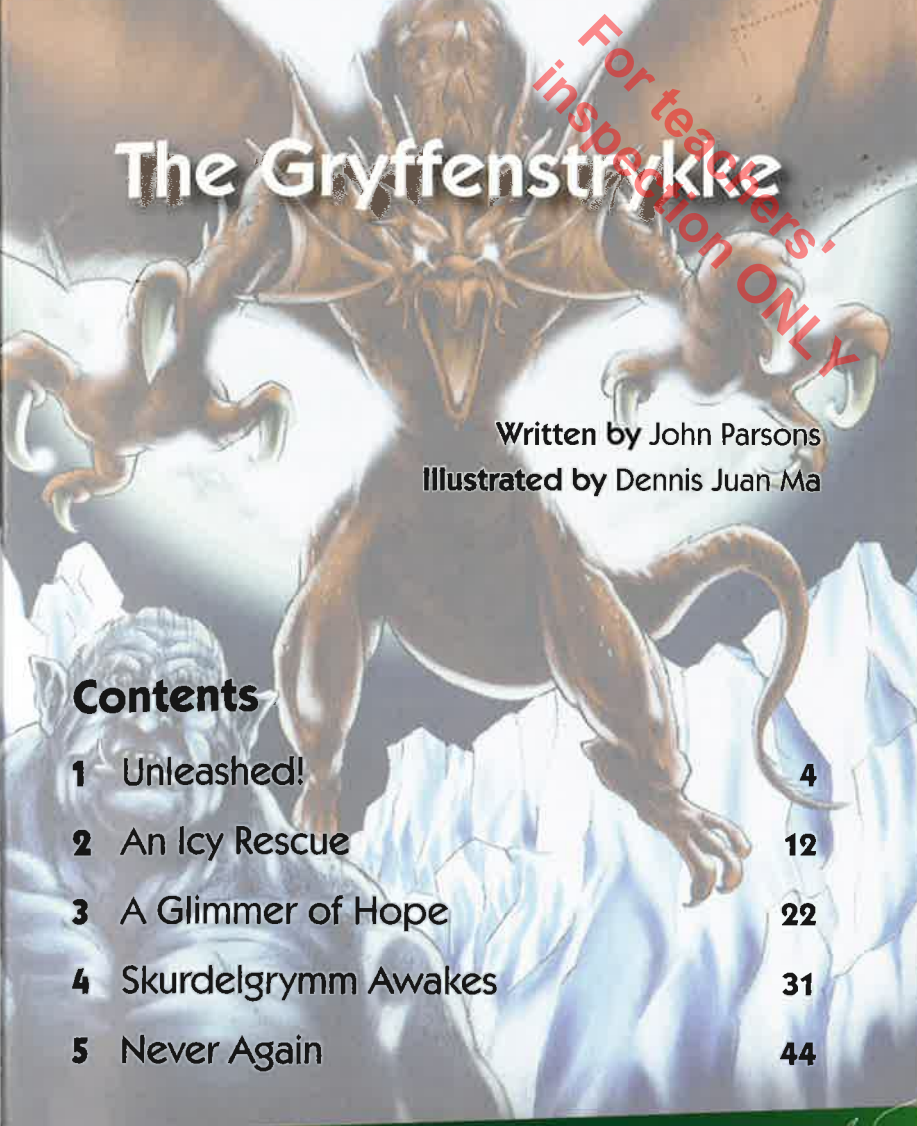
The Gryffenstrykke



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Nelson Literacy Directions



The Gryffenstrykke

For teachers' inspection ONLY

Written by John Parsons
Illustrated by Dennis Juan Ma

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Meet the Characters

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Ulversen

One of the villagers from the north of the fjord.



Sigridsdottir

One of the villagers from the south of the fjord.



The gryffenstrykke

(pronounced "*grifen-strike*")
A terrifying monster.



Skurdelgrymm

An evil troll.



Trygger

Sigridsdottir's brother.

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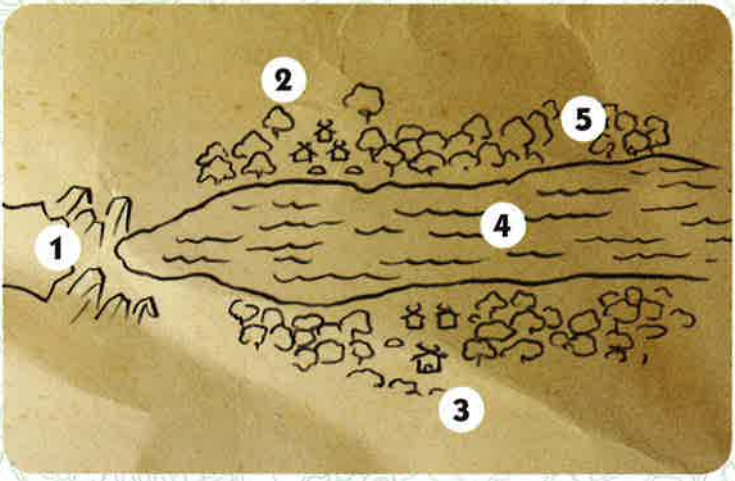
Dear Reader

How often have we blamed someone else for something they never did? It's easy to grumble about other people, especially if they live somewhere different, or we don't normally have anything to do with them.

But sometimes, as this story shows, making the effort to talk can save a lot of misunderstanding!

John Parsons
Author

The Fjord



1. Skurdelgrymm's ice cave
2. The Nordsfolkers' village
3. The Southerners' village
4. The fjord
5. Ulversen's clearing

1 Unleashed!

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The black waters of the icy-cold fjord lapped against the shore with a hiss. Like ancient secrets whispered between souls fixed in stone, a cold breeze seemed to wisp shadows between the rocks. Creeping across the land, an icy mist dampened sounds and spirits.

Behind the heavy doors of the huts on the northern side of the fjord, this was a time of fear and dread.

A lone figure could be seen, hurrying from hut to hut.



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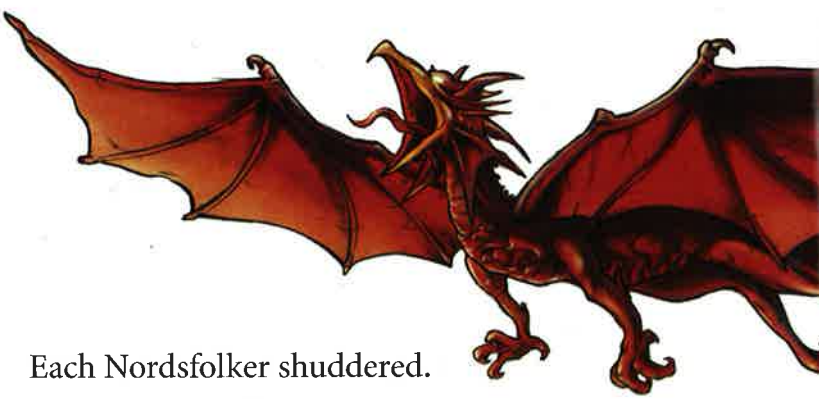
"Nordsfolk! Beware the breath of Skurdelgrymm," warned Ulversen as he reached each hut. "The Southerners have woken the ice troll." He ran to the next hut. "The gryffensmåne is upon us," he whispered, pointing to the yellow moon above the jagged ice at the head of the fjord.

Each warrior came forth bearing a sword or battleaxe. "Ulversen, we are ready," they murmured.

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Families mounted sturdy beams across the doors of their huts. They lit their oil lamps. They trembled beneath rough blankets. In every hut, the Nordsfolk cursed the barbarians of the south.

"The Southerners are waking Skurdelgrymm," the Nordsfolk said to each other. "As we speak, they beg him to unleash the gryffenstrykke."



Each Nordsfolker shuddered. Deep within the blue ice, they pictured the spectre of Skurdelgrymm stirring. Once awake, the ice troll would wait for the full moon to reach its apex above the fjord. Then, when the dread among the Nordsfolk was at its peak, the evil ice troll would unleash the feared gryffenstrykke.

All because of the Southerners.

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And so it was, in these dark times, month after month. First the mist, the suffocating breath of Skurdelgrymm. Then the moon, an unblinking evil eye. Then ... the gryffenstrykke.

The Nordsfolk waited silently.

The moon reached its highest point. The tentacles of the mist pried beneath doors and windows.



The eerie silence was broken by a mournful howl.

"Prepare yourselves," called Ulversen grimly. He tightened his grip upon his sword. Suddenly, from out of the mist, came a blast of wind. The Nordsfolk barely had time to draw their weapons before the dreaded gryffenstrykke swooped down upon them. Its gleaming talons sliced the air like curved daggers. A bellowing shriek filled the night.

"If any person's blood is not running cold, that shriek will surely fill their heart with ice!" shouted Ulversen, swinging his blade. "Let us fell the beast this night!"

The gryffenstrykke wheeled around. It surged through the air like a lightning bolt. Ulversen was buffeted by a wall of air as it swept its scaly, red wings downwards and turned for the huts. Its burning eyes were fixed upon one of the Nordsfolk; its razor sharp beak was poised for attack.



With certain death a split-second away, the man named Grunvald dived for cover. The gryffenstrykke's beak seared within a hand's breadth of Grunvald's head. The beast let out a furious shriek. It dropped a wing and swung around in the air, talons at the ready.

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Ulversen waved his sword to protect Grunvald, who was still on the ground. The gryffenstrykke glared at the warriors. Suddenly, it switched its attention to the huts. Ignoring the Nordsfolk, it flew towards the nearest hut. It landed on the roof with an explosive thump.

The hut's roof was made of soil, held together by a thatch of grasses and tangled cloudberry bushes. It was no match for the gryffenstrykke's beak and talons. The beast quickly set about tearing the roof from the hut.

As the roof and beams were cut to shreds by the creature, the family inside screamed. Someone knocked over the oil lamp. A circle of flames spread.



Ulversen and the other Nordsfolk ran towards the hut. The gryffenstrykke was bathing its powerful body in the light from the fire beneath it.