

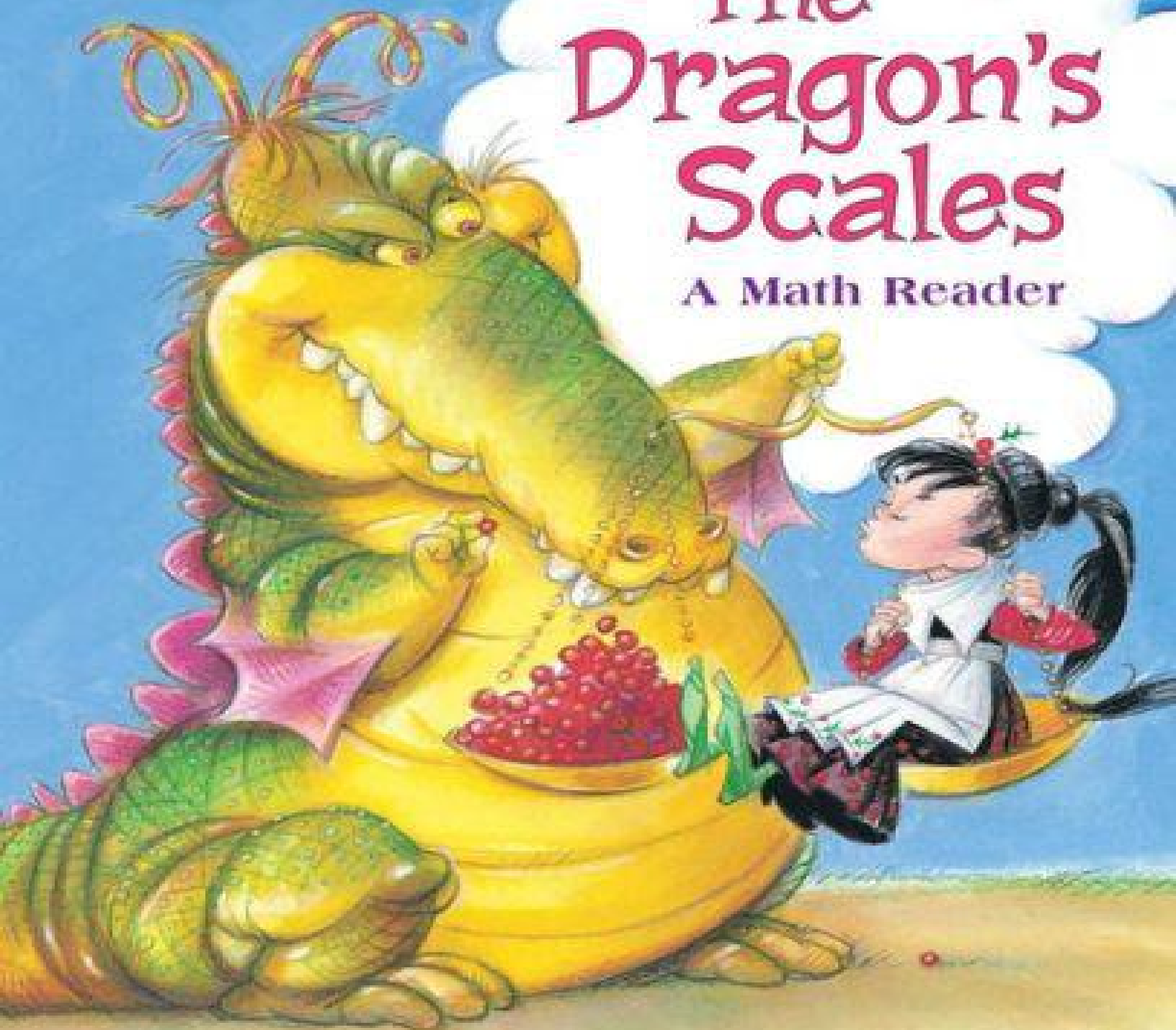
STEP INTO READING

math • reading on your own

STEP
3

The Dragon's Scales

A Math Reader



BY SARAH ALBEE
ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN MANDERS



Learning to Read, Step by Step!



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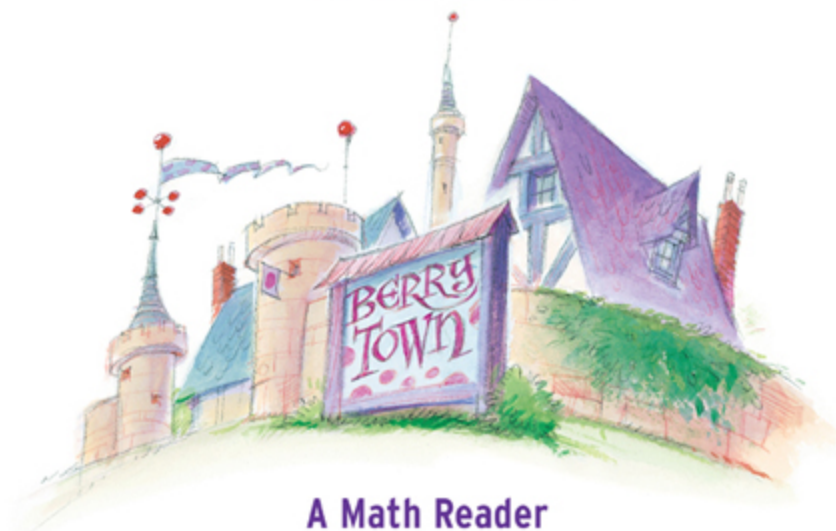
To Sam and Cassie
—S.A.

For Meghan, with love
—J.M.

STEP INTO READING®




The Dragon's Scales



A Math Reader

By Sarah Albee

Illustrated by John Manders

Random House  New York

Once there was a small town
beside a wide river.
The town was called Berry Town.
Everyone who lived there
was crazy about berries.



They loved to eat berries.



They loved to look at berries.



They even loved to smell berries.





In the spring, the people
of Berry Town went over the bridge,
across the river, and to the fields.

There they planted all kinds of berries—
strawberries, blueberries, blackberries,
raspberries, and even huckleberries.

In the summer,
when the berries were ripe,
there was a big parade.
Everyone marched
through the town
on their way to the berry fields.



But one year,
when the people of Berry Town
reached the bridge,
something was wrong.



That something
was very big,
very scaly,
and *very* scary.



It was a dragon!
“No one may cross this bridge,”
the dragon said.
“The berries are all mine!”

The townspeople
sadly turned away.
They wanted the berries.
But what could they do?



The dragon was bigger
and stronger and scarier
than any of them.
“Wait!” came a small voice.
It was a little girl named Holly.

“I have an idea,”
Holly said to the dragon.
“Let’s have a contest.
If I win, you have to go away.”
“Okay,” said the dragon.
“But if *I* win, then everyone
has to work in the berry fields for me.”





“Is that okay?” Holly asked.
The people of Berry Town nodded.
It was their only chance.
The schoolteacher stepped forward.

“I see that you have a set of scales,”
he said to the dragon.





“I will ask three questions about weights,”
said the teacher.

“Whoever gets two out of three questions right wins. The dragon’s scales will decide who is right.”
“Okay,” said Holly.



The dragon was not used
to this kind of contest.



But he knew that
whoever is biggest
and strongest
and scariest *always* wins.
So he nodded.

The dragon gave his scales
to the teacher.





Then the dragon and Holly
stood back to back.
They took one, two,
three steps.



“Which weighs more,” asked the teacher,
“one apple or two peas?”



The dragon snorted.

“Everyone knows that two things
weigh more than one thing,” he said.

“So two peas weigh more than one apple.”

“Two things don’t always weigh more than one thing,” said Holly.

“What matters is how heavy the things are.”

“I know that an apple is heavier than two peas.”



“Let’s see who’s right,” said the teacher.



The teacher put the apple
on one side of the scales.
He put the peas on the other.



The apple side went down.
The peas side went up.
The apple weighed more
than the peas!
The townspeople cheered.
The dragon snarled.
Holly and the teacher smiled.



“Next question,” said the teacher.

“Which weighs more,
a little bag of gold
or a big bag of cotton?”



“Big things weigh more
than little things,” said the dragon.

“So the big bag of cotton *must* weigh
more than the little bag of gold.”



“Just because one thing is bigger than another doesn’t mean it is heavier,” said Holly.

“I know that even a big bag of cotton is lighter than a little bag of gold.”

“Who is right *this* time?”
said the teacher.



The teacher put the bag of gold
on one side of the scales.
He put the bag of cotton on the other.



The gold side went down.
The cotton side went up.
The gold weighed more
than the cotton!

“Time for you to pack up,”
said Holly to the dragon.



The dragon started to cry.

Holly felt sorry for the dragon.

“I’ll ask you one more question,”
she said.

“If you answer it right,
then you can stay.
But you have to promise to be nice.”



The dragon sniffled.

“I really *am* nice,” he said.

“But no one ever wants
to share with a dragon.”

“Which weighs more,” Holly asked,
“a bucket of bricks or a bucket of
feathers?”

“The buckets are the same size,”
said the dragon.

“Two things that are the same—”

“Think *very* carefully,” said Holly.



The dragon took a deep breath.
He thought very carefully.
“Bricks are heavier
than feathers,” he said.
“So even though there is
the same amount of
bricks and feathers,
the bucket of bricks must weigh more.”



Holly put the bucket of feathers
on one side of the scales.

She put the bucket of bricks
on the other.



The brick side went down.
The feather side went up.
The bricks weighed more
than the feathers!

The dragon was right!
And that's the story of how
Berry Town got its very own
watchdragon!



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