

## 4 BIG Ideas in Chapter 1

Hiccup is weak and lacks courage;

Hiccup is a dragon expert therefore a nerd;

Hiccup needs to prove himself as son of the chief;

The other boys are over-confident and mean to Hiccup.



### Character Study Chapter One

#### Demonstration Writing, A Comprehension Answer

The note from Hiccup immediately interests me because he describes himself in terms of becoming a hero. He states that it was difficult for him to become a hero:

“I was not the sort of boy who could train a dragon with the mere lifting of an eyebrow. I was not a natural at the Heroism business. I had to work at it. This is the story of how I became a Hero the Hard Way.”

The reader already knows that the adult Hiccup has written a book about training dragons, and the note shows his expertise as he mentions several facts that only an expert could know such as the size of Sea Dragons.

There is also a note about him before the book starts stating that he was “an awesome swordfighter, dragon-whisperer, and the greatest Viking Hero that ever lived.” However, if Hiccup wrote this about himself – he is the author of *How to Train Your Dragon* after all – is he just showing off? Or is this a true summary of his achievements? The reader begins the novel wondering...

How does the illustration contribute to our understanding of Hiccup?



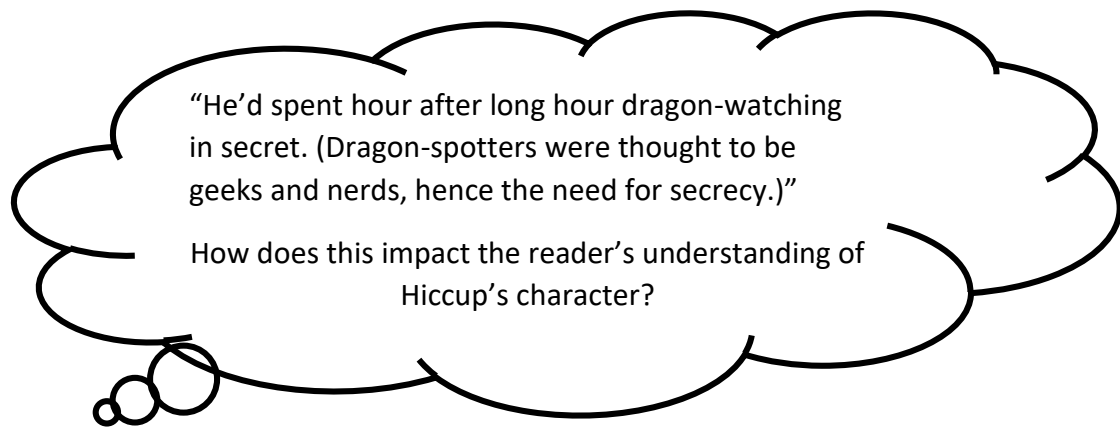
Vocabulary: uncertain, anxious, skinny...

When we first meet Hiccup, he is feeling slightly sick. The reader infers that this is because he is nervous about the Dragon Initiation Programme. The setting contributes to the impression that Hiccup is vulnerable – it is snowing and he is up to his ankles in snow; he seems to be a victim – not a hero. When Gobber tells the boys that Hiccup will be commanding, Dogsbreath declares that Hiccup is useless. Hiccup's reaction to this is to:

“...Wipe(d) his nose miserably on his sleeve. He sank a little deeper into the snow.”

He seems to be resigned to being considered useless and doesn't even stand up for himself or contradict Dogsbreath. We wonder why not when the teacher – Gobber – has chosen him to be in command. Why is he not even attempting to establish himself as a leader? Does he feel that he is being set up, that even Gobber is secretly laughing at him and giving him a task he can't possibly succeed in? The reader is unsure whether to feel empathy for Hiccup or to be frustrated that he has already given up.

However, page 17 reveals a new side to Hiccup – he knows a lot about dragons:



What does this tell us about Hiccup?

- He fears ridicule.
- He’s aware of what’s expected of him as son of the Chief.
- He’s different from most Vikings.
- He’s intelligent and patient.
- He’s a scientist, therefore logical and critical.

The hours Hiccup has spent dragon-watching are **described as** ‘long’ and the repetition of ‘hour after long hour’ **reveals** that Hiccup is patient and dedicated to understanding dragons. However, he has done this in secret **suggesting** he fears ridicule or fears failure in terms of the expectations of him as a son of a chief. Geeks and nerds are often **considered to be** outsiders but are also often the unexpected heroes of stories and films because of their superior knowledge and intelligence. This **contrasts to** the stereotypical view of Vikings as bloodthirsty warriors; therefore, the author has **highlighted** Hiccup’s difference – he is definitely not the same as most of the Vikings in his tribe. Hiccup is **portrayed as** a kind of ancient scientist – someone who studies a species – and in this respect, **can be seen as** intelligent, logical and critical.

When Gobber tells the boys it is not worth returning without a dragon because they will be exiled, Hiccup responds in this way:

“Unhappily, Hiccup looked round at the distant horizon. Nothing but snow and sea as far as the eye could see. Exile didn’t look too promising either.”

What does this tell us about Hiccup?

He thinks he might fail.

He feels depressed about the task and the need to prove himself.

The setting may reveal the fact that he feels trapped, isolated and cannot see a future for himself. This contrasts with the other boys who rush to get their baskets chatting excitedly. This is reinforced later when Gobber shouts, “Death or Glory!” and Hiccup thinks ‘death’ because he has no expectation of glory.