

My Father's Dragon

Recommended for Grades 3-5

Book Summary: My Father's Dragon

Elmer Elevator hears about a baby dragon being held on Wild Island from a stray cat he took in. He decides to go and run away from home and rescue it. He stows away on a ship and manages to seek onto the Island of Tangerina, which was right next to Wild Island. Elmer must rescue the baby dragon, but he will have to face all the other animals on the island to do it.

[SPOILER] Elmer manages to find the baby dragon by tricking the other animals with the items he has in his knapsack and using their own natures against them. He manages to free the baby dragon and they both escape Wild Island together.

Author Biography: Ruth Stiles Gannett

Ruth Stiles Gannett was born in 1923. She graduated from Vassar College in 1944. She wrote her first novel, *My Father's Dragon*, shortly after finishing school. *My Father's Dragon* was awarded the Newbery Honor and has been popular ever since. She also wrote two other stories in the *My Father's Dragon* series and several other books as well.

She married Peter Kahn who was an artist, history professor, and calligrapher. They had seven daughters together. Peter has since passed away. Now, Ruth Stiles Gannett resides near Trumansburg, New York.



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Discussion Questions: My Father's Dragon

1. The whole adventure begins because Elmer wanted to help an old alley cat warm up after being stuck in the rain. Can you think of any other events in your life or in life in general that would have never happened if it hadn't been for a chance event?
2. Elmer's mother seems very mean. She won't let him feed the cat and whips him when she finds out he is still doing it (p. 3). Do you think Elmer is justified in running away? Why or why not?
3. Does Elmer do the right thing in rescuing the dragon? Isn't he technically stealing according to the laws of the land? Is it okay to break laws if you think that they are unjust? Why or why not?
4. When Elmer asks a fisherman about Wild Island, the man is so frightened that he can't speak (p. 17). He tells Elmer that no one who has gone there has ever come back, but Elmer's not worried. Do you think Elmer is brave or foolish? Why?
5. The boars talk about their island being invaded (p. 23). Do you think this is a fair way to view the fact that Elmer has snuck on to their island? Why or why not?
6. How do you think people in this country would view it if someone snuck in to steal something or to free a prisoner? Is it the same thing? Why or why not?
7. Elmer manages to defeat each animal he runs across (the tigers with gum, the rhino with toothpaste and a toothbrush, the lion with a comb, and the gorilla with magnifying glasses). But in the end, one of the island's own animals defeats the rest of them. Why do you think the crocodiles didn't help the animals across? Was this an act of greed (they want to eat them), selfishness (they just don't care), or something else? Why do you think so?
8. Do you think it is wrong to force an animal or person to do something over and over and basically keep them imprisoned? Why? Can you think of any examples of how we do that to animals or people in the real world?



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