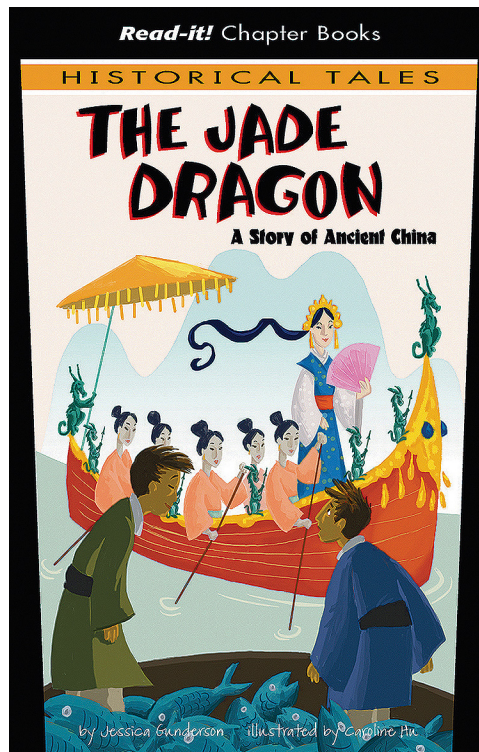




READER'S THEATER



The Jade Dragon **A Story of Ancient China** **by Jessica Gunderson**

Characters: **Narrator** — reads at grade level
 Cheng — struggling reader
 Zhou — reads below grade level

Genre: **Historical Fiction**
Ages: **7-10**

The Jade Dragon (page 1)

Introduction: 219 B.C.—Qin Dynasty

Narrator: The afternoon sun sparkled on the waves of the Wei He. The river was calm that day. Few boats passed by as twin brothers Cheng and Zhou fished.

Cheng leaned over the side of the boat, skimming his fishing net through the water. When he lifted the net, a large fish danced inside.

Cheng: One more for me! I'm still winning!

Narrator: Every year on their birthday, Cheng and Zhou competed. The one who caught the most fish did not have to do chores for a week.

Zhou: You win every year . . . and every year I have to do both our chores for a week. You must be luring the fish with promises not to eat them.

Cheng: (laughing) You're just jealous, Zhou. You're so clumsy! Even if a fish swam into your net, you would drop it.

Narrator: Zhou leaned over the side of the boat, trailing his hand in the cool water.

Zhou: That's not true!

Cheng: Shh! Do you hear that music?

Narrator: Both boys held their breath and listened. The sweet sound of music was rising from downstream. Then they saw a large boat rounding the bend in the river.

Zhou: That boat is beautiful. Look at all the little jade dragons along the side. They look like soldiers.

Narrator: The boat was topped with a shimmering silk umbrella. Rows of elegant girls dipped their paddles in the water. At the front of the boat stood a girl so lovely she made Zhou's eyes water.

Zhou: Who is she?

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Cheng: Zhou, don't you know? It's Princess Mei-lan.

Zhou: I can't believe it! This is the greatest birthday gift I've ever received!

Narrator: Cheng and Zhou rowed their boat to shore so the princess' boat could pass. Mei-lan tipped her fan at them and smiled.

Suddenly, Zhou lost his balance and tumbled into the river. He made such a splash that it rocked the princess' boat. Gasping, he planted his feet on the river bottom and stood. He looked up at the princess in horror as water splashed over the side of her boat, soaking her silk robe. Slowly, her boat rowed out of sight.

Cheng: (angrily) I can't believe you're my brother!

Zhou: Let's just go home.

Narrator: Zhou climbed back into the boat and reached into the water for his fishing net.

Zhou: (whispering under his breath) What's this?

Narrator: It wasn't the fish Zhou had been expecting. Instead, it was a jade dragon. Its jeweled eyes glistened in the sun. He quickly slipped it into his sleeve.

Cheng: What did you catch, Zhou?

Zhou: Nothing. I thought it was a fish, but it's only a stone.

Narrator: Zhou reasoned that that wasn't a total lie.

Cheng: Let's go. You have some chores to do!

Zhou: One more time, and then you win.

Narrator: Zhou and Cheng lowered their fishing nets into the water. Within seconds, Zhou's net jerked. When he lifted it, he saw a fish flopping wildly. It wasn't just one fish. Not even two fish. Three fish were tangled in his net!

Zhou: Now we're even!

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Cheng: The princess' boat must have disturbed the fish.

Narrator: Cheng lifted his net, but it hung empty.

Zhou: *Who* will do the chores?

Cheng: Don't get too proud, Zhou. We're still tied. Let's give it one more try.

Narrator: The boys fished again and again. Each time, Zhou's net brought up more and more fish. Cheng's net caught none.

Cheng: (grumbling) This is so dumb. Stupid fish. I was winning too!

Narrator: Zhou smiled quietly. For once, he had done something better than Cheng. Inside his sleeve, he felt the jade dragon. It was getting as hot as fire.

Cheng: Just you wait until the tournament tomorrow. Then I'll beat you fair and square.

Narrator: Every year, the boys in Cheng and Zhou's village competed in a tournament. The tournament had three rounds: archery, rowing, and *jiao di*, or wrestling. Whoever was the best at all three won the tournament.

Who will win the tournament? Will the jade dragon continue to bring Zhou luck? To find out, read *The Jade Dragon*, a *Read-It!* Historical Tale from Picture Window Books.