



As a child I loved playing Top Trumps! I've created this project plan which can be broken into two or three lessons. It uses literacy, numeracy, ICT and drawing skills. It can be used on its own, but works best as a fun, follow-on activity to one of my drawing workshops. At the end of the project the children have a chance to play with their very own class 'Top Trumps' pack. This lesson can be adapted to suit different age groups.

## Step 1: Designing your dragon

### Optional: Choosing a dragon

To ensure plenty of variety in the final pictures, brainstorm ideas for different types of dragon with the children, eg. ice dragons, flightless dragons, water dragons, friendly dragons, dwarf dragons, two-headed dragons, etc. Write them on the board.

Allocate a type of dragon to each child (or ask them to choose).

### Choosing attributes

Ask the children to think about different physical attributes a dragon might have, as these will form the categories for your Top Trump cards. It's also a good opportunity to discuss units of measurement.

eg. Fire temperature, in degrees celsius  
Length/wingspan, in metres  
Weight, in kilogrammes  
Running/flying speed, in kilometres per hour  
Flying altitude, in metres

Egg circumference, in centimetres

Loudness of roar, in decibels

(Use the attributes on the Top Trumps template, or collectively decide on a list from the ideas discussed. You could even add a special power category for children to fill in with the most imaginative power they can think of. Give it a value 1-10.)

### Additional focus: Comparisons

Discuss with the children how their dragon might compare with things they're already familiar with.

As heavy as an elephant  
Faster than a rocket  
The length of a tennis court  
As big as my head  
The temperature of the sun  
Louder than a lion's roar  
Not as scary as ...

The children allocate values to their dragon's attributes by writing them down. To avoid everyone's dragon having a high value for every category, the numbers could be randomised by picking them from a hat or rolling a dice. Alternatively, allow only 2 high values per dragon.

### Writing about the dragon

Ask the children to write a short piece about their dragon, thinking about its special attributes, eg. If it has a large wingspan then maybe it's good at flying. Is it light in weight and, therefore, a speedy runner?

#### Include the following:

**Description:** Start with a visual description: colour, size, markings, number of heads, differences between male and female etc. Is it camouflaged? Can it fly? Think about its personality and habits: Is it ferocious? Is it nocturnal?

**Habitat:** What type of environment does the dragon live in? Mountainous, arctic, deserts, caves, volcanoes, the ocean, rivers, swamps.

**Diet:** What does the dragon eat? Sheep, children, teachers? And does it hunt its prey by using camouflage, flight speed or running speed?

Lastly they need to name their dragon. (Wildlife books, especially ones about birds and reptiles, are good for inspiration.) Pet names, such as Frank or Bob, are not allowed as they're inventing a breed name. Use a thesaurus or brainstorm words that could relate to dragons. Write them on the board.

Encourage the children to think about their dragon descriptions while being creative with their language, eg. the Lesser-spotted Red crest, Ice Scale, the Horny Cave-dweller, Double Trouble, the Winged Devil, the Tasmanian Ridgeback, the Singed Sizzler, the Rock Gobbler, the Black Sentinel.

### Drawing the dragon

Get the children to look at different types of dragons for inspiration, on the internet and in books. *Dragonology* published by Templar is an excellent place to start. Their drawings should be no bigger than A4 for ease of scanning.

#### Encourage the children to:

- 1 Collect reference material (images, colours and textures they like) and stick them into a sketchbook or onto a worksheet.

- 2 Make small sketches of their compositions before proceeding to the finished piece.
- 3 Draw lightly in pencil at first and avoid using rubbers. Make sure they fill the page.
- 4 Experiment with different media, collage, pen and colour pencils, paint.
- 5 Use a bright colour palette and add lots of detail to their drawings.

## Step 2: Designing the cards

### Using the 'Top Trumps' template

For ease, I've designed a Word template for you to use. Scan or photograph the children's drawings and drop them into the spaces provided in the template.

Type in the different dragons' attributes. (Or the children can do this in groups, depending on their ability and facilities available.)



Type the dragon's name here

Insert the picture

DRAGON'S BREED:	
Type dragon's name here	
Fire power	0-2500 °C
Length	3-40 m
Wingspan	1-90 m
Weight	1-2500 kg
Flight speed	0-2000 kmp
Running speed	0-100 kmph
Special power	

The dragon's attributes can be changed

Type in values for the attributes

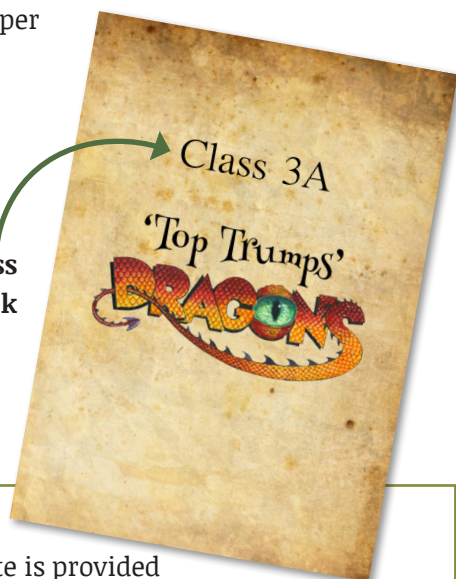


### Making the cards

Once you have filled the template with images and text, print a pack of cards for each group of children. Aim to have 2–4 players in each group and at least 30 cards per pack.

Ideally, print onto heavy-weight paper or card.

Add your class name to the back



#### Optional:

A back template is provided so the cards can be printed double-sided.

Laminate the cards to protect them.

Each group can cut out their own cards using scissors, or they can be guillotined.

## Step 3: Playing 'Top Trumps'

Divide the class into groups of 2–4 players.

- 1 One child shuffles the cards and deals them out face down. Each player must have the same number of cards.
- 2 Players hold their cards so that only they can see the top card. The cards must be played in order, no choosing from the pile.
- 3 The player to the right of the dealer chooses one category from their card and reads out the value.
- 4 The other players take turns to read out the value from the same category on their top card.
- 5 The player with the highest value wins all the cards in that round and puts them to the bottom of their own pile of cards.
- 6 The winner then chooses a category from their next top card for the next round.
- 7 The aim is to try and win all the cards. Limit the length of the game by timing it. Whoever has the most cards at the end of a set time is the winner.



#### Additional activity:

### Making a dragon book

Should you wish to take the dragon theme further, the children's work could be turned into an anthology of dragons. Allocate a page in the book to each child. Include the written piece they produced at the beginning of the project and their drawings, and have a panel including the dragon's powers from the 'Top Trumps' cards. Experiment with page layout but keep the design style consistent throughout. You could produce it as a concertina book and display it in the classroom or a corridor.

## THE CHILDREN'S GALLERY

On my website I have a gallery set aside for children's work. If you'd like to send any of your 'Top Trumps' cards or drawings to me at [Mark@mprobertson.com](mailto:Mark@mprobertson.com) I'll gladly add them to my Children's Gallery.