

# The Veritas Gryphon

“They very soon came upon a Gryphon, lying fast asleep in the sun.”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Beware of the Veritas Gryphon! He is a dual-natured enigma: ferocious yet graceful, atrocious yet attractive and powerful yet subtle. He is archaic, and yet always new. The inscrutable Gryphon has the wings and head of an eagle, and the body of a lion. The Gryphon is utterly fantastic.

It was because of these attributes that this fabulous creature became the mascot of the Veritas Academy. The Gryphon is like Veritas. The Veritas Academy is, of course, dedicated to the pursuit of the Truth (Veritas). We believe, unlike many in our postmodern society, that truth is singularly knowable. We know, moreover, that truth is truly knowable only through the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Ancient of Days, the Son of Man, also the Truth itself. So how can a chimerical creature represent an institution dedicated to the pursuit of truth?

The truth about Veritas Academy is that, like the Gryphon, it is a human invention. Veritas Academy is not the truth itself, nor does it even see itself as having any special claim on the truth. Rather, it is a means by which we pursue the truth. As such, Veritas is, in many ways, a dual-natured enigma. It is a school, but it is not the primary educator of our children. It is a Christian school, but it does not have a chapel. It is classical school and thus imitative of the oldest models of pedagogy but, as part of the Classical School Movement, it is very *au courant*. It is fundamentally conservative, but it is the most radical school in town.

The Gryphon stands for much that Veritas Academy stands for. The Gryphon, which can be spelled several ways, including ‘griffin’ and ‘griffon’, is found in classical mythology and in medieval symbolism. Throughout iconographical history, the gryphon has represented many things including the dual nature of Christ. Like the unicorn, a similarly fantastic beast, the gryphon represents the human imagination. As the combinative product of man as sub-creator, it represents the creative arts of poetry, art and fantasy. Veritas students are taught to understand the fantastic worlds produced by poets as explorations and investigations into the nature of God’s world, which is more intriguing, richer and more satisfying than any fantasy. Poetry is like all scholarly inquiry, it is a means of ascent. Dante understood this when in *Purgatorio* he described the triumphal ascent of the church as a procession led by a chariot pulled upward into the heavens by a majestic gryphon.

So, beware of the Veritas Gryphons! They are wonderful and surprising and they are ‘on the move.’ You cannot be sure when you will meet one, or what will happen when you do. They have already ventured beyond the academy’s walls. Savannah’s middle-school volleyball and tennis players have already met them. Others soon will. When they do, “Watch out!” The gryphons are utterly fantastic.

Joe Nigg, author of *The Book of Gryphons, Wonder Beasts, a*  
<http://www.gryphonpages.com/literature/literature2.htm>

The Gryphon represents:

1. Poetry, fantasy and the imagination
  2. The dual nature of Christ
  3. An enigmatic and strange creature
  4. Classical mythology
1. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*  
"The Gryphes are so called because they are winged quadrupeds. This kind of wild beast is found in the Hyperborean Mts. In every part of their body they are lions, and in wings and head are like eagles, and they are fierce enemies of horses. Moreover they tear men to pieces."
  2. *The Griffin and the Minor Canon.*
  3. Dante, *Divina Comedia, Purgatorio, Canto 29*

The interval between these four contained  
A chariot triumphal on two wheels,  
Which by a Griffin's neck came drawn along;

And upward he extended both his wings  
Between the middle list and three and three,110  
So that he injured none by cleaving it.

So high they rose that they were lost to sight;  
His limbs were gold, so far as he was bird,  
And white the others with vermilion mingled.

Not only Rome with no such splendid car  
E'er gladdened Africanus, or Augustus,  
But poor to it that of the Sun would be,--

That of the Sun, which swerving was burnt up  
At the importunate orison of Earth,  
When Jove was so mysteriously just.120

#### Canto 31

A thousand longings, hotter than the flame,  
Fastened mine eyes upon those eyes relucant,  
That still upon the Griffin steadfast stayed.120

As in a glass the sun, not otherwise  
Within them was the twofold monster shining,  
Now with the one, now with the other nature.

Think, Reader, if within myself I marvelled,  
When I beheld the thing itself stand still,  
And in its image it transformed itself.

While with amazement filled and jubilant,  
My soul was tasting of the food, that while  
It satisfies us makes us hunger for it,

4. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* (1865), CHAPTER IX, "The Mock Turtle's Story"  
"They very soon came upon a Gryphon, lying fast asleep in the sun." The Gryphon and Mock Turtle tell Alice about school, "lessens" and "uglification"
5. Saab Automobile AB introduced the new corporate symbol of the red Gripen head and gold crown with the name SAAB in silver beneath it all contained within a blue roundel
  - a. The heraldic Griffin's head - derived from the coats of arms of the Skåne and Östergötland counties in southern Sweden traditionally symbolises vigilance.
6. The Cotton Exchange Fountain, 1889  
The Cotton Exchange Fountain is a seated, red terra cotta, winged lion in four sections, placed on the north side of a brick fountain basin, in front of the Savannah Cotton Exchange Building facing Bay Street and was created in 1889.

The lion is seated on his hind quarters looking out over the collection pool. It stands approximately 5'2" high and is integral with 5'6" long by 2' 11" wide base. A single stream of water exits from the lion's mouth.

The site is surrounded by a highly ornamental fence containing silhouettes of selected presidents. The iron fence contains 12 single and 7 double segment units. Each segment contains a presidential profile set in a flat circular field surrounded by a raised petal and ring frame. The profiles are centered in a pierced, rectangular, acanthus foliage with square iron frame. That panel is surrounded by a repeating, pierced rectangle with center pierced cartouche. The panels are interfaced with discrete vertical panels filled with pierced symmetrical acanthus.