

Myths and Legends/Teacher pack



Welcome to the Myths & Legends project for the Guernsey Literary Festival. I am a local artist and teacher working in Guernsey who is inspired by myths and legends. In this document, I have included some background material and images to introduce this topic to pupils with a view to writing the stories. I've also included some of my own artwork, explaining the role that myth / legend has in shaping what I produce. Finally, I've listed a few ways in which I've tried to extend my knowledge and interest in this fascinating area which may help other teachers too.

Charlie Buchanan / December 2020

Myths and Legends/Material for Lessons (A Guide to Creating your Own)

Some things in the world are too big and complicated and mind blowing to explain – maybe that’s why people throughout history have used stories as a way of making sense of what they see around them. Sometimes we refer to these stories as myths or legends and they have a lot to teach us.

How many stories do you know which you think the person sitting next to you on the bus might know too? Are there stories we all share? I think you’ll find there are quite a few from our own culture and that of our neighbours and perhaps even further afield which you might share knowledge of, even with a total stranger. These stories are always with us, and I bet you don’t remember when you first heard some of them: it’s as if you have always known them. Some of these stories might be fairy tales like Cinderella or Beauty and the Beast but some will be classed as myths or legends. Myths and legends might be said to be even older than fairy tales but they come from the same route of speaking and telling stories around the fireside and are often routed to a particular place, religion or culture. They are very important, more important than you might ever imagine. What are they?

Myth - a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.

Legend - a traditional story sometimes popularly regarded as historical but not authenticated.

Eg. "the legend of King Arthur"

These stories often include...

Trope - a significant or recurrent theme; a motif

Archetype - a very typical example of a certain person or thing OR a primitive mental image inherited from the earliest human ancestors, and supposed to be present in the collective unconscious

Why do they still interest us?

Even amidst our modern busy lives people still like telling stories. We read them, watch them, listen to them and view them all around us. Old stories too are ever present, it seems their meaning remains relevant even in the 21st century. Do you recognise some of these retellings of myths and legends? Can you name the myths or characters they are based on?



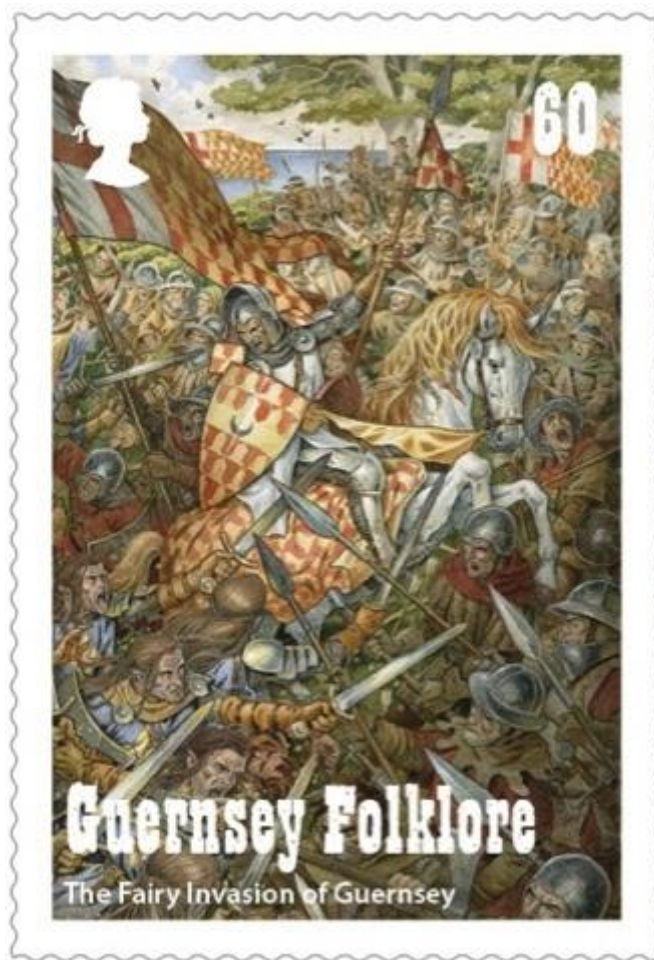


One man named Joseph Campbell wrote a book called *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. He believed that all myths shared a common structure. A director named George Lucas based a very famous film on some of his ideas. Do you recognise it? His idea of *The Hero's Journey* is now ripe for update to include *The Heroine's Journey* as recent films from *The Star Wars* franchise have shown.



This story isn't a myth but it uses many of the **tropes** and **archetypes** of myths and legends to take its characters on a mythic journey. George Lucas rewrote old stories to create new versions. In a way the story has begun a kind of modern mythology.

Artists of all kinds, writers, film makers, sculptors, painters... have always been fascinated by old stories. Artists dealing in pictures have used them for inspiration in their paintings. Have a look at these pictures: how many of these do you think you can name? Some might be new to you but elements of some you will recognise. Even if you can't name the story, what is happening in the pictures, can you name any of the characters?





*This wonderful painting *The Fall of Icarus* by Peter Bruegel the Elder, 1560, is a perfect foil through which to discuss different interpretations of myths, Icarus is hidden in the bottom right corner as he plunges into the sea. There are so many ideas hidden in the work which explores a myth from a different point of view.







Sif and her Golden Hair - Norse
Theseus and the Minotaur - Greek
Pandora's Box - Greek
The Fairy Invasion - Guernsey
Medusa - Greek
Saint George and the Dragon - British Isles
The Fall of Icarus - Greek
King Midas - Greek
The Beast of Bodmin Moor - British Isles
Odin's Eye - Norse
King Arthur and Merlin - European
Morgana Le Fay - European
The Loch Ness Monster - Scottish
Fenris Wolf - Norse
Robin Hood - British Isles
The Lady of Shalott - British isles

Further Mythology from other cultures to explore...

North African & Egyptian - Egyptian Gods and Creation Myths

African -

Indian -

Australian Aboriginal -

Native American -

Arctic -

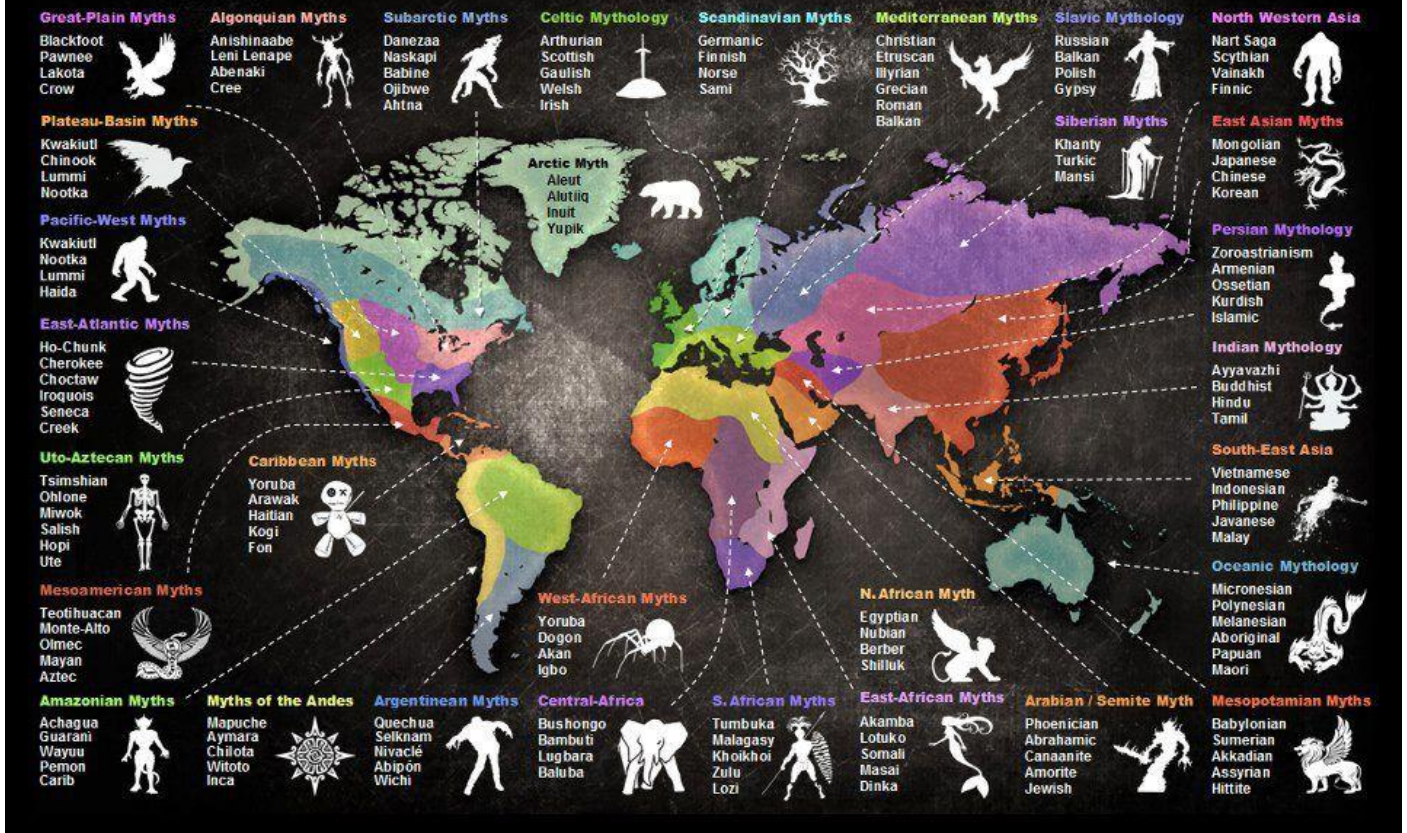
A Good link to view is...<https://blog.ed.ted.com/2018/05/30/5-myths-from-around-the-world>



MAP OF WORLD MYTHOLOGY

V 1.0

DESIGNED BY
SIMON E.DAVIES



Stories of all forms are important because our lives are stories; when we tell stories we are trying to make sense of our lives and the world around us. Very old stories have travelled through time to get to us, told by your great, great, great, great, great, great, great and many more great grandparents as a means of passing on learning, sharing experience and deciding what is right and wrong, safe and dangerous.

Using Myths and Legends as an inspiration to make new Art in all its forms is a great way to explore themes which have been around for thousands of years, particularly in the context of our lives today. The themes inherent in myths and legends are ever relevant.

Here are just a few of the major ones but you can find all sorts if you look hard.

The Origin of the Human Race and the World

Fate

Pride and Hubris

Beauty

Vengeance and Revenge

Birth and Death

Love

The Afterlife

My Role as an Artist- INTERPRETATIONS – As an artist I love stories and I love the idea that life is full of the mythic. When I was making my painting *Young Oak Tree* I was inspired by the story of Daphne and Apollo and paintings and sculptures of a person turning into a tree.



I love the symbolism of trees in myths around the world but this particular Greek myth inspired me. My subject isn't turning into a tree but his youth and growth are mirrored by the tree next to him. To me my subject in modern day dress is like a young Greek hero but he's also still very much of the now. The story was an inspiration in that it allowed me to spring off it like a trampoline to somewhere new but I was by no means copying it. As with all myths this story has now come down to me and I have interpreted it in my own way. Myths and legends are almost like living things they are growing and evolving all the time.



Daphne and Apollo – Bernini 1622-1625

An artist who was inspired by mythic tales was Pablo Picasso, he said “**good artists borrow, great artists steal**” as artists we all take from what surrounds us and the world is full of stories. His etching *The Minotauromachie*/1935 is bursting with mythological elements in particular the Minotaur.



Thoughts & Ideas for teachers/ Starting points for reimagining these stories...

- Read myth and legends, remind children of old ones and reintroduce new ones. Enjoy the sharing of these stories to allow them to settle in young people's minds.
 - Use film and modern re-tellings to encourage the idea of old themes reimagined.
 - Use artists' visions of myths and legends to inspire fresh inquiry and discussion. Drawing is a great way to get kids imagining. Mythical beasts and animals can be a great way to begin visualizing a new approach.
 - Look at the idea of tropes and archetypes. This should be possible even with quite young children. There is lots of debate about what these are but you could include the idea of the hero and heroine, the trickster, the magician or mystic, the monster, the warrior, the mother and father etc...
 - Encourage children and young people to explore old stories in new ways, these are just a few ideas to try...
1. Retell myths and legends in modern day settings.
 1. Refocus the character viewpoint – perhaps the story could be told by a minor character or the viewpoint of a perceived villain could be explored.
 2. Use imagery from the stories as a springboard to new ideas. Eg. Apollo and Daphne turning into a tree and the idea of youth, beauty and the natural world (as in my painting *Young Oak Tree*)
 3. Explore archetypes from mythology – use these to explore modern day issues and themes.
 4. Play with combining ideas from various stories.
 5. Explore the overarching messages and fables inherent in some myths and legends, creation and destruction, fate, beauty, revenge etc...

MYTHS AND LEGENDS THE WRITESTUFF CHALLENGE

Ideas for Teachers

What are Myths and Legends?

Myths: Stories from history involving gods, Demi gods, super-humans, rituals of Ancient times.

Narratives play a fundamental role in our understanding of society.

Historical: in such myths the accuracy is lost but the meaning is gained e.g. The Trojan War.

Etymological: explains the origins of words e.g. Aphros - Aphrodite.

Natural: explains aspects of Nature. E.g. Thunder and lightning or the Seasons.

Suggested Greek myths:

Pandora's Box

Persephone

Achilles

Theseus and the Minotaur

Legends:

These are stories that started about a real person or a place that may be visited. The characters may become exaggerated over time – may include magical heroes. Set in olden times in calm peaceful places. Good always overcomes Evil.

Look at Myths and Legends from other countries

England/Britain:

Excalibur.

Robin Hood.

Finn McCool and The Giant's Causeway.

Legend of St George and the dragon.

Aboriginal legends.

Norse legends.

The 'Just So Stories' by Rudyard Kipling as creation myths. These link well with Aboriginal Creation myths.

Look at myths from different countries which explain the same idea differently e.g. the Canadian Indian creation myth of 'How Glooskap Found Summer' and Persephone and the creation of Winter and Summer.

Bailiwick legends:

Our homeland abounds in myths and legends – a trip to Candie Museum or the Folklore Museum in Sauzmarez Park will provide stimulus in this area.

Starting Points (Depending on age and ability)

Read stories to the class. They may represent these in a drawing, painting, storyboard. They may choose to create their own mythical beast then illustrate and describe these.

A homework task may be to research a myth/legend which is then presented to the class.

This could be as a piece of memory work. They may be challenged to present it in 5-6 bullet points.

Films are a good starting point such as:

King Arthur

Immortals

Clash of the Titans.

Percy Jackson.

Being productive!

Before entering the competition - if you have time - it is worth getting students to create, rework, develop ideas so that they will have confidence when they begin to plan/write their stories for the competition.

Choose a favourite place in Guernsey, Alderney, Sark or Herm and with a partner/group, devise a creation myth. For example:

How Little Sark became.

The Fairy Ring at Pleinmont

The Cup and Saucer.

Choose a myth or legend which hasn't yet been made into a film. Devise a trailer for it by picking out the most exciting, fantastical, important parts.

Choose a myth or legend that you particularly enjoyed and:

With a partner, write a script.

Act it out.

Record /film it.

Rework a myth or legend into an English contemporary setting.

Retell a favourite myth or legend from another viewpoint – could be a bystander who has an omniscient view.

From the viewpoint of a different character.

We have provided 5 worksheets for use in the classroom including:

Fold a Monster Game

Myths and Legends Picture Frame

Hero's Quest Story Mountain

Myths & Legends Storyboard

Myths and Legends WriteStuff Story