

**External Conflict as a Form of Characterisation: An
Analysis of *How to Break a Dragon's Heart* by
Cressida Cowell**

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Bachelor's Thesis

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University of Turku

February 2026

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Number of pages: 17 pages

Conflict is one important element in storytelling. It plays a role in many parts of a story, but one of the most crucial ones is characterisation. This paper looks at how that applies to the novel *How to Break a Dragon's Heart* (2009) by analysing what the different kinds of conflicts of the novel reveal about the characters involved in them, and the kinds of methods that are used to do so. As the book in question is somewhat part of a tonal shift in the series, with some conflicts having a lighter tone versus some having a darker tone a particular interest is seeing if and how characterisation is different between those two types of conflicts. The analysis finds that across all the conflicts, a common way to add to characterisation is the method characters use to try to solve the conflict.

Key words: conflict, tone, characters, literature, *How to Break a Dragon's Heart*.

Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Theoretical framework	5
3	Data and methods	7
4	Analysis and discussion	8
4.1	Conflict against the witch	8
4.2	Conflict against the dragon	10
4.3	Conflict between humans and dragons	11
4.4	Conflict with the Berserks	13
4.5	Comparison	15
5	Conclusion	17
	References	18

1 Introduction

Conflict is an important part of storytelling. According to I Gusti and Ida (2024, 1850), conflict in general plays a key role to keep readers interested, challenge characters and make the conclusion of a story more unpredictable. As such, it occurs in all types of stories and is naturally deeply linked to the characters of those stories. The way characters are presented in a conflict situation can tell readers many things about them, with what they say out loud, the ways they choose to engage in the conflict, and symbolic motifs present in those situations.

How to Train Your Dragon is a fantasy book series written by Cressida Cowell set in the Barbaric Archipelago, a collection of islands inhabited mostly by small Viking tribes and different species of dragons. Aside from the dragons, there are barely any fantastical elements present in the series. The first half of the series focuses on mostly unconnected and simple plots without much importance in the overall story. However, this starts to shift around halfway through the series, which maintain some aspects of those earlier stories, while also adding elements of a larger overarching plot that then becomes the focus of the last three books. The whole book series, twelve books in all, has very little prior academic research on it, likely because of how it is somewhat overshadowed by the film series based on it. This is partially why it was chosen as the subject of this analysis.

This thesis aims to analyse the characterisation in the series done through some of the external conflicts that appear specifically in the eighth book, *How to Break a Dragon's Heart* (2009), because it is directly in the middle of the shift in the tone of the overall story, and thus is the most balanced in terms of developing the complex overarching conflict and including more simple one-off conflicts. In terms of the conflicts analysed, the focus will be on how they are presented, what they showcase about the characters involved in them and what methods they use to do so. Firstly, this thesis will present the theoretical framework use to analyse the conflict and the theme. Then it will go over the different of conflicts appearing in the book, which ones were chosen and why. After that, the fourth chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of each of the conflicts and discussing the findings of this analysis. Then the final chapter will present a conclusion on this study.

2 Theoretical framework

There are many different types of conflict in stories, and different ways of categorising them. Perhaps the most common categorisation separates conflicts between internal and external conflicts. Internal conflicts happen inside one character's mind, whereas external conflicts happen between one or more characters. Čechová presents three types of external conflict (2019, 82). The first of these is overt conflict, where the characters are openly against each other and fully aware of each other's intentions (Čechová 2019, 82). The second type is covert conflict, which involves one side of the conflict, typically the antagonist, making moves without the knowledge of the other (Čechová 2019, 84). The third and final type is potential conflict, which is a situation that is not hostile, but there is a possibility of it escalating to that level (Čechová 2019, 86). The type of conflict present between characters can reveal many things about them, especially if it switches as time goes on due to the situation changing. One example of this is a potential conflict changing into an overt conflict, due to a character's failure to maintain a peaceful situation.

The different sides of a conflict usually also have opposing views or represent opposing ideas. (change) These oppositions vary across conflicts. Aimukhambet et al. present some of these oppositions, namely nature–man, tradition–modernisation, individualism–collectivism, good–evil and past–present (2024, 5–6). They are usually brought up by the characters present in the conflict. For example, when the opposition is between two different kinds of values, like tradition and modernisation, one side will be more supporting of one set of them, while the other will take the opposing side. Of course, there are also many cases where things are not so simple, and both sides of the conflict embody both parts of the binary opposition, just in different ways.

Finally, conflicts can also be categorised by the type of resolution the story presents them with. Deetz and Stevenson (1986, 211–220) go over five approaches to concluding conflict: avoidance, pacification, competition, compromise, and creative integration. The method a character uses to solve a conflict can more generally reveal the ways in which they view the world. For example, a character using the first method is often used by characters that are not ready to face their problems yet, the third method is used by those who see the world in absolutes, and using the fourth method indicates that a character seeks to avoid harm to as many involved as possible.

One way of analysing characters is through psychological development. Paris (1997, 18–19) discusses a theory about positive and negative human development, where positive development is moving towards self-actualisation, and negative development is socially isolating oneself. He specially mentions three types of negative development, which he calls “self-effacement”, “detachment” and “aggression”, which is further divided into “arrogant-vindictive”, “narcissistic” and “perfectionistic” (Paris 1997, 19). These are all some form of defence mechanism against negative feelings that people experience, and most real and fictional characters show some variation in the approach they use, often having a compilation of multiple methods (Paris 1997, 34–35). The kinds of development that could be associated with certain character are most often identifiable through the dialogue they have, but other actions also contribute to them.

Another important way of analysing characters is through their growth and maturing across a story. Köhler provides a view of maturity based on taking responsibility for one’s actions (2021, 105). This allows the maturing person to develop their own views and make their own decisions independent of what others think (Köhler 2021, 120). Conflicts play a crucial role in this, as they often are what forces a character to take responsibility for them to be solved. This is especially true for the main overarching conflict of a piece of media.

3 Data and methods

There are many conflicts present in *How to break a Dragon's Heart*. Limiting the search to just external conflicts, about ten were found. From these ten, I have selected four to analyse for this paper: The main character of the book series, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third (referred to as Hiccup III) against Excellinor the witch, Hiccup III against the dragon Furious, the broad conflict between humans and dragons, represented through the characters of Grimbeard the Ghastly and Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Second (Hiccup II), and finally, the conflict that Hiccup III has with the Berserk tribe.

The first three conflicts were selected due to how much the series focuses on them, meaning that there is a good number of things to analyse in them. There is also pretty good variety in terms of the different categories used to analyse them in this paper between them. They also have a large impact on the overall story and characters of the series going forward, which will also be factored into the analysis. The conflict with the Berserks was chosen as a contrast to the first three, since it is much less important in the grand scheme of things.

Although most of these conflicts are focused on a lot more in the final part of the book series, the analysis of these conflicts in this paper is mostly limited to the one book. However, because since it is the one where the conflicts start, it provides a lot, if not most, of the relevant information for analysing the conflicts. The later books also do not really throw in any surprise reveals about the conflicts that would affect this analysis, except for one potentially important additional detail added to the conflict of humans and dragons that was not presented in this book, which will be brought up in the conclusion.

4 Analysis and discussion

The overall plot of *How to Break a Dragon's Heart* (2009) is about the viking tribe Hiccup III belongs to sending a rescue party to search for a missing person, who happens to be a friend of Hiccup's. This search then takes Hiccup III to the island of Berserk, where through some events that transpire with the local Berserk tribe, he encounters Excellinor and Furious, two dangerous individuals who both plan to reshape the world according to how they see fit, and who have both been trapped on the same island for reasons unrelated to the other. Hiccup is ultimately able to rescue his friend and leave the island behind, but due to some things he does, both Excellinor and Furious are able to escape, leading to a somewhat uneasy ending that will be followed up on in the subsequent books of the series.

4.1 Conflict against the witch

The first conflict to be analysed in this paper begins when Hiccup III is tossed into a prison cell inside of a tree trunk. There he first encounters a witch, who does not tell her name to him, but she is later referred to as Excellinor. Their encounter begins as a potential conflict, as no hostilities play out between the two characters yet, but there is a very tense atmosphere. (Čechová 2019, 86). This is reinforced when Excellinor assures Hiccup III that she is dangerous: "I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU!" announced Hiccup, as loudly as he could to give himself confidence. "Ohhh, [*sic*] yes, you *are*," spat [Excellinor]. "And you are right to be." (*How to Break a Dragon's Heart* 2009, 141; capitalisation and italics as in the original)

As a character, Hiccup III often defaults to trying to avoid conflict, both due to his kind nature and because he is not particularly strong. Due to this, a lot of the external conflicts he has have some aspects of potential conflict, as can be seen with one of the other conflicts later.

As the two continue to speak, Excellinor starts to have suspicions about who Hiccup is, due to how he speaks about certain things. She proposes that the two should try to guess who the other is, based on a story she tells Hiccup III, and the one who guesses successfully gets to kill the other. Excellinor has been given no specific reason for wanting to kill Hiccup III, at least at this point, and it is just presented as something she wants to do. The conflict now escalates into an overt one, as both people involved are now fully aware of how and why they are fighting (Čechová 2019, 82). Like mentioned before, Excellinor is very dangerous, which is shown by her being the one escalating the conflict.

The main opposition in this conflict is light-dark. This shows itself very clearly, as the conflict takes place in a very dark prison cell, where Excellinor can easily find her way around due to being stuck there for a long time, while Hiccup III struggles because he was just thrown in. This opposition also plays a role in the conclusion of the confrontation, as Hiccup III uses the brightly glowing eyes of his dragon, Toothless, to temporarily blind Excellinor so he can escape. The darkness adds to Excellinor's generally creepy and ruthless demeanour, as the way she can find her way around in it feels somewhat unnatural. It also symbolically ties into her secretive personality, since one of the symbolic meanings of this opposition is between the know and the unknown (Aimukhambet et al. 2024, 7).

The things Excellinor tells Hiccup III gives a lot of information on her as a character. When Hiccup finds out how the story she is telling ends, he says that it is sad, to which she replies "It's history. Of course it's tragic. This is real life, not a fairy tale..." (*How to Break a Dragon's Heart* 2009, 171). This reveals that Excellinor views life as inherently cruel and unfair, which combined with her aggressive nature lines up with the traits Paris (1997, 22–24) lays out for "arrogant-vindictive" people. In this conflict, Excellinor uses the third type of conflict resolution, competition, seeking to completely defeat Hiccup III in a game of wits before killing him, leaving no room for any negotiation (Deetz and Stevenson 1986, 215).

By contrast, Hiccup III's worldview is somewhat optimistic. Before this point in the story, he has already been on quite a few adventures and faced many dangers, but most of them have been from monstrous dragons or particularly mad humans, which have not really caused him to reflect much on the world he lives in. His earlier adventures have been about him overcoming the challenges he faces in society for being different from others around him, but previously he had accepted that as an unfortunate, yet inevitable part of his life. Hiccup does not clearly display any one of the negative types of development mentioned, making his development lean more positive (Paris 1997, 19) The story Excellinor tells him is one of the first things that truly makes him realise how terrible some things in the world are, and that some stories do not end happily. Before this point, Hiccup had stayed distant from these sorts of issues, mostly trying to just get through life without too many problems, but this encounter changes that somewhat. Excellinor, without knowing it, tells Hiccup III about some of the greater issues that exist in the world the Vikings live in, which ultimately gives Hiccup the incentive to look at the world more critically and face the issues head on, which is a key part of growing up (Köhler 2021, 11). However, that growth happens later, and to resolve the conflict in this moment, Hiccup purposefully chooses the option of avoidance and runs away

when he gets the chance (Deetz and Stevenson 1986, 211). This action by Hiccup III ensures that he will have to face Excellinor again, due to the fact he was so anxious that he forgot to lock the door to the prison cell they had been trapped in.

4.2 Conflict against the dragon

This conflict happens a few chapters after the end of the previously analysed conflict, when Hiccup III encounters an old and enormous dragon called Furious, who had once had a strong brotherly bond with his ancestor, Hiccup II. He tries to calm Furious down by appealing to the connection the two share, but the dragon tells him that he no longer cares about it. Hiccup III is distraught by this but quickly changes the topic by telling Furious that he can free him. In exchange for freedom, Hiccup III makes Furious promise to leave far away and live in peace. Furious seemingly agrees, and Hiccup III frees him. However, Furious breaks his promise afterwards and tells Hiccup III that humans and dragons can never live in peace, which is why he vows to destroy all humans. Furious then leaves Hiccup.

Throughout most of their conversation, the conflict between Hiccup III and Furious is mostly just potential, as Hiccup III is trying his best to stay on the dragon's good side, so he does not get eaten by him. However, there are some parts towards the beginning which are more overt, as Furious tries to eat Hiccup III. Furious' betrayal also makes part of it a covert conflict, since he hides some of his true intentions and strikes when the other side does not expect it (Čechová 2019, 84). Like stated earlier, Hiccup III prefers to avoid direct confrontation, hence why he tries to de-escalate the situation. Furious on the other hand is very aggressive, as can be seen from him causing all the non-potential parts of this conflict. He is also shown to be intelligent enough to manipulate Hiccup III into freeing him, instead of simply eating him when he had the chance.

This time the opposition is mostly past-present, as the contrast between how Furious used to be versus how he is now is shown. Hiccup III also first tries appealing to Furious' past before switching to talking about how he can help the dragon in the present when it fails. Furious is also trying to let go of his traumatic past by rejecting his connection to Hiccup II, though it is still clear that the events regarding him continue to affect the dragon, as Furious blames himself for getting caught due to mourning Hiccup II's death. This all showcases the interplay of the present and the past, which highlights how things have changed between the two timeframes (Aimukhambet et al. 2024, 11)

As a character, Furious is most concerned about revenge for the treatment of dragons at the hands of humans. The lengths he goes to achieve his revenge are extreme, to say the least. He believes the only way dragons can be free is if humans do not exist anymore. Furious also believes the only way for him to be free of the grief of Hiccup II's death is if he leaves his feelings for the boy behind and never looks back. Much like Excellinor, Furious also believes the world to be a cruel place, where he feels he must do anything to guarantee the survival of himself and those he holds closest to him, those being his fellow dragons. This belief in survival through confrontation is also attested to "arrogant-vindictive" people (Paris 1997, 23). His solution to the confrontation with Hiccup III is at first simply to eat him, following the third strategy of competition. However, when the boy tells him he has a way for the dragon to escape, Furious shifts his strategy more to the first one: avoiding conflict with Hiccup III in the present by flying away to strategize on how to defeat him in a future confrontation.

Much like his confrontation with Excellinor, the conversation Hiccup III has with Furious makes him realise important things. More specifically, it shows him that there are many things in the world that cannot be easily fixed, as when he first recognised Furious he believed that the dragon would still care about Hiccup II, and he could use his relation to the boy to calm Furious down, but this did not turn out to be the case. Hiccup III overall tries to use the compromise strategy of conflict resolution in this confrontation, and while it works in getting himself out of the situation, it is inadequate at resolving Furious' gripes with the world around him, inevitably leading to future conflict with him. This failure to reach a satisfying conclusion is a common downside of this strategy (Deetz and Stevenson 1986, 216).

4.3 Conflict between humans and dragons

The third conflict to be analysed is much broader than the other ones. It also does not appear directly in the main timeframe of the story, instead being shown in the story Excellinor tells Hiccup III. This story is set around a hundred years before the events of the book and as previously mentioned, is about the fall of the kingdom of the Wilderwest, which once used to rule the Barbaric Archipelago. The story begins with the last king, Grimbeard the Ghastly, having control of a rich and powerful kingdom, which has gained a great amount of power by enslaving dragons and humans. Grimbeard has a son, Hiccup II, whom he leaves him to die in the wilderness for fear that the son will bring bad luck. However, Hiccup II is saved by two wild dragons, who decide to raise him as their own, along with a young Furious. Eventually

Hiccup II and Grimbeard find each other and reunite. This is where Hiccup II gets involved in the conflict

At first, the conflict is very overt, with both Grimbeard and Hiccup II being aware of the other's intentions. However, later some more covert aspects get introduced, as Grimbeard's eldest son, Thugheart, gets jealous of Hiccup II and tells Grimbeard that he secretly plans to overthrow him, causing Grimbeard to kill Hiccup II. This greatly escalates the conflict Grimbeard's kingdom has with the dragons, which leads to his downfall.

Thugheart as a character is not explored that much. He is described in the book as "the spitting image of [Grimbeard]" (*How to Break a Dragon's Heart* 2009, 154), so a lot of what has been discussed for Grimbeard should hold true for him as well. His main motivation for acting the way he does seems to be jealousy towards Hiccup II, due to how much attention Grimbeard had started to give Hiccup II. He is also shown to be ambitious, as he later uses the chaos of the battle with the dragons, as well as Grimbeard's despair, to seize power for himself, ultimately leading to his defeat and exile at the hands of Grimbeard. In all his actions, the conflict resolution strategy present is competition.

The opposition here is evidently very much nature-man, which is shown by Grimbeard's desire to control everything, even the forces of nature, because he believes himself to be above them. Grimbeard's high view of himself due to his status and achievements lines up with people Paris (1997, 24) describes as "narcissistic", who he says try their best to maintain a status of exceptionality they gained when growing up. However, in the end Grimbeard realises that he is not as powerful as he imagined, since he cannot command time and save Hiccup II from dying after attacking him. This adds to a theme with this opposition, that nature is in many ways beyond human control (Aimukhambet et al. 2024, 9-10)

Hiccup II tries to change Grimbeard's mind by showing him how strong the dragons are with a peaceful dragon petition. Hiccup II's attempt to solve the conflict follows the fourth strategy of compromise, as he tries to resolve the situation without hurting anyone involved, much like how Hiccup III tries to solve things. By contrast, Grimbeard uses the strategy of pacification, trying his best to disconnect Hiccup II from the dragons, for example by banning him from speaking Dragonese (Deetz and Stevenson 1986, 212). Dragonese is the language the dragons in the series speak. The two Hiccups can also speak it, Hiccup II because he was raised by dragons, and Hiccup III due to his extensive study of it.

. This is until he shifts to the strategy of competition when the possibility of Hiccup II betraying him is brought up.

4.4 Conflict with the Berserks

This conflict is given more of the book than all the ones previously discussed, but it is much less important in terms of the series' overall plot. The main participants in this conflict are Hiccup III, his friend Fishlegs (who is not the friend Hiccup III is searching for in the book), his arch-enemy Alvin the Treacherous and the Chief Berserk. This conflict serves as the reason for why Hiccup III ends up meeting Excellinor and Furious, as Alvin is the one to toss him into the tree prison where Excellinor happens to be, and the Berserks later sacrifice him to a creature they call "The Beast" who turns out to be Furious.

In this conflict Hiccup III tries his best use his regular approaches of avoidance and compromise. He first tries talking to the Berserks, but that fails and he is locked up. After being tossed into the prison cell with Excellinor and escaping, Hiccup III tries to sneakily help Fishlegs and a few other people who were trapped by the Berserks break free, but the Berserks start preparing their ritual sacrifices before he can do that, so he pretends to also be trapped to avoid raising suspicion. Hiccup III is picked first to be sacrificed, but he manages to convince Furious to help him free everyone in exchange for freeing him. Even with Furious' help, Hiccup III still tries to negotiate with the Berserks for everyone's freedom, and he would have been able to get out of the situation without violence, had Furious not betrayed him at that moment to start burning everything.

Fishlegs, much like Hiccup III, prefers to avoid conflict as much as he can. However, unlike his friend, he does not have the confidence in himself he would need to negotiate his way out of confrontations, or plan sneaky escapes, so he often results to just accepting the situation without even trying to solve anything, no matter how horrible it would be for him. In this conflict, this involves him sitting hopelessly in the cage the Berserks put him without attempting to escape for most of the duration of the conflict. His tendency towards ignoring anything he feels is even slightly out of his control makes him fit best with the description of "detached" people (Paris 1997, 28). Despite his usual disconnect from things, when he and Hiccup III first get captured by the Berserks, he tries reasoning with them on the basis he might be a lost member of their tribe. Some of the earlier books bring up the fact Fishlegs has berserk tendencies, which has overlaps with being a member of the Berserk tribe, although the two are not entirely the same.

The Berserks ultimately deny this notion, because they would not accept someone like Fishlegs, who they deem to be a “runt” (*How to Break a Dragon’s Heart* 2009, 112–113).

The Chief Berserk is the main antagonistic force of this conflict. As his name implies, he is the leader of the Berserk tribe, who are described in the book as having “more than the usual Archipelago loopiness about them” (*How to Break a Dragon’s Heart* 2009, 100). They have a ceremony that involves sacrificing people to the Beast of Berserk, aka Furious, because they believe it will make them more powerful. This desire for more power is the only motivation they seem to have. The Chief Berserk embodies this aspect of the tribe the most, going as far as to believe he has some kind of magic powers (*How to Break a Dragon’s Heart* 2009, 104). Part of the definition Paris (1997, 25) uses for people he refers to as “narcissistic” is their unwavering belief in the fact that they are special, which applies well here. The Berserks do not have any discontent for the people they sacrifice, and sometimes even admire them if they show great courage when facing the certain death that they put them into, so from their perspective the situation is not really a conflict for the most part. The only part in the story where this is not the case is after Hiccup III confronts them with the help of Furious and tells them to release everyone, to which they at first object to, but ultimately comply with after a few more threats, solving the conflict through compromise.

Finally, there is also Alvin the Treacherous, who is a recurring villain character throughout the book series. After his earlier encounters with Hiccup III, he has declared the boy to be his sworn enemy and has tried a few times already to get rid of him by any means necessary. As Alvin is a major recurring character in the series, he has quite a lot of characterisation that has been established in the previous books. However, like mentioned previously, this thesis will only cover how he appears in the eighth book. Alvin and Hiccup’s first encounter in this book happens at the Berserk village, where Alvin had been hiding. Alvin attempts to kill him, but Hiccup III points out that Alvin is not in a good position with the Berserks if they ever figured out that he was not supposed to be there and tells him he can help if Alvin in turn helps him. This leads into Alvin supposedly leading him to the friend he and Fishlegs came to rescue, but instead Alvin locks Hiccup III away, which leads to him meeting Excellinor. This shows how Alvin is more than willing to deceive others to get what he wants. It also showcases his belief that he can get free from the Berserks by himself, even though he has no proof of such a thing. This sort of unusual belief in himself, along with his ability to easily break promises he made, also puts Alvin into the category of “narcissistic” (Paris 1997, 25)

Overall, this conflict has quite a clear opposition of good-evil, and the way it is applied is quite simplistic, since one side is clearly good and the other clearly evil (Aimukhambet et al. 2024, 11). The villains involved are all shown as power-hungry individuals, who are willing to do terrible things to others to accomplish their goals. Their evil is even incorporated into their appearance, as the Berserks all restrain themselves with heavy chains to increase their strength, and Alvin has lost many parts of his body in his attempts to destroy Hiccup III, having artificial replacements for almost all of them. These include a metallic hook hand, an ivory peg leg and a wooden nose. In contrast to them, Hiccup and Fishlegs are portrayed as generally good-natured individuals, mostly shown in the confrontation by their reluctance towards being violent.

4.5 Comparison

After looking into all the conflicts, there are not any clear differences with the way characterisation is done. However, a few clear differences are seen between the first three and the last in terms of the types of characters involved. Firstly, the first three conflicts all deal with a lot of large-scale issues that affect almost all the characters across the series, while the last one is only focused on a very small group of people. The century-long disdain the humans and dragons have for each other shapes the conflict between Hiccup III and Furious, as well as Hiccup II and Grimbeard's conflict. And while the confrontation of Hiccup III and Excellinor is not tied to it as directly, the things Excellinor talks about still echo back on it.

Another major difference can be found in the antagonists involved. While the antagonists in the book's main conflict are motivated almost entirely by their desire to become more powerful and get rid of their enemies, the antagonists in the overarching conflict feature more variety. This is mostly seen with Furious, who in comparison has a much more sympathetic motivation, seeking revenge not just for himself, but for all dragons. Of course, there is also Excellinor, who has a lot of the same selfish motivations as the Berserks and Alvin. In fact, she has a lot of similarities with Alvin in particular, and this is partly because she is his mother, which is something she revealed to Hiccup III during their encounter.

Speaking of schemes, that is another major difference between the conflicts. As mentioned, Excellinor has her big plan of bringing back the Kingdom of the Wilderwest, and Furious also has large ambitions, seeking freedom for dragons from humans. In contrast, the Berserks and Alvin are much more shortsighted and only focus on broad ideas of becoming more powerful without any bigger plans in mind. Grimbeard is somewhat like this, wanting to maintain the

high amount of power he was born into. However, this goal is much less vague than the ones Alvin and the Berserks have.

5 Conclusion

This analysis found that the conflicts in the book use multiple ways to portray its characters. Perhaps the most frequently used is the actions the characters take within the conflicts, and the way they intend to solve them, though there are also many other things. There also aren't that many notable differences between how characters are portrayed between the book's main conflict, and the conflicts which build up to the later books. For future analysis, the *How to Train Your Dragon* book series has a lot of characters, plot points and other aspects that could be looked at in further academic research.

One of the later books, *How to Betray a Dragon's Hero* (2013), adds more detail on Grimbeard's character. Before he became king, he was known as Speedfist, an arrogant and somewhat egotistical youngster who viewed the kingdom's earlier friendly collaboration with dragons as unnecessary, so when he took power, he was the one to enslave the dragons. This adds a lot more personal responsibility for the treatment of the dragons to Grimbeard, while also going deeper into the motivation behind his actions. For example, the reason he left Hiccup II to die was because the friendly collaboration with dragons that his kingdom used to have before he came into power was brought about by Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the First centuries earlier, and he feared that his own son would bring about something similar, because he had also gotten the name Hiccup. The series mentions a few times that the Vikings do not choose names for their children by themselves but instead take them to a "naming dame", who examines them and gives them a name. However, it does not change the previous analysis of Grimbeard's character that drastically.

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