

DRAGONS AS SYMBOLIC CREATURES IN ENGLISH FOLK TALES

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Annotation. This article examines dragons as symbolic creatures in different folk tales, focusing on Western, Eastern, and English traditions. It analyzes how dragons represent fear, chaos, wisdom, transformation, and power. Special attention is given to English folk tales such as The Lambton Worm, The Laidly Worm of Spindleston Heugh, and Saint George and the Dragon, highlighting their cultural and symbolic meanings.

Keywords: dragons, symbolism, folk tales, English folklore, mythology, transformation, cultural values

Аннотация. Данная статья рассматривает драконов как символических существ в различных народных сказаниях, уделяя внимание западным, восточным и английским традициям. Анализируются значения драконов как символов страха, хаоса, мудрости, трансформации и власти. Особое внимание уделяется английским легендам, таким как «Лэмбтонский червь», «Прекрасный червь Спиндлстона» и «Святой Георгий и дракон».

Ключевые слова: драконы, символизм, фольклор, английские сказания, мифология, трансформация, культурные ценности

Аннотация. Ushbu maqolada ajdarholar turli xalq ertaklarida ramziy mavjudot sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Unda G'arb, Sharq va ingliz folkloridagi ajdarholarning qo'rquv, kaos, donolik, o'zgarish va kuch timsoli sifatidagi ma'nolari o'rganiladi. Ayniqsa, "Lambton qurti", "Spindleston ajdarhosi" va "Avliyo Georgiy va ajdarho" kabi ingliz xalq rivoyatlariga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi.

Калит so'zlar: ajdarho, ramziylik, xalq ertaklari, ingliz folklori, mifologiya, o'zgarish, madaniy qadriyatlar

Dragons are among the most fascinating and enduring mythical creatures found in folk tales across the world. Although their appearance and behavior vary widely depending on the culture, dragons almost always carry deep symbolic meanings. In different traditions, dragons represent fear, chaos, wisdom, protection, and power. By examining how dragons are portrayed in Western, Eastern, English, and Uzbek folklore, it becomes clear that these creatures are not merely monsters, but complex symbols reflecting cultural values, beliefs, and human imagination.

In many Western fairy tales, dragons are typically depicted as dangerous and destructive creatures associated with chaos, evil, and fear. They often guard treasures or capture princesses, creating challenges that only a brave hero can overcome. These narratives symbolize the triumph of good over evil, with dragons representing obstacles, fear, or moral corruption.

In contrast, dragons in Eastern traditions, particularly in Chinese folklore, are seen as wise and benevolent beings. They symbolize strength, prosperity, and harmony with nature. Rather than being feared, they are respected and admired, showing how cultural perspectives shape symbolic meanings.

Dragons also play an important role as symbols of personal growth and transformation. In many tales, the dragon represents both an external enemy and internal struggles. Defeating

the dragon symbolizes overcoming fear, doubt, or weakness, making it a powerful metaphor for human development. They further symbolize the unknown and mysterious forces of nature. In ancient times, people used myths to explain natural phenomena, and dragons—with their supernatural abilities—became representations of these powerful and unexplained forces.

In Uzbek folk tales, dragons (*ajdarho*) are portrayed as supernatural beings that typically live in caves, underground spaces, forests, or mountainous areas. They are often described as guarding treasures or appearing at specific times—especially at night—to hunt for prey. Their connection to hidden places reflects ancient beliefs about the unknown and the otherworldly.[1]

For example, in the tale “*G‘ulombachcha*”, the dragon is depicted as enormous and terrifying, with its breath producing such a powerful wind that it shakes the forest. This emphasizes the dragon as a symbol of overwhelming natural force and fear. Similarly, in “*Rustamzod and Sherzod*”, the dragon appears every night to capture living beings and retreats into a cave during the day, reinforcing its connection to darkness and danger.[2]

Historical accounts, such as those recorded by V. V. Bartold, mention mysterious caves associated with dragon-like creatures, sometimes described with carvings and smoke. Although not scientifically verified, these stories reflect the rich imagination of Turkic peoples and their belief in supernatural forces.[3]

In “*Three Brave Brothers*”, the dragon is described as having a terrifying voice, a head as large as a cauldron, and a body as long as a massive beam. Such imagery highlights its monstrous nature and symbolic association with danger, power, and the unknown world.[4]

English folk tales present dragons as powerful and often terrifying creatures closely connected with danger, morality, and social fears. Like in Uzbek folklore, dragons are associated with caves, hills, and remote natural landscapes, reinforcing their connection to the unknown. However, English dragons are more often portrayed as enemies that must be defeated.

In *The Lambton Worm*, the dragon grows from a small neglected creature into a monstrous force that coils around a hill and terrorizes the land. It symbolizes the consequences of irresponsibility and how small mistakes can grow into major threats.

In *The Laidly Worm of Spindleston Heugh*, the dragon is actually a cursed princess. This tale presents the dragon as a symbol of transformation, suffering, and hidden identity, showing that not all dragons are purely evil.

In *The Dragon of Wantley*, the dragon represents exaggerated social fears. Its story, partly humorous, reflects how communities imagine and cope with danger.

Finally, *Saint George and the Dragon* presents the dragon as a symbol of evil and chaos. The hero’s victory represents courage, faith, and the restoration of order.[5]

Both English and Uzbek folk tales share important similarities in their portrayal of dragons. In both traditions, dragons are often connected to isolated and mysterious locations such as caves, mountains, and forests. They frequently appear at specific times—especially at night—and pose a threat to human life. This reflects a shared human tendency to associate danger with the unknown and unseen forces of nature.

However, there are also significant differences, as Uzbek dragons are more closely linked to natural forces and the supernatural world, often emphasizing their physical power and connection to hidden spaces. They sometimes act as part of a larger mythological system and may even assist the hero in certain stories.

In contrast, English dragons are more strongly connected to moral and social symbolism. They often represent evil, sin, or societal fears and are typically defeated by a hero. The focus is on moral lessons such as responsibility, courage, and justice. While Uzbek tales emphasize fear and the unknown, English tales emphasize conflict between good and evil.

Additionally, English folklore shows more variation in symbolic meaning, as seen in *The Laidly Worm*, where the dragon represents transformation rather than destruction. This demonstrates that, despite differences, both traditions use dragons as flexible symbols to express complex human experiences. In conclusion, dragons in different folk tales are complex symbolic figures that reflect cultural beliefs, human fears, and philosophical ideas. Western traditions often depict dragons as destructive forces of chaos, while Eastern cultures portray them as wise and protective beings. Uzbek folklore emphasizes their connection to nature, fear, and the supernatural world, while English folk tales highlight moral lessons such as responsibility, transformation, and the triumph of good over evil. Despite their differences, dragons in all traditions serve as powerful symbols that continue to inspire storytelling and convey universal human experiences.

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