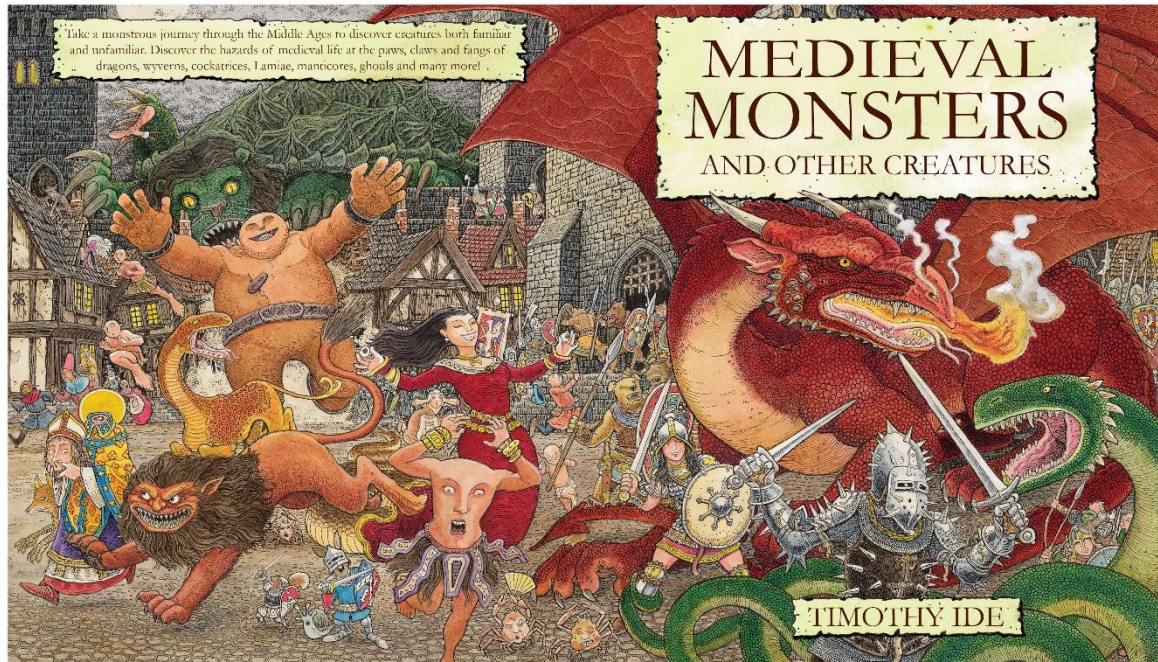


# Medieval Monsters and Other Creatures



## Teachers' notes by Timothy Ide part 1

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### Outline

Medieval Monsters and Other Creatures is constructed as an A-Z catalogue of mythological creatures taken from medieval lore, primarily from Europe, but also touching on other continents, such as Asia. It takes as its inspiration bestiaries from the Middle Ages.

The text follows an alphabetical listing, giving entries of varying length on monsters and creatures from medieval myth and legend. The book is written in the past tense and makes no judgement on whether these monsters ever existed at all, leaving the reader's imagination free to wonder. Each entry is accompanied by some sort of illustration.

Some entries are brief, compared to others which are quite long. In most cases, this reflects the amount of information available. Some entries contain a condensed version of the story or legend attached to the creature concerned. There are also a couple of double page spreads dedicated to particular stories, such as the various dragon slayers, and the legend of Prince Dietrich von Bern at the siege of Jeraspunt.

## Further information

At the back of the book is a bibliography and reference list of the various books that the author used to draw inspiration and information from in writing the text.

## Key Study Topics and Ideas

### Humanities and Social Science (HASS)

#### History

MMAOC most obviously covers the period of time known to history as the Medieval Period, or the Middle Ages.

'Middle Ages, the period in [European history](#) from the collapse of [Roman civilization](#) in the 5th century CE to the period of the [Renaissance](#) (variously interpreted as beginning in the 13th, 14th, or 15th century, depending on the region of [Europe](#) and other factors).'

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Middle-Ages>

Many of the entries contained within MMAOC cover wide ranging periods of time, and some monsters can be traced back to early periods of history, such as the hydra and the centaur.

#### Activities:

Which monsters can you spot from earlier mythology, in particular Greek mythology? Which monsters had you already heard of? Which monsters had you never heard of?

Looking at costume and armour, can you identify which century certain pictures are set?

D for Dragon (15<sup>th</sup> century- The Battle of Bosworth ), Prince Dietrich von Bern (14<sup>th</sup> century), the Golem (11<sup>th</sup> century- the Rhineland Massacres), Tengu (12<sup>th</sup> century- Minamoto no Yoshitsune)

Which monsters are familiar but different to what we know of them today. The most obvious example of this is the vampire. What is the history of this creature, and what lore has been added or subtracted when? This could even be a personal learning project for someone at secondary level.

#### Social Science

MMAOC can be seen as a book of accurate misinformation, in that as far as possible, effort was made to accurately record the misinformation of the middle ages as far as mythical beasts and peoples were concerned.

#### Activity and discussion point ideas:

What are the parallels between this misinformation of a much earlier time and today? Many of the fantastical peoples listed in the book such as Blemmyae, Cynocephali, Ipopodes, Nuli, and Panotti and Skiapodes come from far and distant lands to the average European citizen of the Middle Ages. Was it easier for people of that time to believe incredible and weird things about people who lived long distances away? Is this true of us today in our reactions to people foreign to us and from different cultures? We may not believe that they have the heads of dogs or ears that can make them fly, but are we willing to believe other things that may not be true, simply because they are different?

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-couch/201603/how-can-we-understand-our-fear-the-other>

## Geography

### Activities:

How many countries and continents can you find on a map referred to in MMAOC can you find?

Africa (Ethiopia, Libya), Asia (China, India, Japan, Korea), Britain (England, Ireland, Wales), Europe (Aragon, Catalonia, Czechoslovakia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Kyiv, Serbia, Scandinavia, Spain, Sweden), Middle East (Parthia), to name most, if not all.

Travel: How did people travel in the Middle Ages? How modes of transport can you see in MMAOC? Are there any others not shown? What monster or creature would you domesticate or befriend to travel your country or the world?

## English

### Reading:

As previously mentioned, there is an extensive reading list supplied at the back of MMAOC, however, getting hold of many of these texts may prove difficult. However, the internet contains a wealth of information which can be researched. What sources can students find to look up further information on various creatures?

### Activities:

Find out more about a particular monster or creature or hero from the book. Write a short report listing three or more extra bits of information you have found out.

### Writing Activities:

Create a class bestiary!

Each student develops a monster with a story and description. Each student should feel free to add details about where they live and invent a backstory, habits and so forth. Does the monster still live? Is it/was it hostile? Friendly? Did it guard something? What is its favorite food? Have heroes fought it? What does the local city council think of it?

The whole lot is either printed into a volume as a souvenir for students, or color photocopied into a binder, folio, plastic sleeves, etc. Depending on available resources, this could be given out to students, or simply kept as an ongoing project by the teacher, each year's students adding more and more to the collection of monsters.

This activity ties into the visual arts activities below.

## Visual Art

### Illustration and technique:

Timothy Ide used pen and watercolor wash for most of the book. Occasionally he used mixed media, adding a background in gouache and acrylic. He also added elements such as scrolls and text with photoshop, as well as some borders.

**Activity:**

As a counterpart of the class bestiary assignment above or on its own, students need to create an illustration to accompany their made-up monster. While some may have very clear ideas of what to do or create, others may struggle to think of something. Teachers are therefore encouraged to develop a table of animals that students may take one element from. It could be as prescriptive as say ten animals, then pick head, body, tail, or it could have more elements thrown in, such as a randomizer. Perhaps students must roll for which element they get, with rerolls being allowed perhaps. Depending on year level, the teacher could tailor how this is set up. For younger year levels, a piece of paper divided into thirds (head, body, tail) and for older year levels more freedom to represent those elements.

Author biography

**Timothy Ide Biography**

Timothy Ide is an Adelaide based illustrator. He has illustrated a number of children's books including Fiona McIntosh's *Fantastica: Shapeshifter series* and Kristin Weidenbach's *Tom the Outback Mailman* for Hachette and *King of the Outback* for MidnightSun Publishing. *Medieval Monsters and Other Creatures* also for MidnightSun is his first book as both author and illustrator.



# Medieval Monsters and Other Creatures

## Teachers' Notes part 2

By Timothy Ide 2024

### Author's notes regarding illustration

This is intended to be an in depth look at Medieval Monsters and Other Creatures, and explain some of the reasoning behind illustrations, what I was intending, and so forth. Hopefully it will provide some answers to any questions that might be asked about what is going on in each picture.

People have often asked me how long it takes to do each illustration. From planning to the finished picture, it takes me around seven to ten days. This includes the process of thumbnails to visuals to preliminary drawings, working out composition and final outlines, to toning everything in with pen, before finally coloring in with watercolor. As a rule, all my illustrations are done by hand, and not digitally. Very occasionally however, I will construct things in photoshop. All the scrolls that the text sits on are added in Photoshop, and there are a few corrections here and there.

As far as the text is concerned, there's a couple of deliberate omissions of information about various creatures, which I will address as they come up. I have on occasions unashamedly used a Wikipedia link for easily accessible information.

### The Society for Creative Anachronism

Throughout the book, there are many people depicted, some of whom are based on actual people in my life. Many of these are members of the medieval recreation group the Society for Creative Anachronism, or SCA for short. Members are sometimes referred to as SCAdians. Society Members also go by alternative names based on Medieval sources, rather than use their own 'mundane' (as in the real world) names. Where I mention such people in the context of the illustration, I will refer to them by their SCA name. There are other nods to SCA customs; for example, that of white belts which are only worn by those who have attained knighthood. This is a theme that continues throughout the book; every knight wears a white belt.

The SCA have their own website which I have included here. I have included the SCA Wikipedia entry for the casual inquirer.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society\\_for\\_Creative\\_Anachronism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_for_Creative_Anachronism)

<https://www.sca.org/>

### Heraldry

Whenever King Arthur or one of the knights of the Round Table appear, I have used the heraldry developed for them in the Middle Ages for knightly tournaments. Game designer Greg Stafford took this concept further with his *Pendragon* role playing game, published by Chaosium,

using old sources but also making up others to cover all the knights mentioned in King Arthur lore. Sir Percival's heraldry is therefore taken from this source, as are all other knights of the Round Table depicted in this book.

A lot of the other heraldry is taken from friends and acquaintances in the SCA.

**Front cover:** I always knew I wanted a wrap around cover for this book, crammed with as many monsters as possible. I did this illustration last of all, and in so doing I had the final look of the monsters cemented. It probably took the longest to do, being well over eleven days. One of the factors of this length is the use of stippling for the sky. Stippling is a dot technique with pen, in which tone and texture is slowly built up. It can be relaxing, or frustrating depending on your mood, but regardless of which, it is very time consuming.

On the back cover can be seen a rabbit and squirrel, both based on SCA friends of mine, Sir Felix and Sir Eva.

The result is closest to my original concept, which I then abandoned for other ideas, but finally went back to at the publisher's prompting. It was the right choice, and I'm quite happy with the result, especially the contrast between the three main characters, the dragon, the knight, and the worm.

**Frontispiece:** This was a bit of a cheat entry. Throughout the book, I had made intermittent use of marginalia creatures, martial rabbits, snails, and other creatures. I wanted to explain what marginalia were without an entry in the main text. The text on the monk's manuscript was done separately and reduced to fit onto his page. All the little marginalia critters were based on extant examples and done separately and then dropped into the illustration via photoshop.

**Introduction:** This was an enormously fun picture to do, as it gave me an opportunity to do a very detailed world of weird monsters, all threaded in and around the landscape. As this was one of the early ones, I had not yet fully nailed down the look of all the creatures, so there are a few differences, but I don't think that matters, overly much.

Monsters and creatures present: dragon, ziphius, werewolf, vampire, nightmare, bicorne and chichevache, oni, dwarfs, elves, giant, worm, leucrotta, jaculus, huldra folk. The milestone is an old Roman one, if anyone asks.

In a book that has a very heavy European focus, it was important to me to get as much cultural and gender diversity in as I could. The two human characters on the right side of the illustration portray a Muslim youth and a European girl, both armed and armored according to their cultural backgrounds. I wanted to imply that they were both friends and comrades, off on some dangerous adventure in a wood filled with hazards. One of my earliest concepts for this book some thirteen years ago was to have two unnamed characters, male and female, appear on each page in some way as a constant for the reader, but I ultimately decided that this was too restrictive. These two characters are all that remains of that concept.

**A: Afanc to Aspidochelone.** This was a complete redraw of a test piece I did for sending off to publishers. It remained pretty much the same in concept. The red and yellow panel was added in photoshop.



My earliest page layouts were very formal. I thought they lacked interest, and I soon abandoned them. I wanted a much more chaotic format, where every page was different, almost as if the monsters and creatures wouldn't be told what to do. Wherever possible, I wanted the monsters and creatures to be part of the same landscape, interacting in some way. I reserved the right to add scraps of paper here and there for added space, such as the afanc and the alphyn.

**B: Basilisk to Bonnacon:** This illustration has the most entries on it, having five creatures. Behind the Polish king can be seen the Polish coat of arms. The warrior running away from the blemmyae is a Moorish soldier, and the knight being sprayed with flaming dung is based on Charlton Heston's character of Chrysgon in the 1965 movie *The Warlord*. This isn't a political statement, although it could be. I just thought it would be amusing, and a reference to one of my favorite Medieval movies.

**C: Catoblepas to Cyncephali:** The catoblepas was one of the oldest monsters I remember from the role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons*, which I started playing in 1981. I had no way of knowing its origin at the time, so I was very interested to find out decades later that it was based on a medieval mythological beast. Originally, my composition was for there to be a scroll across the catoblepas's face, to protect the viewer from being struck dead by it. I abandoned this as one of those ideas that seems clever initially, but you then must then explain to the viewer, which defeats the whole idea of a joke.

The cockatrice is sitting in the middle of the petrified, shattered remains of its parents, a snake and a rooster, though the rooster is now mostly concealed behind the scroll, because of a composition change.

The cynocephali are based on an entry by Sir John Mandeville in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. The king of the cynocephali is described as wearing a large red gem around his neck. I decided that as dog type people, they really liked bones, so this is reflected in their weapons and gear.

**D: Dragon.** Originally, I had gone for the traditional dragon sitting on his hoard of gold, but I decided to have fun and have a dragon crashing a major historical event.

Based on the Welsh dragon, this monster is charging through the Battle of Bosworth, where Richard III met his end. He can be seen at the back in golden armour, riding his horse. I used heraldry from the main principal combatants, so that anyone who is historically minded can hopefully check up on them and not be disappointed.

The illuminated D features Tiamat and her little dragon babies. There are five, each a different color, which references the original five evil dragon breeds in the role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**Dragon slayers:** All these dragon slayers are described in detail in Joseph McCullough's book *Dragonslayers from Beowulf to St George* listed in the bibliography and further reading section of the book. While most will have heard of St George and Sir Lancelot, the others will probably be less familiar. American SCA Duke Thorfinn is the model for Dobrynya Nikitich.

**Dragons of the East:** It was important to me to show that Eastern dragons did not belong to just one culture, but many. This is why I included three couples: Chinese, Korean and Japanese. I figure they meet up every year somewhere for tea, and to watch the dragons fly.

**Dwarfs:** This drawing was quite complex to do and involved using perspective to create an interesting environment, with depth. I wanted the viewer to explore further and wonder what was down the tunnels. Primitive railways were used in mines in Medieval times, and I figured that it might be a technology that dwarfs would be into. I once wrote and got published a Dungeons & Dragons adventure module about a dwarven steam railway for the now defunct *Dungeon* magazine entitled ‘Train of Events’ (Dungeon Issue #44 (Vol. VIII, No. 2)), so this is my call back to this.

There’s a few SCAdians present in this one. Sir Felix is a renowned armorer, so he is over by the forge with his vast collection of hammers smashing out some piece of armour. Sir Benedict of York is a jeweller, so he is seen with the eyeglass in the foreground, both examining and showing off his wares. The red headed dwarf lady is based on Sir Mari, although she now dyes her hair blue.

The full story of King Laurin is rather a grim one, in which there are no real heroes. I went with the bare bones of it, but anyone who is interested can check out the source material in the bibliography. Because of Laurin’s propensity for chopping off hands and feet, I have put in a bunch of discarded gloves and boots, although two dwarfs have found a boot with a foot still in it.

**Echeneis and Elves:** The echeneis is a real fish, so I simply went with what it looks like, rather than make something up. The humans to the left are pilgrims, as denoted by their pilgrim badges and seashells. The elves are slightly fantasy in their armor and gear. The foreground elf with the three arrows takes his inspiration from actor Michael Praed as Robin Hood from the 1980s Robin of Sherwood TV show.

**F: Faeries:** This picture took its inspiration from my experiences at WOMADelaide, especially when the sun goes down and I wonder among the Moreton Bay fig trees and the fairy lights gleam over the food vendors. I’m there with my friends, there’s great music playing and I’m having a great time.

Mostly the fairies are creatures of my own design. I put a green man up the tree, but he is simply there without explanation, which adds to his mystery.

King Arthur is present in the foreground, with the lady of the Lake to the left and Merlin to the right. I reference the story from Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* here, where Arthur had previously battled King Pellinor and nearly lost his life into the bargain. He breaks the sword from the stone and needs a new one, so he gets Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake. Merlin holds the sword’s scabbard and is asking Arthur the gotcha question of which he prefers best, the sword or the scabbard. Arthur answers with ‘The sword, of course’, but Merlin then points out that the scabbard will prevent him from losing any blood. Along Excalibur’s blade are written the words ‘Take me up’, according to legend.

**G: Ghoul and Giants:** Giants, but slightly different to giants most will have seen before. These are mercenary giants of Rome, so their gear reflects this. I figured that they were in the decline of the Roman Empire, so their gear is somewhat of a mishmash. One Muslim student asked me if the crescent moon on the foreground shield pertained in any way to his faith, but I explained that no, it was an ancient Roman heraldic device (which it is).



The giant with the ghoulish helmet wears a shield with my SCA coat of arms on it. Clearly, I didn't do too well in this fight.

The illuminated ghoulish figure illustrates the story of the ghoulish figure being able to take on the appearance of the last person it ate, in this case the child's father. On top of the capital is Corineus throwing Gogmagog to his death.

The building behind the battle is Mont-Saint-Michel. Obviously, this wouldn't have been around in King Arthur's time, but it's very iconic, so it went. King Arthur, as established in the 'Faerie' pages previously, wields Excalibur in battle, this time with the other side visible "Cast me aside."

**Prince Dietrich vs the Giants:** When I began the project, I had already completed one illustration, that of Prince Dietrich of Bern fighting the giants at Jerspunt. The format of the book changed, which is why in a happy accident the composition ultimately ended up with a white panel down the right side where I could put the text, along with Dietrich and the wise queen. In the story, the wise queen's name is actually 'Virginal' which is awful, on many levels. For centuries, virginity has been seen as a supreme virtue, to the point where its loss is seen in some quarters as being sullied. I decided to omit this detail.

I put in references to the flora and fauna of the Alps. The good guys' heraldry is the edelweiss flower, and the beast without a name behind Janibas is based on the Alpine snail and ibex.

**Golem to Heikegani:** The most famous golem story is that of Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the late 16<sup>th</sup> century rabbi of Prague. I looked for an earlier setting for my golem, and decided to set my illustration in the time of the Rhineland Massacres of 1096 CE. Here, in some Rhineland city, a bunch of murderous crusaders have been sent packing by a synagogue's golem, who clearly enjoys his work.

The following page was a fun opportunity to have two creatures from very different cultural backgrounds interacting. Around the corner of the arch of the Rhineland city is medieval Japan, where a European griffin makes off with an unfortunate samurai's horse. Heikegani crabs do exist, though obviously I have taken huge liberties with their appearance. Carl Sagan discusses them here:

<https://www.organism.earth/library/document/cosmos-2>

The Tairo (also known as the Heike) clan *mon* or heraldic device of a swallowtail butterfly can just be seen on the banner behind the crabs. I didn't use an illuminated capital for H here. Rather I went with a simple capital on a samurai banner, blending in with the action of the illustration.

**Heraldic Beasts:** This illustration was a lot of fun to do. I always loved the idea of all the beasts waiting their turn to be selected and drawn as part of a heraldic device.

I put a few of my SCA friends into it, especially those with an interest in heraldry. To the left are Paddy and Faelan, wearing the garb they often wear. I am often quite threatened and jealous of Paddy's atom bomb explosion of a hat, so I had the camelopard eat some of its feathers out of good-natured spite.

Sir Eva is present in her armour, pointing. Eva is an SCA peer of the Realm in heraldic display, a title that carries the rank of Laurel, so it's fitting that she be included in this picture. Behind her is her friend and mentor Duke Mark, as the centaur. In the blue, white and red tabard holding his hand over his mouth in thought is Gabriel, another herald. I am also present in this illustration with my back to the viewer in a red and black doublet, drawing on a shield. As you can see, my hat is much smaller than Paddy's.

This list is by no means all inclusive of the many heraldic beasts that were used. There were some that escaped my notice!

**Hippogriff and Huldra folk:** The stories of Roland and the Paladins of Charlemagne were told and retold for many centuries. This version is from *Orlando Furioso*, by Ludovico Ariosto in 1516, which is technically out of the Middle Ages, but Bradamante was such a fun character that I wanted to include her.

*Orlando Furioso* is not a work designed to be taken seriously. Bradamante has been suggested to have been presented as a joke, the joke being that a lady rescued the knight and not the other way around. Be that as it may, she remains extremely competent and has a lover who is a Saracen, something that would have raised a few eyebrows among readers of the time, and perhaps even today among some less than enlightened circles.

Hippogriffs are also a bit of a joke, being an impossible creature that can do impossible things. They were invented by Ludovico Ariosto for *Orlando Furioso* but were made much more famous in JK Rowling's Harry Potter novels.

Huldra Folk were an interesting bunch, and ever since reading *The Elfin Hill* by Hans Christian Anderson, I had been intrigued and rather creeped out by the idea of people who were hollow from behind. What would that look like? How would that work? I ended up going with Huldra girls being substantial enough to look at, but with hollow backs. The texture inside the foreground girl is from a hollowed-out tree I saw on a walk up near Morialta Falls, Adelaide, South Australia.

**Hyakume to Iruzan:** Hyakume is one of the Yokai group of monsters, of which there are an enormous amount. One could do a book just on Yokai alone, so I was wary of including too many, in case they ended up taking over. Hyakume was just too weird to omit, however!

In the Ipopodes illustration, I have included Sir John Mandeville, referred to earlier in the Cynocephali entry. His appearance is based on an extant and presumably completely made-up illustration of him.

Iruzan the Cat is based on my own cat, Finch, who is herself a lovable monster. The poem is some extremely poor poetry I wrote myself about lazy cats, and then google translated into Irish. Some of the trinkets hanging from Senchan's belt are SCA awards for performing. St Ciaran can be seen in the illuminated 'I' to the left.

**Jaculus and Jasconius:** The jaculus has changed its appearance very slightly from the introduction page earlier. The monks in the boat are St Brendan and his crew off on their strange journey. I had to make sure that there were the right number of monks on board, as he loses a couple along the way.

**Jinn and Kraken:** This was one of the more complicated illustrations I had to do, and involved a lot of planning regarding the ship and where all the tentacles went and so forth. Again, there are a few SCAdians on the boat: Baron Yevan, wearing green and waving a sword, his partner Sir Mari watching her shield fall overboard, and the figurehead face is that of Baroness Ingerith, strongly disapproving of a kraken stuck to her hull.

The Jinn is inspired by an actual Islamic manuscript of Djinni. His presence and purpose in this picture are left to the viewers' imaginations. Was he summoned? Will he help?

**Lamia to Merfolk:** This was a redraw of an earlier illustration designed as a submission piece to send to publishers. Mostly it remained unchanged, apart from the merfolk. While drawing it, the storm in a teacup controversy over Disney casting Halle Bailey was in full cry, so I knew that I had to make my mermaid a merperson of color. The merman does bear a resemblance to Jason Momoa as Aquaman, I'll admit. I did not set out to do this, not consciously anyway! I also included the bishop fish again, one of whom is giving a blessing.

**Necks to Nuli:** All the music that the animal students are playing (and eating) are based on historical examples. While the nightmare is deliberately creepy, I wanted the viewer, especially younger ones to know that she could be banished quite easily. The man sitting up in bed is more annoyed than anything else and the nightmare is leaving as quickly as she can.

There are many strange peoples in this book, and it has been rightly pointed out that this does reflect the European fear or view of 'the other'. People from far off 'exotic' places, must by necessity be physically different in some bizarre way. I tried to make such races unique, and not reflect actual non-European cultures. The Nuli are an exception to this rule, as they are very clearly from India, and for that reason, I put in an Indian person of normal appearance reacting in surprise to being shown the Nuli elder's backwards feet. This suggests that they are as unusual in India as they are elsewhere.

**Oni:** Oni were a lot of fun to draw. I first read about them in high school as well as the legendary samurai who fought them. This picture held a fair bit of nostalgia for me! It was while drawing this picture that I realized that I had lost a book on Japanese fairy tales that I had since a teenager. I still can't find it.

**Orobon to Phoenix:** This illustration is the closest composition to what I originally planned and then abandoned. Illustration, text, illustration, text, repeat. I decided to make it more interesting by including a detailed marginalia border, made up of creatures from actual historical manuscript examples.

**Questing Beast and Revenants:** Once again, I was able to indulge my interest in King Arthur by the inclusion of this odd creature. The most famous illustrations of this creature are by Aubrey Beardsley and Arthur Rackham. My illustration depicts the incident in which a despondent King Arthur rests by a stream, only to be startled by the sudden appearance of the very noisy Glatisant, pursued by King Pellinor. English author TH White includes a humorous subplot involving the hunting of the Questing Beast in his 1958 novel *The Once and Future King*.

Revenants were a lot of fun to do. This was a bit of a composite illustration in photoshop, as the skeleton soldier playing the hurdy gurdy and the scroll carrying monk skeletons were drawn separately and added in.

SCAdian Sir Thibault can be seen at the back with an axe, ready to take down the advancing priest zombie creature. He was a squire when this picture was drawn, so his belt is red, not white.

It was quite exciting when I stumbled on medieval stories of the walking dead in the book *Strange Histories* (2005), by Darren Oldridge. This was the perfect opportunity for me to reference ‘The Long Night’ episode of season 8 of *Game of Thrones*, and *Evil Dead 3: Army of Darkness*, plus any other number of films that include skeleton warrior (*Jason and the Argonauts*).

None of the heraldry belongs to anyone I know. I just wanted to include some of the heraldic beasts from earlier.

One of St. Denis’s angels would appear to be singing off key, to the annoyance of his fellow.

**Skiapodes and Tarasque:** The skiapodes are probably better known as the Dufflepuds from CS Lewis’s 1952 novel *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. I speculated on how they might ‘work’ physically, so to speak, and looked to creatures like the whale and the dolphin for inspiration. Rather than having just one leg (left, or right?), their two legs have fused together, making one big toe in the middle of their foot. As far as the altercation in the foreground is concerned, I figured the older male is berating the irritated but unconcerned girl for reading her book in the face of the miracle that St. Martha is performing, but again, that’s up to the viewer to imagine. Maybe he’s just an annoying person.

The Tarasque is another monster I first encountered in *Dungeons & Dragons* decades ago, only to recently discover that it had a very vibrant life in the culture of Provence. I based St. Martha on illuminated manuscript illustrations, in particular ‘St. Martha and the Tarasque’, from the *Hours of Henry VIII*. The person crawling out of the Tarasque’s mouth is inspired by one of these illustrations which has a pair of legs hanging out of the beast’s jaws. I figured it was about time that person finally escaped.

**Tengu:** The Tengu were a late addition, but there is something very intriguing about the notion of shape-changing bird people of questionable character teaching a historical samurai the arts of war. The notion of them masquerading as Buddhist monks is interesting as well. My illustration is heavily inspired by Kawanabe Kyōsai’s 1863 color woodblock print of *Yoshitsune Training with the Tengu Sōbōjō*.

**Trolls and Unicorn:** Trolls and the landscape they inhabit have always fascinated me. As a child, I remember reading a beautifully illustrated by Arthur Rackham version of Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt*, and the troll scenes always stuck in my mind. Later, trolls became more cemented in my mind through the works of Tolkien and of course *Dungeons & Dragons*, but hopefully my illustration captures the very varied nature trolls, as well as their gleeful evil. ‘Bøyg’s Finger Food’ depicting literal fingers being used as food references The Great Bøyg, a Scandivian troll, and a vast shapeless creature that Peer Gynt runs into on one of his many misadventures. One of the smaller trolls’ heads echoes the troll gif of the grinning face.

Writing assessor Connie Spanos suggested the addition for the text of internet trolls, which in turn gave me the idea of a very literal interpretation of a troll post in the middle of the double page spread. These troll posts are mostly obvious and poor jokes as well as vaguely provocative comments, but some are ‘in-jokes’ which I’ll admit, is poor form, but I couldn’t resist them. Mostly, they can be worked out, if need be, with the use of Google.

‘Lamia adopts Princes from the Tower’ refers to the missing heirs of King Edward IV of England. According to Shakespeare, they were murdered by their uncle, Richard III. However, if Lamia was involved, there’s another good reason why they were never seen again.

‘Diet of Worms not that tasty’ refers to the meetings of the deliberative body of the Holy Roman Empire, known as the Imperial Diet, held at Worms in Germany. Martin Luther most famously refused to recant his beliefs at the Diet of Worms in 1521 and was excommunicated.

‘Round Table is an oval’ is a very basic joke designed to annoy knights and fans of that order of chivalry, but it does also reference some of the flat earth conspiracies, and the occasional nit-picking response that ‘actually, earth isn’t round either, it’s an oblate spheroid.’

‘Margaret of Anjou an actual werewolf’ refers to the Queen Consort of King Henry VI of England. In Shakespeare’s *Henry VI, Part 3*, the Duke of York famously calls her "She-wolf of France/ but worse than wolves of France/ Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth!"

‘Do your own research’ is usually extremely bad advice, because in most if not all cases, the person doing their own research is not qualified to do so. While illustrating this book throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, this became especially obvious as armchair experts sprang up everywhere with all sorts of strange notions and conspiracy theories.

‘Unicorns actually an Oryx’ refers to speculation that the mythical unicorn may once have been inspired by the sight of an oryx in profile.

‘Fossegrim now using a lightning powered violin- FANS OUTRAGED’ is a Bob Dylan reference. In 1965, at the Newport Folk Festival, Bob Dylan swapped his acoustic guitar for an electric one. Many of his hitherto diehard supporters felt betrayed and that he had sold out.

‘Richard the Lionheart does not actually have the heart of a lion’ has no specific intent other than to be lamely amusing or annoying, or both.

‘Is Lochac imaginary?’ This is an SCA in-joke. Just as SCA members give themselves medieval sounding names, so too are places and countries renamed, usually determined by existing ‘mundane’ geographical borders. Consequently, Australia and New Zealand are known as ‘Lochac’ within the SCA world. One of the internet troll jokes of the last few years has been that Australia is a made-up imaginary country, hence this post.

‘Mermaid is a manatee’ follows the idea that sailors sometimes mistook manatees as mermaids.

‘Change my mind’ comes from the popular range of memes based on the original image created by controversial conservative podcaster Steve Crowder. He posted an image of himself sitting with a beverage at a table with the sign ‘Male privilege is a myth/ Change my mind.’ Since that time, the image has been changed multiple times with more and more absurd things being suggested that Crowder’s mind should be changed about.

'Book of Kells to be written in ALL CAPS' Seeing as the Book of Kells is written in lower case and is regarded as one of the finest examples of illuminated manuscripts ever, this is guaranteed to annoy at least someone.

'Black Plague-' I'm pretty sure that the word concealed by the troll's hand is 'hoax?' This ties into the various Covid-19 conspiracy theories during the time I was illustrating this book.

'Art thou mad, sir?' is a more medieval version of 'You mad, bro?' which is a mocking response to someone firing up on some internet forum or another, usually in response to a trollish comment.

'Problem?' A similar response to 'you mad, bro?'

'Peers elitist, say non peers' While this could refer to Britain's House of Peers, it also is a dig at the tendency of some within the SCA to accuse those who achieve peerages, such as laurels or knighthood, of being elitest. While this may or may not be true on a case-by-case basis, whatever the truth, such internet forum discussions do occasionally lead to very heated discussions. This is very definitely an in-joke.

'Beowulf starts flame war with dragon' Beowulf met his end fighting a fire breathing dragon.

'War of the Roses started by Violets' Just a silly comment, really. However, if the reader has not yet heard of the War of the Roses, it might inspire them to find out.

'Robin Hood is Prince John's Brother' Just a silly, baseless accusation destined to gain traction among the conspiracy minded folk of Nottingham. Will probably be later referred to Sherwoodgate.

'Til [sic] Eulenspiegel buys Bonnacon for Merry Pranks' Till Eulenspiegel was a German folk hero from the late Middle Ages. Said to have lived in the 1300s, Till played brutal and scatological practical jokes on people, targeting the clergy and upper classes in particular. Thus, him purchasing a bonnacon would seem a match made in heaven, or perhaps hell!

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Till\\_Eulenspiegel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Till_Eulenspiegel)

As regarding the unicorn, one of the most famous pieces of folklore is that only a virgin, usually a female, can tame one. As this is a book accessible to children, I didn't want to start a whole line of questioning about the virtues of remaining chaste, as opposed to not. I didn't want this book to be used as a tool in any way for creating or encouraging potential sexual hang ups, 'sex is dirty, unicorns won't like you' etc. This book is also designed as a port of first entry into the world of Medieval folklore. The full story is available, if you want to learn more via the bibliography at the back.

The rider of the unicorn is intended to be a female, but on reflection, could also be a non-binary person. There is much debate online about what females should or should not wear as medieval armour, and the most sensible answer is armour similar to a males, that does not go in for sculpted boob plates, or other feminized/sexualized fantasies. Thus, Joan of Arc would have worn basic armour sized for her, but other than that indistinguishable from a man. What is unlikely is the unbound hair streaming out from under this rider's helmet, but oh well.

What was fun to do on this page were all the little stories in the background. The little trolls running across the bridge, plus the one under it, the mountain sized one who was presumably turned to stone by the sun.

**Vampire:** This illustration and text went through several changes before it reached its final stage. As was the case with the werewolf, much of the established folklore surrounding vampires had not yet come into being at the time of the Middle Ages. For example, it is now well established that sunlight kills vampires, yet that only really came in with the release of FW Murnau's 1922 movie *Nosferatu*. Originally, I intended for the lead vampire figure to be a bald male figure like Count Orlock from *Nosferatu*, but I ended up going for a female instead. She was going to be like the vampire lady in the left foreground of the introduction page, but when I remembered that my own text mentioned people with red hair being fated to become vampires, I changed her from a brunette to a redhead instead. I gave her a very genial looking quality, which makes the evil that she has wrought behind her somehow worse.

I took a deal of inspiration from Stephen King's 1975 novel *Salem's Lot*. In the novel, an ordinary community is slowly but inevitably overrun by vampires, as one vampire spreads the curse to the next person, and so on. I wanted to present a medieval town in the last stage of this infection. The sun has gone down, and now the vampires openly walk the streets, young, old, male, female, and from all walks of life, such as the jester on the left and the monks on the right. Signs of the lead up to this are the red plague crosses marked on doors, signs that the townsfolk suspected for a while that something was amiss, but were ultimately overwhelmed. Above it all rises the castle, once a bastion of strength for this community, now useless and empty.

There are obviously similarities between the idea of a vampirism outbreak and a devastating pandemic such as Bubonic Plague. The presence of rats among the gravestones is suggestive of that.

Standing against all of this of course are the three intrepid vampire hunters, the last survivors of the town. The matron sharpens her axe and has a string of garlic hanging from her belt, the monk blesses a flask of water from the buckets at his feet, and the archer sharpens up a stake, a skill from the Hundred Years War he is now finding a new use for. They stand under a rowan tree, which is mentioned in the text. Around them, the undead gather, and some are becoming aware of the hunters as they prepare. Will they make it, either to escape or to reclaim the town? Or will they go down in a blaze of glory, to become new vampires? That is something for the viewer to speculate on.

**Werewolf and Worm:** It is fortunate that W follows V, because this kept the gothic horror feel of the book going for a few more pages. Escaped the vampire, did you? Well now you must deal with the werewolf, not to mention the Lambton Worm.

Again, the mythology of werewolves has evolved over the centuries. Back then, being a werewolf was a voluntary pursuit, something you did on purpose rather than being the victim of a blood cursed scratch. You could shape-change whenever you wanted to, by means of spells, rather than wait for a full moon. I kept the presence of a full moon in my illustration because it looked cool, even if it was not relevant and I chose a blood red sky, which gives a lurid Hammer Horror



feeling, and contrasts nicely with the green worm. The front cover echoes this contrast with the worm in front of the dragon.

On one occasion, I showed a year 8 student this page. She didn't read a word of the text but made up her own story about how the werewolf in the picture was actually a good guy that looked after his community, but they didn't understand him, and so on. It was a fun story she spun, so teachers could potentially set a small project to invent a story to go with some of the illustrations.

Sir John versus the Lambton Worm was the goriest of all the illustrations for this book, and while I don't have a problem with drawing this sort of thing, I was concerned by how the consumer might deal with it. I went to a bookshop and looked through all the history picture books dealing with violence and war, particularly medieval ones to find what the benchmark was. I was relieved to see quite a few were as gory as my planned illustration, if not more so. Inspiration for my John versus the Worm illustration came from a book from my childhood: Usborne's 'Monsters', from their 1977 *Mysteries of the Unknown* series. It was very gory!

Wyvern and Xanas: This drawing of the wyvern is based on an old illustration I did, well over a decade ago. As it was the germ of this project, it was fun to resurrect it again and redraw it. The xanas were fun to do, as was the puzzled changeling about to give the game away.

Xingtian and Yale: Xingtian was a weird character to do, but also a fun one. He is partly based on an old Chinese drawing, which depicts him wearing a grass skirt. I dropped the skirt for an armored one. As he is a jolly fellow, I thought it would be amusing to have him dancing with an army of Mongol soldiers. In the last few years, I discovered a Mongolian folk metal band called The Hu, so the musicians playing are based on them, at least in part. One of the foreground Mongol soldiers on the right is anachronistically performing a 'dabbing' maneuver, a signature move that was very popular a few years ago, and now very out of date and 'uncool.' Once, all the kids were dabbing, and now they either don't know what it is or it's some daggy old hat their uncle does while still thinking he's young and with it (he's probably in his early twenties).

My illustration of the Yale, while described in the text as having multicolored spots, has yellow spots. This is because the Yale often is depicted with yellow spots, but seeing as this does contradict the text, that is a mistake on my part.

In thinking about why a Yale might be in China, I hit upon the notion that he was there to learn kung fu. As the heraldic beast position described as 'rampant' rather resembled a kung fu fighting stance, that seemed like a fun idea. He mimics the young kung fu master, earnestly trying his best. The position closest to what he is in is known as the rooster stance, hence the presence of a rooster.

I have no idea what the creature lurking in the doorway on the far right is, but it possibly isn't pleasant.

**Ziphius:** This is my interpretation of the medieval monster Ziphius. I used a whale as inspiration, and I figured that as ziphuises were probably aggressive creatures, they got into lots of fights with each other, hence all the scars.

Behind the monster, the ship sinks with her bottom ripped out. The heraldry on the shields on her hull belong to various SCAdians. Her crew and one cat swim for their lives, hopefully being rescued by the mermaids. Echeneis swim nearby, as does a bishop fish, giving thoughts and prayers to the unfortunate mariner about to be swallowed.

**Bibliography:** It was important to me to acknowledge my sources, some of which have been books in my collection since childhood. One that deserves a mention for general inspiration was *A Tolkien Bestiary* by David Day, published in 1978. This book was a phenomenal influence on me during my teen years, both for its text and the amazing artwork by so many accomplished illustrators within. *Medieval Monsters and Other Creatures* is set in Garamond font, which was the closest I could get to the font of the *Bestiary*.