

Developed by:

Julie DenOuden  
Middle School Teacher,  
Westminster Catawba  
Christian School

## Meet the Author

Sam Subity loves writing stories that explore the magic and wonder of being a kid and is thrilled to share his writing with readers everywhere—both the young in age and the young at heart. When he's not writing, you might find him hiking the trails of northern California where the endless, winding miles past fog and ocean inspire stories of adventure and mystery.



# VALOR WINGS



## Book Summary

Everyone in Iris's small English village avoids the dragon in the woods.

Everyone, that is, except for Iris. When she receives news that her brother is among the troops trapped in France by the Germans, Iris devises a desperate plan to fly to his rescue on her dragon.

Meanwhile in Belgium, Max's school day is abruptly interrupted by a German invasion. He and his grandmother flee toward France. But when they are separated after a German attack, Max must continue the treacherous journey on his own.

Across hundreds of miles, the stories of Iris and Max steadily converge toward an explosive conclusion. Along the way, they each must find the inner strength and resolve—the valor—to do the impossible.

## What's inside

Fact & Fiction 2

Themes & Vocabulary 3

Reading Questions 4-5

Exercises 6

## Background Info

Valor Wings brings together two unrelated ideas to build an entirely new story. In this story, it is the union of World War 2, or more specifically the Dunkirk evacuation, and dragons. Before reading the story, it is helpful to think about what you already know about these topics and what questions you have.

### List of Common Core standards covered

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.7, 4.10
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.10
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.7, 6.10

# Before Reading

Consider this exercise to separate fact from fiction

Since *Valor Wings* combines a true historic event, the Dunkirk evacuation, with a fantasy element, dragons, it is recommended that you begin by having students think about what they know about these major locations and events in the story before they start reading. Maybe some of them have seen movies like *Dunkirk* or read other World War 2 books that will give them some ideas about what is to come.

Then at the end of reading the book, spend some time talking about the events of the Dunkirk evacuation. This will give readers the opportunity to distinguish between real events and fantasy elements.

What do you know? England - Spring 1940 (Iris)	What questions do you have? England - Spring 1940 (Iris)

What do you know? Belgium – Spring 1940 (Max)	What questions do you have? (Belgium – Spring 1940 (Max)

What do you know? The Dunkirk Evacuation	What questions do you have? The Dunkirk Evacuation



**Web Activity:** Now do some research to find answers to your questions.

## Meet the first main character: Iris



Likes: Playing with dragons, teasing her older brother

Dislikes: Closed-minded people, waiting for adults to fix things

# During Reading: Themes

Encourage your students to consider these themes as they read the story and make notes about places in the story where each theme appears.

*“Be ye men of valor. Yes! Wasn’t this precisely what she had argued with Maud about? That it was better to stand up and bravely face difficulties? To do something rather than nothing?”*

A theme of a book is an idea woven throughout the story. Themes are not just specific to that story, but are ideas that can be applied to other texts and to life in general.

One way to think about a theme is that it is an idea plus an opinion. In other words, it is the author’s specific opinion about the central idea of the story.

**Example:** A story might focus on the idea of justice.

**Theme:** But justice alone is not the theme, instead the theme might look at *What are the proper consequences for people who do the wrong thing?*

Valor Wings has themes related to valor/courage, family, and war. As students discuss possible themes in the book, have them look for evidence in the story to support these themes and evidence that supports how they answered the questions related to each theme. They might create a grid similar to the one below to log their findings.

<b>Valor/Courage</b> What does it mean to have valor?	<b>Family</b> What does it mean to be a family?	<b>War</b> What are the costs of going to war? What are the benefits?
Text evidence:	Text evidence:	Text evidence:
Text evidence:	Text evidence:	Text evidence:
Text evidence:	Text evidence:	Text evidence:
Text evidence:	Text evidence:	Text evidence:

When you consider the themes of Valor Wings, it is also important to make connections between this story and other stories, and connections between this text and yourself.

**Text-to-Text Connections:** Have students brainstorm other books they have read with similar themes. How are they similar? How are they different?

**Text-to-Self Connections:** Have students think about a time in their lives when they didn’t feel very courageous.

## Vocabulary

Annihilate

Bedlam

Brute

Chateau

Conspicuous

Cowered

Drivel

Exhilarating

Frenetic

Indomitable

Mercilessly

Pummeled

Precipice

Quailed

Refuge

Resilient

Smolder

Valor

## Note for Educators

To the right is a list of reading questions to use while you are reading *Valor Wings*. Additionally, the three questions below are useful to use throughout the story to help readers make inferences about the story, gather evidence to use when making predictions, and to deepen their understanding of the story.

### Questions:

What things do you notice happening over and over in the story?

What aha moments have you noticed Iris and Max having?

What advice have Iris and Max received from another character?

## Reading Response Questions

A few ideas for incorporating these questions into your reading of *Valor Wings*:

- Have students keep a journal and answer questions as they read.
  - Utilize Think-Pair-Share and discuss these questions throughout the reading.
  - Select a couple of questions for students to write a longer written response. This is an opportunity to cite evidence in their writing to support their answers.
1. “Each day Iris woke before dawn to milk the cows, feed the chickens, and leave breakfast for the dragon.” This is the very first sentence in the book. After reading the first sentence, what feelings and thoughts do you have as a reader?
  2. Why do you think Iris was so eager to head into town when her brother invited her? (Ch 1)
  3. What realization/inference does Max make when he is leaving school and notices the dirt lane is completely dry? (Ch 2)
  4. What strategy/tactics does Iris use to convince the officer not to shoot Galahad? (Ch 3)
  5. What was Max and Peter’s clue that Germany had invaded Belgium? (Ch 4)
  6. “Max knew at that moment that he was going to die.” (Ch 4, pg 24) - Make a prediction about what will happen next.
  7. As Max and his grandmother prepare to flee Belgium, they pack just the essentials. What would you pick in a similar situation? (Ch 6)
  8. What does Jamie make for Iris to use in her training with Galahad? (Ch 7)
  9. “With a scream, she lost her footing and plunged off the side of the cliff.” (Ch 7, pg 56) - Make a prediction about what will happen next.
  10. What news does Iris learn from her dad and Jamie when she goes home to make a plan to help Galahad escape? (Ch 9)
  11. If Max and his grandmother are separated, where will they meet up? How will Max navigate his way there on his own? (Ch 10)
  12. What gifts do Jamie and Iris exchange before Jamie departs for war? (Ch 11)
  13. How do Max and his grandmother get separated? (Ch 14)
  14. “Yes, she had promised her father that she wouldn’t follow in another boat. That was fine. She wouldn’t follow him in a boat. Because she had a much better idea.” (Ch 15, pg 102) - Make a prediction about what will happen next.
  15. “The dragon continued to rear up with his eyes rolling wildly as he tugged on the chain. But it was no use. Galahad was trapped.” (Ch 19, pg 123) - Make a prediction about what will happen next.

## Reading Response Questions - Continued

16. What saved Jamie's life when the plane shot at him and Max? (Ch 22)
17. What realizations does Iris have when Iris, Maud, and Galahad shelter in the cave for the night? (Ch 23)
18. What does Iris discover about her mother's necklace while talking to Belrath? (Ch 25)
19. What plan does General Wyvern decide to follow, even though it is against Hitler's orders? Why? (Ch 29)
20. What is Jamie's plan for the pencils they found in the schoolhouse? (Ch 30)
21. How does General Wyvern motivate the dragons to light the vineyard on fire? (Ch 31)
22. "Meaning, if we don't get away first, this could be our last hour alive." (Ch 33, pg 220) - Based on what you have read so far, what plan would you create?
23. What was Max's first reaction when they arrived in Dunkirk? (Ch 38)
24. How do the kids handle the problem of General Wyvern trying to escape with them and the dragons? (Ch 39)
25. What gifts does Major Stevenson bring the kids a month after their 'Miracle of Dunkirk?' (Epilogue)

## Exercises

Use these additional exercises as a fun way for students to delve further into the world of *Valor Wings*.

1. **Breaking News:** It is June 5, 1940 and you are a reporter for the *London Evening Standard*. Your job is to compile all the facts, interview survivors, and share the news of the Dunkirk Evacuation with the people of England. What information is the most important to include? What questions would you ask the survivors? What do you think their answers would be? What headline would you give the story?
2. **Choose Your Own Adventure:** *Valor Wings* brings together two unrelated ideas to build an entirely new story. In this story, it is the union of World War 2, specifically the Dunkirk evacuation, and dragons. Now it's your turn to choose your own adventure and combine two unrelated ideas and write your own story! Maybe you'll combine the tearing down of the Berlin Wall with witches and wizards. Be creative!
3. **How to Train a Dragon:** In order to save Galahad, Iris must teach him to fly. Using Iris's experiences and your imagination, create a how-to tutorial teaching someone how to teach a dragon to fly. Your tutorial could be in graphic novel form, video form, step-by-step written instructions, or whatever form you think is best for teaching someone!
4. **Cartography:** Cartography is the science or practice of drawing maps. This story takes place in three different countries: England, Belgium, and France. It's your turn to be a cartographer! Using what you read in the story, and additional research, create a map showing where the different parts of the story take place. For some events, like finding the herd of dragons, you may need to make an educated guess. Add as many details as possible to your map to help create a visual of where the story takes place. Don't forget what Max's father told him: a writer's keen observational skills bring a story to life (Ch 2). Think about the details you read in the story that you can add to the map to bring it to life.
5. **Research:** What really happened during the Dunkirk evacuation? Research the events of Dunkirk that took place between May 26 and June 4, 1940.