



# Imaginary theatre company

2008–2009 SEASON

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Adapted by Sarah Brandt  
from the book by Ruth Stiles Gannett  
Music and Lyrics by Neal Richardson  
Directed by Bruce Longworth

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**Musical Director**

Neal Richardson

**Scenic & Costume Designer**

Lou Bird

**Stage Manager**

Eric Barnes

**Director of Education**

Marsha Coplon

**Artistic Supervisor**

Jeffery Matthews

## The Company

Cat, Tiger, Rhino, Lion, Dragon / **Briston Ashe**

Mom, Mouse, Tiger, Gorilla / **Katie Consamus**

Captain, Wild Boar / **Chauncy Thomas**

Jim, Elmer / **Amanda Williford**



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS



REGIONAL ARTS  
COMMISSION

Financial assistance for this theatre has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency; the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency; the Arts and Education Council of Greater St. Louis; and the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission.

# setting the scene



Want some ingredients for a great adventure? Start with an island where no humans live. Throw in some exotic animals with tricky puzzles that only a clever hero could figure out. Don't forget a scary villain who will chase the hero all the way until the end, where the hero is able to save the day (and the captive dragon). Wrap it all up with a triumphant return home, and you've got yourself quite an adventure (or the play *My Father's Dragon*)! But where's all the fun when the play's over? After all, it's easy to have adventures in movies, books, plays and video games, but when they're all over, so is the adventure, right? WRONG! *My Father's Dragon* isn't about an adventure that ends with the story—it's about an adventure that begins whenever you want it to. The only real ingredient you need for an adventure is your imagination. Just like Jim, you get to choose whether you're bored with your backyard or you're exploring a savage tropical island. Your adventure is limited only by your imagination!

# who's who?



JIM is a kid (just like you!) who's getting bored with just sitting around at home on summer vacation.

Jim's MOM knows some great stories about incredible adventures.

ELMER is a little boy in the story, but he will grow up to be Jim's grandpa!

The CAT seems like a normal house pet, but there's definitely more than meets the eye with her.

The CAPTAIN drives a ship to and from the Island of Tangerina.

Fuzzy and cute, the MOUSE is always poking her nose in everyone's business on Wild Island.

The WILD BOAR is a bully, but he's also the Sheriff, so everyone has to listen to him.

The TIGERS are twins who like to do everything together—especially eat.

Even though she's a big, strong animal, RHINO is afraid of everything!

The LION is a messy guy—he'd much rather surf all day than clean up after himself.

GORILLA is the Deputy on the island, and his job doesn't leave him much time for anything but work.

The poor DRAGON has been captive on the island ever since she was just a baby.

# what's the story?



It's the very beginning of summer and Jim has already drained all the fun out of his vacation from school. His video games, DVDs, baseball and bike are all boring, so there's nothing left to do...or so he thinks. Everything changes, however, when his mother begins to tell the tale of how Elmer (Jim's grandfather) once rescued a dragon from the mystical Wild Island.

It all started one day while Elmer was walking home from the grocery store (he was picking some things up for his mother). While taking a shortcut through a back alley, Elmer met a stray cat. After talking with the cat for a bit, Elmer decided to take the cat home and hide her in the basement since his mother was allergic to cats. Despite Elmer's best efforts, however, his mother knew immediately what he was hiding and forced Elmer to get rid of the cat.

As Elmer walked his new friend to a secret cave, Elmer revealed his wishes to someday be able to fly. Having a bit of an adventurous past herself, the cat told Elmer that she knew of a way he could fly—take a trip to the Wild Island and rescue the dragon. If Elmer could save the dragon, surely it would be appreciative and fly Elmer wherever he'd like to go!

The next day, Elmer met the cat at the docks. He had packed his knapsack for the adventure, and the cat found a boat that Elmer could take to the island. Elmer hid in the boat, embarking upon his journey. All Elmer had to do was get to Wild Island, cross the river in the middle of the island, and free the captive dragon. Sounds easy enough, right?

While arriving on Tangerina was a breeze and getting to Wild Island was as simple as following a sign, all wasn't as easy as it seemed. As Elmer set off upon his quest, he was leaving behind evidence that Mouse and Wild Boar (the Sheriff) were finding—evidence that a human was invading their island!

Making his way to the river, Elmer first ran into a pair of tigers that wanted to eat him. After some slick talk and a little bubble gum, Elmer was able to move on. He soon stumbled upon a giant cowardly rhino whose fearful shrieks almost got Elmer caught, but a toothbrush and some reassurance allowed him to move further down the path. Not long afterwards, Elmer ran into a surfer lion with a knotted mane and a hunger for "little human dudes." Luckily, Elmer's comb and a few ribbons were enough for Elmer to escape (and give the lion a makeover). He wasn't free for long though, as once Elmer made it to the river he was taken captive by the gorilla deputy. Thanks to some fleas (and a little help from his magnifying glass), Elmer was able to escape just before the Sheriff and Mouse arrived—they'd been hot on his tail the whole time!

Once Elmer was past the gorilla, the only thing that kept him from the dragon was the river. A little sweet talk (and some sweet lollipops) convinced the fish to help him across, where he was able to free the dragon (meanwhile, the mean old Sheriff was taken captive by the fish on the river!). Sure enough, the dragon was grateful to Elmer and did fly him wherever he wanted—which happened to be home (where all the best adventures really live).

Please feel free to adapt these materials to suit your classroom needs and reproduce them for future use.

The activities in this guide address the following Missouri Show Me Standards and Illinois Learning Standards.

MO: CA1, CA5, FA2, FA4, MA1, SC3, SC4, SC8

IL: 1, 3, 5, 6, 12

# words to the wise



**Trespassing:** to enter someone else's land or property without permission

**Paprika:** a powdered spice made from dried and ground sweet peppers

**Debate:** to argue

**Rotting:** going bad like a brown banana

**Invasion:** when someone (or something) from outside of a particular place comes in and takes over

**Gnarly:** surfer's slang for something difficult, dangerous or challenging

**Comb:** while we usually use a comb to make our hair pretty, a comb can also be a short name for a honeycomb

**Captive:** a captive is a prisoner; to be held captive is to be held as a prisoner

## pets and people

The dragon is mistreated by the animals on the island until she is saved. Did you know that in real life many animals are abused and neglected every day? You can make a difference just by helping animals in your home or community. Your pets should always have food, water and lots of love, but here are some more ways you can help:

- **Keep your pets safe.** Ask your parents to help you make a tag for your pet with identification information in case he or she ever gets lost.
- **Say NO to hot cars.** Pets should never be left in the car alone, especially in the summer time. If you see a pet in a hot car, make sure you alert an adult.
- **Provide shelter.** If your pets live outside, give them a special place where they can get out of the cold and rain. Pet houses should be leak free and have straw or other bedding materials to help the animals stay warm.
- **Be patient.** Though they may seem smart, animals don't have the brain power we humans do. When training your pet, expect some mistakes and never, never hit or hurt your pet as punishment.
- **Spay or neuter.** Your pets should not be having puppies or kittens of their own. Animal shelters are way overcrowded and too many animals are already without homes. Spaying or neutering your pet is part of taking care of him or her.



# Holy Habitat!

On Elmer's journey to save the dragon, he runs into lots of wild animals. Wild Island is a magical place where lots of animals live together, but in real life most animals have very specific homes called habitats. Check out some of the many different habitats on our planet, and see if you can match them to some animals who live there.

On the line, write what kind of habitat each animal lives in.

**Koala**  
(eats leaves which are poisonous to some other animals)

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**Roadrunner**  
(can lower its body temperature in extreme heat)

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**Meadowlark**  
(builds a cup-shaped nest in tall grass)

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**Woodpecker**  
(makes its home and gets its food in trees)

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**Dolphin** (can hold its breath for up to 15 minutes at a time)

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**Kangaroo Rat**  
(can convert dry seeds it eats into water)

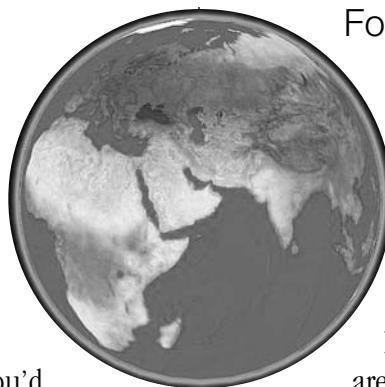
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## Ocean

Did you know that water covers almost 75% of our planet? That's why the earth looks blue when seen from outer space. With that much water, we sure do have a lot of ocean habitat available. Imagine living underwater in the deep blue sea. Obviously, you'd have to be able to breathe under there. Fish accomplish this with gills, but other animals go up to the surface to breathe air with lungs. The ocean is home to an amazing amount of different animals. Depending on how shallow or how deep you look, you will find animals who need sunlight and fresh air to survive, and others who have never even seen the light and like it that way! Also, some animals make their homes in the wide water, swimming all around, while some live in caves or plants, and some burrow deep into the ocean floor.

## Desert

We'd surely be sweating like crazy if we had to spend much time in the hot, dry desert, but some animals think deserts make the perfect home. Deserts are very delicate habitats because of the extreme heat, lack of moisture and harsh sun. The animals that live in these places have adapted their lives to survive here. Snakes, lizards and some mammals and birds have found ways of coping with the heat, getting water from food sources and even going a week without taking a drink at all.



## Forests

All forests are full of trees, so they must all be the same kind of habitats right? Wrong! Forests around the world are hugely different from one another. The two main things that can help you tell what kind of forest you're looking at are the climate (how hot or cold) and the kind of trees that grow there.

Some trees are called evergreens because they never lose their leaves or needles. Another kind of tree (and forest) is deciduous, which means their leaves change color and fall to the ground each year. These forests are usually found in cooler climates, and are home to animals who can survive in the cool or cold weather. These forests see rain, but also get their moisture from snow.

Another kind of forest is a rainforest. These places are warmer and more tropical. Lots of heavy rain keeps these places very wet and makes the plant life thrive. Animals here also must be able to adapt to this way of life.

## Prairies

You're living in Missouri, so you've probably seen your fair share of prairies. These wide open fields and meadows are carpeted by grass and are usually located centrally on the continents. Prairies exist naturally with the help of wildfires that burn off old grasses and animals who help spread seeds. In the US, a lot of prairie land has become farmland, but there is still some left with large herds of grass-eating animals who roam free.

# Missouri Wildlife

The Wild Island is full of interesting animals, but did you know that there are all kinds of interesting animals right in your own backyard? In fact, the forests in Missouri are home to over 730 different species of wildlife. Here are just a few and some of their defining features:

## Bat

The only mammal capable of flying, bats are often found in Missouri caverns and forests. Bats are an important part of our ecosystem and help control insects and pests. Even though they're important, three kinds of Missouri bats are on the list of National Endangered Species.

## Beaver

The beaver is the largest rodent in North America, and unlike smaller rodents (like mice) beavers can get up to 4 ½ feet long and weigh up to 90 pounds. Living along our many streams, rivers and small lakes, beavers are builders who create dams and lodges of tree limbs.

## Catfish

Common to Missouri's lakes and streams is a fish with large whiskers (known as barbels) protruding from its face (like a cat)—the catfish. While they may greatly vary in size, they have been known to grow as large as nearly six feet long and weigh well over 100 pounds.

## Cougar

Also known as a mountain lion, the cougar is thought to roam the forests from Northeastern Missouri to somewhere around Kansas City (and in the Ozarks). Though they are substantially bigger than a cat you might see around the neighborhood, their close relation to the domestic cat makes them look a lot alike.

## Coyote

Looking kind of like a dog, coyotes are very common in Missouri. They may seem playful, but coyotes are actually aggressive and very smart. They are often known to enjoy outwitting other animals.

## Skunk

There are two types of skunks in Missouri—the spotted and the striped. Skunks are well known for their ability to give off a horrible scent. This stinky attack is used to ward off predators, and boy does it work!

## White-tail Deer

Found practically everywhere in the state (forest or not!), the white-tail deer enjoys large numbers here in Missouri. While they can take on a variety of sizes and colors, they are all noted for their trademark white tail. Adult male deer (known as Bucks) grow and shed antlers each year. Females are known as Does.

Now it's time to crack the books! Research another native Missouri animal and write your findings on the lines below.

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Bobcat

Cottontail rabbit

Fox

Mink

Mole

Opossum

Raccoon

River Otter

Squirrel

Woodchuck

# Crazy Creatures

Talking lions, boars and dragons are all just figments of childhood imagination that aren't real or important, right? Wrong! Mythical creatures have a long and rich history across cultures world wide, and are an important piece of storytelling and the sharing of knowledge from one generation to the next. Below are some mythical creatures you might recognize from movies, books and fairy tales.

## Dragons

Found in mythology across the globe, dragons come in various shapes, sizes and colors. Common to all myths is that the dragon is typically a large, scaly, reptilian creature. In some cultures (like China), the dragon is considered friendly and caring toward human beings. In these cultures the dragon is associated with wisdom and spirituality. Other cultures (like European and the West) portray the dragon as menacing and fierce towards human beings. No matter where the myth comes from, most dragons are depicted as having magic or supernatural powers and some even breathe fire.

## Fairies

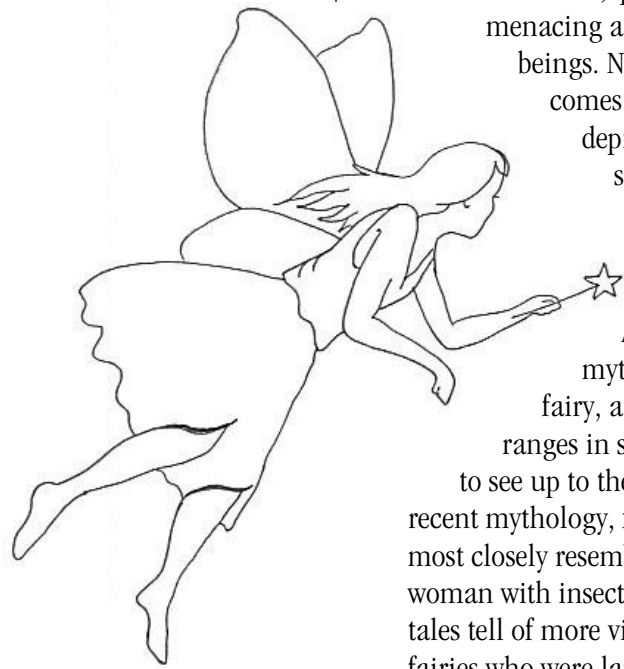
Another common mythological creature is the fairy, a human-type creature that ranges in size from nearly too small to see up to the size of a child. In more recent mythology, fairies are sweet and light, most closely resembling a small young woman with insect or butterfly wings. Older tales tell of more violent, feared male fairies who were larger and lacked wings (they flew purely through magic). In the older tales, fairies were to be avoided so they would not be angered, but more modern stories call on fairies to lend a hand to humans in need. Regardless of the myth, fairies typically possess the power to fly, cast spells and alter the future.

## Unicorns

More than just a horse, the unicorn is a strong, courageous and magical creature that shows most of its affection to young, gentle maidens. Traditionally, the unicorn wasn't just a horse with a horn, however. It also possessed the beard of a billy goat, the tail of a lion, and cloven hooves (like a deer or cow). While the mysterious unicorn may possess many different types of magic, it is best known for its horn which can neutralize any poison.

## Giants

While you might think that Shaquille O'Neal and Yao Ming are giants, they've got nothing on the real mythological creatures. Giants are monstrously large human-like creatures with equally massive strength. Modern fairy tales and older mythology alike tend to portray the giant as mean and unintelligent, though some stories depict the giant as a wise and friendly being.





# Create a Creature!

It's time for a new adventure, but before we can send you off to Wild Island to save another mythical creature we need you to come up with one to save! Use what you've learned about both real and mythical creatures to come up with your own original mythical creature.

What is the name of your creature?

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What are the defining characteristics of your creature (what does it eat, drink, look like, sound like, etc.)?

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What is your creature's natural habitat?

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What mythological power (or powers) does your creature have?

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Now let us see what it looks like—draw a picture of your creature in the box.

# Packing for an Adventure

Elmer sure did pack a lot into his backpack! It seems like his backpack can hold almost anything, but really it can only hold a certain amount. Answer the following questions to figure out how much Elmer can take with him to Wild Island.

1. 6 ribbons + 4 combs + 1 sandwich

2. 3 brushes + 7 mirrors

3. 3 tubes of toothpaste + 11 toothbrushes

4. 5 sandwiches + 4 ribbons + 4 combs

5. 8 packs of gum + 3 lollipops

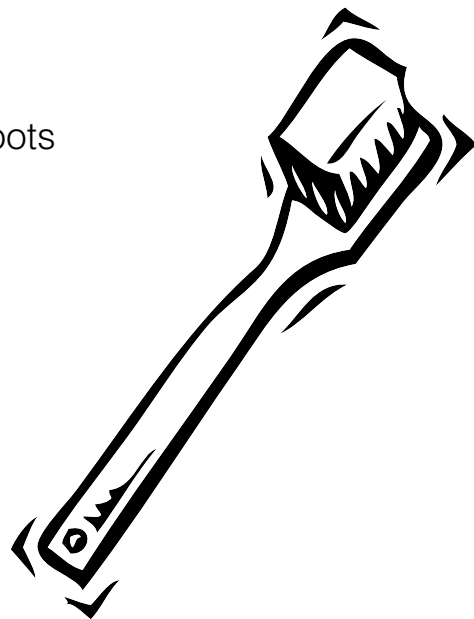
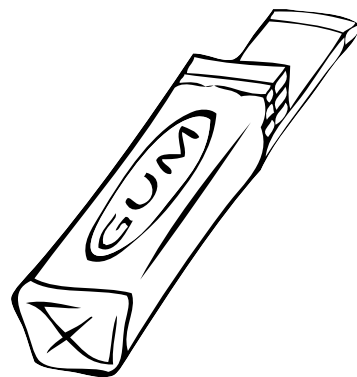
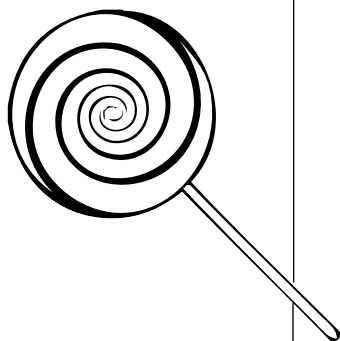
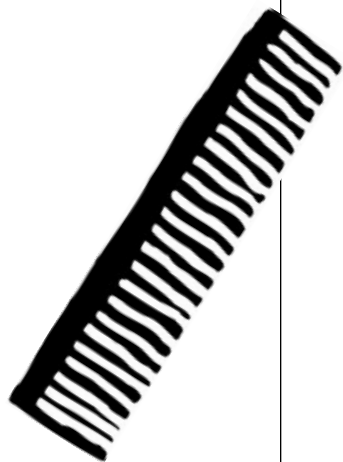
6. 3 toothbrushes + 3 tangerines + 2 boots

7. 7 combs + 10 ribbons

8. 2 brushes + 3 sandwiches

9. 5 lollipops + 5 mirrors + 5 ribbons

10. 3 packs of gum + 6 combs



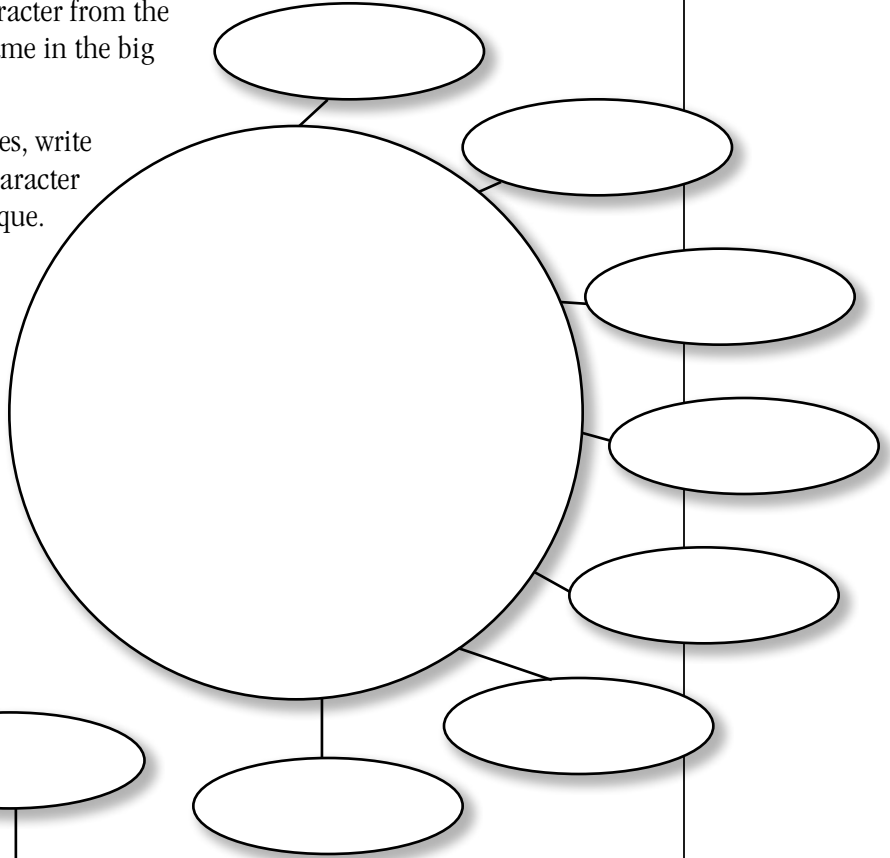
## Bonus:

Elmer can fit 12 items into his backpack. How many math problems show a number of things he could take along?

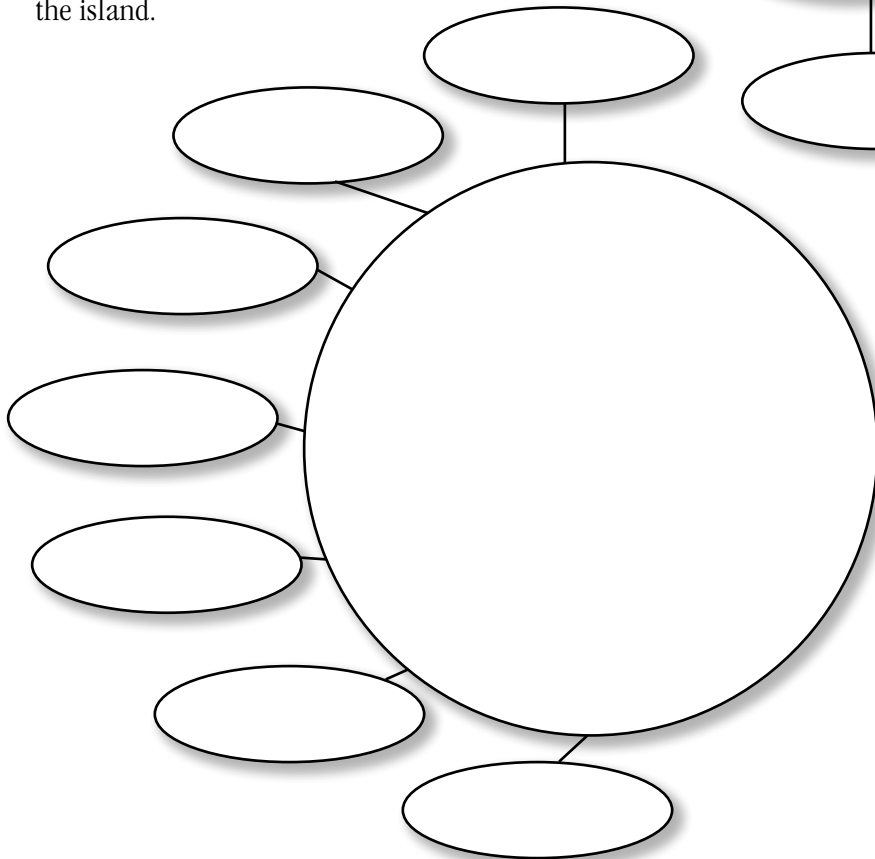
# Character Characteristics

There are a lot of different characters in *My Father's Dragon*. Which one was the funniest? The smartest? The nicest? Just like every person is different and unique, every character in a story has things that make him or her different from everyone else. These things are called characteristics and they are the traits and talents that make everyone special.

1. Choose your favorite character from the story and write his or her name in the big circle.
2. In all of the smaller circles, write characteristics about this character which make him or her unique.



1. Now create your own character to add to the story. Write its name in the big circle.
2. In the smaller circles, write special things about your character that will make it different from the others on the island.



On the lines below, write a few sentences about your character and how it might behave with the others on the island. Will your character be a bully like the Wild Boar or a scaredy cat like the Rhino? Only you know—you made it!

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# Color a Dragon

You saw the dragon in the play with her blue and yellow stripes. What do you think a dragon should look like? Color this dragon to look any way you want!

