers to:  
(a) *waste.*      (b) *his temper.*      (c) *Nightfire.*
3. Which word in Paragraph 7 tells us Florian's whip crumbled into tiny bits?  
(a) *fireball*      (b) *disintegrated*      (c) *shot*
4. The "**huge piles of steaming waste**" would be made of Nightfire's:  
(a) *leftovers.*      (b) *droppings.*      (c) *fresh meat.*
5. Nightfire shot a fireball at Florian \_\_\_\_\_ he whipped Ryan.  
(a) *before*      (b) *after*      (c) *just as*
6. Which paragraph describes the way Florian treats people and animals?  
(a) *Paragraph 6*  
(b) *Paragraph 2*  
(c) *Paragraph 3*
7. Becoming a dragonrider is:  
(a) *popular.*  
(b) *hard work.*  
(c) *great fun.*
8. You can conclude that Nightfire attacked Florian to protect Ryan because:  
(a) *Ryan was going to be a gold rider.*  
(b) *Nightfire liked kind and respectful Ryan more than cruel Florian.*  
(c) *Florian ran away.*
9. Ryan and Nightfire both:  
(a) *wore gold.*  
(b) *disliked Florian.*  
(c) *liked flying.*
10. What is the moral of the story?  
(a) *Kindness is more powerful than cruelty.*  
(b) *Nasty people get burned.*  
(c) *The best way to control dragons is to be happy.*



## Something Extra

- ★ Draw your favorite scene from the story.
- ★ Write what happened during Ryan's first flight with Nightfire.



# The Lost Temples of Angkor

1. I was not happy! I wanted a vacation by the beach, at an adventure park, or anywhere I could meet children my own age. I'm a sociable person, and I like lots of action! But, as usual, Dad and Mom had chosen an educational vacation. Boring!
2. As soon as we dropped our bags at the hotel, they were itching to get moving. We were in Cambodia, and we had come to visit the famous temples of Angkor . . . and no, I'd never heard of them either!
3. They were built by the Khmer civilization between eight and twelve hundred years ago. The old Khmer kingdom was one of the great powers of Southeast Asia at that time.
4. By the end of our first day, I had become the number-one fan of these ancient ruins! They are the most stunningly beautiful things I had ever seen in my life! I don't usually care about what buildings look like, but even I was blown away by their beauty. Huge towers, pillars, courtyards, and fountains . . . they are truly magnificent.
5. In the stonework, intricate carvings show scenes from Khmer history and mythology, and gigantic faces are carved into huge pillars and walls. How skilled those ancient stonemasons must have been!
6. A lot of the temples have been restored, but Ta Prohm has been left as it was found. Like the tentacles of a giant octopus, the roots of banyan trees are hugging the ruin. It just shows how the tropical jungle can take over if left untouched!
7. Angkor Wat is the greatest of the Angkor temples. Even now, it is one of the biggest religious buildings in the world. It's a spectacular sight to behold! It was built to honor the Hindu god, Vishnu (I'd never heard of him either). Much later, it became a Buddhist monastery.
8. I had already heard of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. This trip has made me want to learn more about different ancient civilizations.



# Questions

1. In Paragraph 2, the word *itching* means:  
(a) *scratching.*  
(b) *impatient.*  
(c) *patient.*
2. It is a fact, not an opinion, that the temples of Angkor are:  
(a) *magnificent.*  
(b) *remarkable.*  
(c) *made of stone.*
3. Before visiting the temples, the writer knew \_\_\_\_\_ about them.  
(a) *nothing*  
(b) *something*  
(c) *everything*
4. The temples had been hidden by:  
(a) *the Cambodian army.*  
(b) *piles of rubbish.*  
(c) *tropical jungle plants.*
5. By the end of the trip, the writer \_\_\_\_\_ the trip to the temples of Angkor.  
(a) *disliked*  
(b) *enjoyed*  
(c) *didn't care about*
6. The temples of Angkor were built by the ancient \_\_\_\_\_ civilization.  
(a) *Khmer*  
(b) *Greek*  
(c) *Egyptian*
7. Paragraph 1 describes how the:  
(a) *writer first felt about the planned vacation.*  
(b) *writer's parents felt about the vacation.*  
(c) *vacation was planned.*
8. If the temples were once more left alone, they would:  
(a) *stay exactly the same.*  
(b) *be hidden by the jungle plants again.*  
(c) *disappear completely.*
9. Angkor Wat was built as a:  
(a) *palace for the king.*  
(b) *shrine to a Hindu god.*  
(c) *Buddhist monastery.*
10. In Paragraph 2, the word *they* is used instead of the:  
(a) *temples.*  
(b) *family's bags.*  
(c) *writer's parents.*



## Something Extra

- ★ Find Cambodia on a map of Southeast Asia. Sketch a map of Cambodia and its three neighboring countries. Label the map with the names of the four countries and their capital cities.