**Book: *The Last Dragonslayer* by Jasper Fforde**

**My thoughts:**

I love reading children’s lit, but this one felt a little “watered down.” Kids are capable of very complex thoughts and recognizing changes in characters, especial at a 5.8 reading level. The book was a quick, funny, read, but the story lines could have been much better developed. There were complicated political themes briefly touched on that were hard to understand because they weren’t fully explained. The characters were also shallow, which is a shame because they were very funny and interesting upon meeting them. I might read the rest of the story to see if the author develops the characters any further. I wish the concept of “Berzerker” was developed more. These are people with fierce tempers that are very hard to control. Jennifer, the protagonist, learns that she is a rare “berzerker” with the ability to control and channel her temper to do great things. I would love for my students with anger issues to have a character to relate to and help them learn to control their own tempers.

**Simon’s perspective:**

The concept of an orphaned child destined for great things appeals to kids pretty universally. All kids feel alone sometimes, and all kids can relate to the fantasy that they might someday escape from their real life to do something exciting. Simon, like most kids his age who love to read, likes to escape his real life by way of fantasy books. Perhaps he feels abandoned by his father the way that Jennifer Strange was left without parents in the story. Jennifer has a loyal pet Quarkbeast in the story that she believes was sent by her father to protect her. Simon loves animals, and maybe he connected with Jennifer on that level, too. He would probably also agree with her decision not to kill the dragon, because he loves to study animals and would probably like to learn from the dragon as well. Jennifer had to take on very big responsibilities at a young age. Kids with single parents sometimes have to take on extra responsibilities at home as well, and in my experience with students and family, more likely to be self-sufficient at a younger age out of necessity. I believe Simon could relate to her feeling burdened by her added responsibilities.

**Students’ perspectives:**

“I liked it. It was a good book. I really liked the part where the dragon popped up. She thought he was stones, but then it was the dragon. I want to read more, but I can’t find the other books in the library.”-Third grader

“Jennifer seems pretty cool. It was sad when the Quarkbeast died. I think Tiger will take over the business. I hope that Jennifer and Tiger get to be free, but they will stay at the magic place even if they don’t have too.” –Fifth grader

**TV: *Agents of SHEILD***

**My Thoughts:**

This new show wasn’t on Simon’s list of likes, but it’s produced by Marvel and features a post-Avengers New York City in which superheroes and villains live side-by-side with regular citizens. I watched the first episode of this because I thought it might be the kind of show Simon would like. I thought the show was pretty funny and well written, despite some bad acting. You need a base knowledge of Marvel comic themes and characters, but the plot was pretty easy to follow.

**Simon’s Perspective:**

I’m not sure how well this show appeals to a young audience. It was more dialogue-heavy and less action driven than the movies he likes to watch. It lacked the costumed super heroes and big special effects that are the big draw for kids watching these movies.

**Student’s Perspective:**

It was not very popular amongst my students, most had never heard of it. I had a couple of students say that they watched it, but they might have just been saying that!