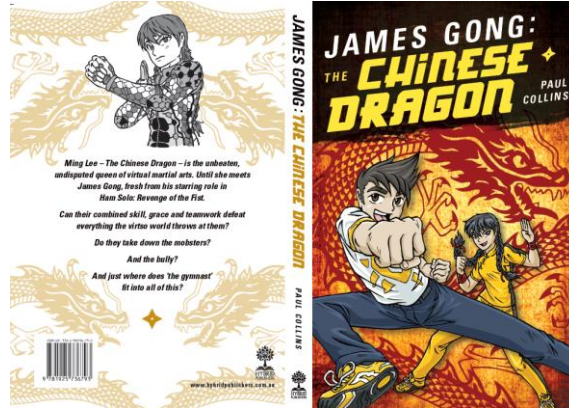# Teachers' Notes for James Gong: Chinese Dragon *by Paul Collins*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Collins has written many books for younger readers. He is best known for his fantasy and science fiction titles: *The Jelindel Chronicles* and *The Quentaris Chronicles* – co-edited with Michael Pryor. He has also written *The World of Grrym* trilogy with Danny Willis. His trilogy *The Earthborn Wars* was published in the US by Tor. His last book was *James Gong – The Big Hit*.

Paul has been short-listed for many awards and has won the Inaugural Peter McNamara, A Bertram Chandler, Aurealis and William Atheling awards.

Paul is also the publisher at Ford Street Publishing, a children's specialist publishing everything from picture books to young adult literature.

Paul has a black belt in both Ju Jitsu and Taekwondo and was a kick boxer trained by then Australian Heavyweight Champion, Dana Goodson. You will find much of Paul's martial arts experiences in this book.

Paul's websites are: www.paulcollins.com.au; www.fordstreetpublishing.com and www.creativenetspeakers.com

SYNOPSIS

James Gong is a 14-year-old taekwondo enthusiast who discovers virtso fighting, using holograms which can do cool tricks instead of their own bodies. He idolises Ming Lee, a girl who excels at all martial arts including virtso fighting and is the local champion. James discovers that his sister, Caitlin, has been creating a science project of construct gymnast which is similar to a virtso. He steals the gymnast and uses her to defeat Ming, which results in her asking James to be her partner in the National Doubles Championship.

Caitlin helps them to refine the gymnast and they train for the Nationals, including defeating James' nemesis, Brian Tossa, nicknamed Tosser. Tosser is not happy about this and challenges Ming to a fight in a virtso suit which transfer the impact of the fight from the virtual fighters onto the wearer of the suits. Two rival mobs place bets on the fight and threaten James, one wanting him to win and the other to lose.

In the fight, Ming is losing until a final illegal move which knocks Tosser out, resulting in a draw, avoiding the negative impacts of her either winning or losing.

ACTIVITIES

Questions to Ask
Before Reading:
- What do you think this book will be about? What makes you think that?
- Who are the characters on the front cover? Track your thinking about who they are as you read.
- Why do you think the book is called *James Gong: Chinese Dragon*?
- Read the blurb and then predict the ending.

During Reading:
- Picture the main characters in your mind. What do they look like? Draw them and give evidence from the text to support your drawing.
- If anything happens to change your picture, discuss what made you think differently.
- What kind of a person is James? What makes him make the decisions he does?
- How does James feel about Ming? Note any evidence to support your ideas, and add to this as you read.
- Are you like any of the characters in the book? Do you know anyone who is like any of them? In what ways are they similar?

After Reading:
- What did you find that you did not expect when you started reading this book?
- How did your thinking about James and Ming change over the course of the book? What made your thinking change?
- Where there any plot developments which surprised you? What evidence did you find in the text which hinted at events to come?
- How do you think Tosser would tell this story? Would his perspective be very different?
- Create a story map of the book which shows all major events. In what ways does it innovate on the narrative structure?

Discussion Points
- Chapter 1: What has happened so far? Which characters have we met? What do we know about them? What do you predict might happen? Why did the chapter end here?
- Chapter 2: What did you notice about how James reacted to the fight? Why do you think he reacted this way?
- Chapter 3: How would you get the use of Caitlin's gymnast? How would you get the Sony-Plus 5? What honest and ethical means can you think of? What other means can you think of to get James what he wants?

- Chapter 4: Discuss the ethics of James' actions. What do we know about James' character as a result of his actions? What sort of person is he? What do you think the consequences of his actions will be, or should be?
- Chapter 5: At the end of the chapter, James says he sincerely felt guilty about it. What is 'it'? Why did he feel guilty? Would you?
- Chapter 6: How have others reacted to James' win? Why do you think they reacted this way? How do you think people feel about Tosser? What is the evidence for this? How does the reaction of his classmates change the way James is feeling?
- Chapter 7: Discuss the ethics of James' behaviour – do you agree with what he is doing? What are the consequences of his behaviour? Are you surprised? What have we learned about Ming and her character?
- Chapter 8: What do we learn about Caitlin's character in this chapter? What motivates her?
- Chapter 9: How do you think Ming will influence James? What do you predict will happen now?
- Chapter 10: What is James learning about himself from working with Ming? How is his character developing?
- Chapter 11: What do you think James is planning on doing now? What do you think Ming is planning? How are they different, and how are they the same?
- Chapter 12: Did you expect this turn of events? Do you think James and Ming are the best fighters, or do you think it is Caitlin's prototypes which are winning? What do you think of Caitlin now? How do you think Tosser is feeling? How would his version of this story be different to James'?
- Chapter 13: Discuss the virtso suits. What are they? Why do you think they have been created? Should they be legal? What are the advantages and disadvantages of their use? What is Tosser thinking by proposing a Death Commando regs fight in virtso suits?
- Chapter 14: How is James and Ming's relationship changing? What evidence do you have of this? How is Ming feeling about the fight?
- Chapter 15: What do you Caitlin's motivation is now? Is she concerned about money, winning, or protecting James and Ming?
- Chapter 16: What have we learned about Tosser's family? What do you think about James and Caitlin's plan?
- Chapter 17: How do you think James is feeling after they pick up the suit? How is Ming feeling? What evidence do you have to support your ideas?
- Chapter 18: Discuss what has happened in this chapter. What are the possibilities moving forwards? What do you predict will happen next, and what will the consequences be? What other possibilities are there?
- Chapter 19: What has Caitlin done to help them? How does this change your prediction? What do you think of Caitlin as a person?
- Chapter 20: Now that we have learned more about the virtso suits and how they work, what do you think of them? Are they a good idea? What do you think the social and historical reasons are for the popularity of illegal backstreet fighting?
- Chapter 21: How has James and Ming's relationship further developed? Where do you think they are going? What do you think will happen next with the huge fat hand that is throttling James?
- Chapter 22: Why do you think Tosser is acting like this? How would his side of the story be developing? What do you think is happening in his life? Do you think his family and friends are supporting him? What is your evidence to support your ideas?
- Chapter 23: Predict what will happen next, and give evidence for your thoughts? James thinks no one trusts him. Is he right? Would you trust him?
- Chapter 24: Recap what happened in this chapter. Is it what you expected? What was predictable? What was surprising? What will happen next?
- Chapter 25: Again recap what happened in this chapter. What has changed? Is it what you expected? What do we know about how both Ming and James' characters are developing?
- Chapter 26: What do you think of the ending? How did it turn out for James, Ming and Tosser? How do you think the gangs will feel about the result?

Characters

- Choose a character from the book and sketch them. What evidence did you have to inform your sketch?
- The main characters all really want something. Would you say that they are willing to do whatever it takes to get what they want? Does this extend to things which they would normally not do? Consider the ethical question: How far should you go to get what you want? Give examples from the text and connect to your own life when answering the question.
- Choose a character and describe how their personality develops over the book. What does Paul Collins do to show that they are growing and learning?

The Craft of Writing

Paul Collins used many writing traits throughout the book. How do these impact the way it is read? Explore and be inspired!

Voice

How does the way in which James tells the story change throughout the book? What stays the same?

Presentation

The pictures at the beginning of each chapter foreshadow what is about to occur. What else do they add to the story?

Word Choice

Suspense is a major feature of this book. Find the words which help to build suspense.

Ideas

A big idea in this book how far the characters go to get what they want. How far *should* you go to win?

Sentence Structure

Examine the sentence structures at the beginning and end of each chapter. Do you notice any patterns? What is the function of these sentence types?

Conventions

Choose a passage from the book and examine the punctuation choices. How does the punctuation add to the narrator's voice?

Organisation

Write a timeline of the entire storyline and compare it to a standard narrative convention. What do you notice?

Curriculum Links

There are many links to be made to the Australian Curriculum (AC), especially the English Learning Area. The table below demonstrates some of the possible connections between the above learning activities and the curriculum from Years 4-8, allowing for both extension and literacy support groups using the same text. Differentiation is achieved by level of detail and evidence which is required by the students, allowing all students to work within their zone of proximal development.

Learning Activity	Year 4 AC Links	Year 5 AC Links	Year 6 AC Links	Year 7 AC Links	Year 8 AC Links
Questions to Ask	ACELT1603 ACELT1605 ACELY1692	ACELT1609 ACELY1702 ACELY1703	ACELT1613 ACELY1709 ACELY1713	ACELT1620 ACELY1722 ACELY1723	ACELT1627 ACELT1630 ACELT1807 ACELY1734
Discussion Points	ACELT1603 ACELT1605 ACELY1692	ACELT1609 ACELT1610 ACELY1702 ACELY1703	ACELT1613 ACELY1709 ACELY1713 ACELY1801	ACELA1763 ACELT1620 ACELT1621 ACELY1723	ACELT1627 ACELT1630 ACELT1807 ACELY1734
The Craft of Writing	ACELT1604 ACELT1605 ACELY1692 ACELY1694	ACELT1609 ACELT1610 ACELY1698 ACELY1701 ACELY1702 ACELY1703 ACELY1704	ACELT1613 ACELT1615 ACELY1713 ACELY1714 ACELY1801	ACELA1763 ACELA1764 ACELT1620 ACELT1621 ACELY1722 ACELY1723 ACELY1725	ACELA1543 ACELA1548 ACELT1630 ACELT1807 ACELY1734 ACELY1736
Characters	ACELT1604 ACELY1692 ACELY1694	ACELT1609 ACELT1610 ACELY1698 ACELY1702 ACELY1703 ACELY1704	ACELT1613 ACELY1713 ACELY1714 ACELY1801	ACELA1763 ACELT1620 ACELT1621 ACELY1722 ACELY1723 ACELY1725	ACELT1630 ACELY1734 ACELY1736
Research	ACELY1692 ACELY1694	ACELY1702 ACELY1703 ACELY1704	ACELY1713 ACELY1714	ACELY1722 ACELY1723 ACELY1725	ACELY1734 ACELY1736

Full descriptions of Australian Curriculum Links

Year Level	AC Link	Description
4	ACELT1603	Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a point of view
4	ACELT1604	Use metalanguage to describe the effects of ideas, text structures and language features of literary texts
4	ACELT1605	Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension
4	ACELY1692	Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning to expand content knowledge, integrating and linking ideas and analysing and evaluating texts
4	ACELY1694	Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts containing key information and supporting details for a widening range of audiences, demonstrating increasing control over text structures and language features
5	ACELT1609	Present a point of view about particular literary texts using appropriate metalanguage, and reflecting on the viewpoints of others
5	ACELT1610	Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses
5	ACELY1698	Show how ideas and points of view in texts are conveyed through the use of vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions, objective and subjective language, and that these can change according to context

Year Level	AC Link	Description
5	ACELY1701	Identify and explain characteristic text structures and language features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text
5	ACELY1702	Navigate and read texts for specific purposes applying appropriate text processing strategies, for example predicting and confirming, monitoring meaning, skimming and scanning
5	ACELY1703	Use comprehension strategies to analyse information, integrating and linking ideas from a variety of print and digital sources
5	ACELY1704	Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive print and multimodal texts, choosing text structures, language features, images and sound appropriate to purpose and audience
6	ACELT1613	Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts
6	ACELT1615	Identify and explain how choices in language, for example modality, emphasis, repetition and metaphor, influence personal response to different texts
6	ACELY1709	Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions
6	ACELY1713	Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts
6	ACELY1714	Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience
6	ACELY1801	Analyse strategies authors use to influence readers
7	ACELA1763	Understand that the coherence of more complex texts relies on devices that signal text structure and guide readers, for example overviews, initial and concluding paragraphs and topic sentences, indexes or site maps or breadcrumb trails for online texts
7	ACELA1764	Analyse how point of view is generated in visual texts by means of choices, for example gaze, angle and social distance
7	ACELT1620	Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view
7	ACELT1621	Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts
7	ACELY1722	Use prior knowledge and text processing strategies to interpret a range of types of texts
7	ACELY1723	Use comprehension strategies to interpret, analyse and synthesise ideas and information, critiquing ideas and issues from a variety of textual sources
7	ACELY1725	Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, selecting aspects of subject matter and particular language, visual, and audio features to convey information and ideas
8	ACELA1543	Analyse how the text structures and language features of persuasive texts, including media texts, vary according to the medium and mode of communication
8	ACELA1548	Investigate how visual and multimodal texts allude to or draw on other texts or images to enhance and layer meaning
8	ACELT1627	Share, reflect on, clarify and evaluate opinions and arguments about aspects of literary texts
8	ACELT1630	Identify and evaluate devices that create tone, for example humour, wordplay, innuendo and parody in poetry, humorous prose, drama or visual texts
8	ACELT1807	Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts
8	ACELY1734	Use comprehension strategies to interpret and evaluate texts by reflecting on the validity of content and the credibility of sources, including finding evidence in the text for the author's point of view
8	ACELY1736	Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices, and including digital elements as appropriate