

**University of Puerto Rico at Humacao
Center of Communication Competencies (CCC)**

**Traditional Tales:
History and Genre**

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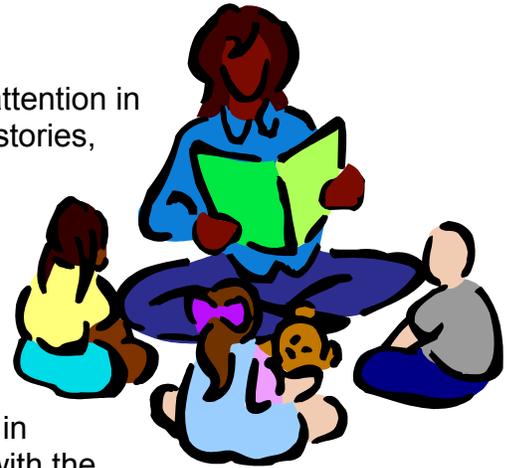
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September, 2003

Dear Students:

Once upon a time, before television became the center of attention in many homes, people used to sit and share stories. These stories, many times of unknown authors, were about tricksters who tried to fool people and sometimes got fooled themselves; beautiful poor girls that wished to be princesses and so did become; or handsome men that were cursed into being frogs, snakes or simply a beast. These were the times that traditional tales were part of everyday life.

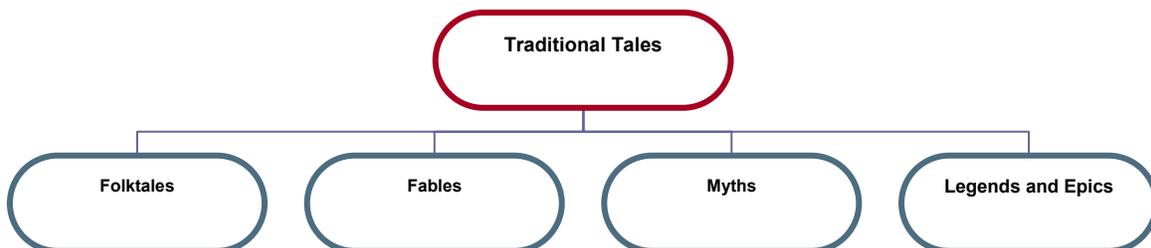


I had the privilege of having one of the greatest storytellers in the world- my grandfather. Under the starlit night sky and with the sounds of coquis, my grandfather would tell us stories of Juan Bobo, or of beautiful women cursed into everlasting searches for their loved one, as well as adventures of sly people that wanted to trick their friends. Yes, those tales enriched my life. My grandmother and my mother would also tell us stories whose origins are lost in time.

Traditional tales come from the oral tradition. They appear in all cultures and times. The characters or places can change but the beliefs, dreams and fears are universal. The words might not be the same, but the idea continues on as mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents or friends retell the stories that have been in the family for years and years.

In this module you will learn more about traditional tales. You will study the different types of traditional tales that exist. They are divided into:

- Folktales
- Fables
- Myths
- Legends



Folktales will be studied in details. There you will learn that folktales are usually divided into:

- Cumulative Tales
- Talking Beast Tales
- Drolls and Humorous Tales
- Realistic Tales
- Religious Tales
- Romances
- Tales of Magic
- Tall Tales

Fables which are mainly didactic tales developed from several sources. We could identify the following as sources for fables:

- Jataka tales
- Panchatantra
- Jean de la Fontaine retelling of Aesop's tales in verse

Myths are the explanation of our world in interaction with supernatural beings. They are sub-divided into:

- Creation Myths
- Nature Myths
- Hero Myths

We will also study legends and epics. Legends are those stories that are based on a real event. But as time passes by, the story is transformed by the fictional elements added to it. Epics are those stories that focus on the adventure of a single hero.

The purpose of this module is to expand your understanding of traditional tales and to use these stories in your English classroom. As future English teachers, I want to leave for you as a gift, the beauty of traditional tales. Hopefully, you will include these stories not only in your classroom, but as part of your life. Material things can come and go, but the power of the imagination goes beyond time and place.

And we will tell stories for ever after,

Carmen Milagros Torres

Objectives of the Module

General Objectives

After reading this module you will be able to:

- Identify the different types of traditional tales that exist.
- Define folktales.
- Identify the origins of folktales.
- Mention the characteristics of folktales.
- Define a tall tale.
- Define fables.
- Mention the characteristics of fables.
- Define myths.
- Define legends.
- Define epics.

Specific Objectives

After reading this module you will be able to:

- Show the difference between the monogenesis and polygenesis theory.
- Differentiate between literary and traditional folktales.
- Identify the different types of folktales that exist.
- Mention the characteristics of the different types of folktales.
- Identify some popular tall tale heroes.
- Mention the elements of the plot of folktales.
- Analyze how folktales help in language development.
- Mention how folktales have evolved through times.
- Analyze folktales using folktales characteristics.
- Mention the sources that influence the development of fables.
- Analyze different fables on the basis of its characteristics.
- Identify the different types of myths.
- Compare and contrast Greek and Roman myths.
- Identify some popular epics of different cultures.

A note about answering the practice exercises

Please answer all exercises in a pamphlet that will be provided along with this module for this purpose.



Traditional Tales

Pre- Test

Instructions: Choose the best alternative for the following statements.

1. Stories that try to explain the natural and spiritual events are known as _____.
 - a. legends
 - b. myths
 - c. folktales
 - d. tall tales
2. _____ is the hypothesis that states that all traditional tales derive from a single culture.
 - a. monogenesis
 - b. diffusion
 - c. polygenesis
 - d. evolution
3. Another hypothesis states that traditional tales have multiple origins. What they all reflect are the universal desires and needs. This is _____.
 - a. monogenesis
 - b. diffusion
 - c. polygenesis
 - d. evolution
4. _____ tales focus on repetition, not in plot.
 - a. Beast
 - b. Wonder
 - c. Cumulative
 - d. Pourquoi
5. _____ tales explain traits and characteristics of animals as well as human behavior.
 - a. Beast
 - b. Wonder
 - c. Cumulative
 - d. Pourquoi
6. In _____ tales, animals behave and speak as humans.
 - a. beast
 - b. wonder
 - c. cumulative
 - d. pourquoi

7. _____ are mainly about magic and the super natural.
- Beast
 - Wonder
 - Cumulative
 - Pourquoi
8. _____ are the patterns that appear in traditional tales; it is the smallest independent part.
- wishes
 - trickery
 - motifs
 - transformations
9. _____ are didactic tales. Usually animals speak and behave as humans.
- Legends
 - Myths
 - Epics
 - Fables
10. _____ try to explain nature and human behavior.
- Legends
 - Myths
 - Epics
 - Fables
11. _____ are stories about heroic deeds of a character.
- Legends
 - Myths
 - Epics
 - Fables
12. _____ are stories believed real, but there's no concrete evidence about these events.
- Legends
 - Myths
 - Epics
 - Fables

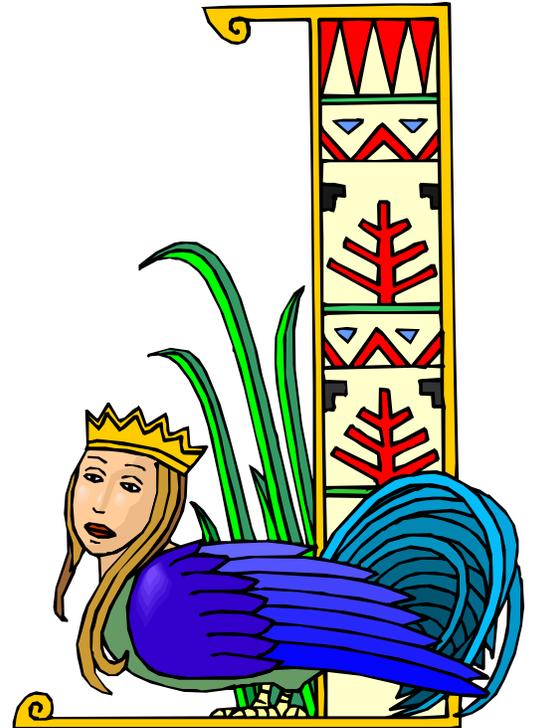
Traditional Tales: History and Genre

A Brief Overview

After reading this section about the origins of folktales, you will be able to:

- Identify the origins of folk tales.
- Define the monogenesis theory.
- Define the polygenesis theory.
- Differentiate between literary and traditional folktales.

Folktales developed from the necessity of people to try to explain and understand the natural and spiritual phenomenon that occurred in their daily lives. It is impossible to pin point the exact date of the beginning of this literary genre. What can be stated is that it goes back to the oral traditions of people.



It was around the 12th century that the first literary sources began to circulate in European land. And from here on, the oral tradition evolved into writing.

Even though the majority of folktales have come to us from the oral tradition, we have a group of these stories known as literary tales. We know who wrote the stories. These are more complex than the ones that were passed down orally from one generation to the next. An example is Hans Christian Anderson who wrote 168 tales. One of his best known stories is **The Emperor's New Suit** (1837).

It is interesting to note that similar patterns in the traditional tales around the world seem to prevail. Scholars have come up with several hypotheses to explain this phenomenon. One of these hypotheses is that probably the traditional tales were passed to different lands by the migration of the people. As these people moved from place to place, they took their stories with them. Most of these people were probably sailors, soldiers, women stolen from tribes, slaves, captives from wars, traders, minstrels as well as bards. As they moved on, the stories were told again and again. Changes were made and the traditional tales evolved.

Those scholars who believe that traditional tales derived from an original source support the **monogenesis theory**. This idea was supported by the Grimm Brothers. They believed that every folk tale could be traced to the pre-historic group Aryans, known now as the Indo-Europeans.

Other scholars support the **polygenesis theory**. This means that traditional tales have come from multiple sources. What unites them is the universal desire and needs of humanity.

Remember...

- Folktales derive from the oral tradition.
- Around the 12th century the oral tradition evolved into writing (Europe).
- Some people believe that traditional tales were passed along different lands through migration (i.e. sailors, traders, bards, slaves).
- Literary tales are the ones whose authors are known.
- The **monogenesis theory** mentions that traditional tales have their origins with the Indo-Europeans known in Grimm's time as Aryans.
- The **polygenesis theory** believes traditional tales derive from different sources. What they have in common is presenting humanity's desires and needs which are to them universal. This is according to the supporters of this theory

Now that you finished studying this section, you can check your understanding of this material doing the following exercise.

Instruction: State if the following sentences are true or false. Explain the ones that are false. Check your answers on page 33.

1. _____ Folk tales come from the oral tradition.
2. _____ We do not know the author of literary tales.
3. _____ The monogenesis theory explains that folk tales derive from multiple sources.
4. _____ The polygenesis theory mentions that all folk tales reflect human desires but come from different sources.
5. _____ Aryans are now known as Indo-Europeans.
6. _____ The Grimm's brothers believed in the polygenesis theory.

Folktales

After studying this section, you will be able to:

- *Identify the different types of folktales.*
- *Mention the characteristics of each type of folktale.*

Different scholars classify folktales in different ways. According to Stacy Carney, the tales are divided into:

- **Cumulative Tales:** these have little plot and lots of rhythm. Events follow a logical order in a pattern of repetition. Those stories that have "add-ons" are

known as repetitive tales. Others that have a pattern that unites the whole story are known as chain tales.

- Talking Beast Tales: animals behave as humans. These stories usually teach a lesson. Human behavior is exaggerated in the animal character. In most tales there is no magic. An example is having three pigs in a story.
- Drolls and Humorous Tales: are fun and nonsense stories. The main character makes silly mistakes. The characters of these tales are poor or of the lower classes of society. They usually behave in a child-like manner.
- Realistic Tales: The characters, plot and setting can be possible in the real world. No magic is involved. Stories can have some exaggerated events.
- Religious Tales: These are usually didactic but can be humorous.
- Romances: Lovers are separated and through magic and impossible tasks are again reunited. Characters are usually stereotyped in these stories.
- Tales of Magic: Are those known by many as fairy tales. Magic is involved. The characters come from the upper classes of society. The characters are usually princes, kings, queens, just to mention a few.

Another way to classify folk tales is by:

- Cumulative Tales
- Pourquoi Tales
- Wonder Tales
- Realistic Tales

Pourquoi tales are the “why” stories. They try to explain animal traits as well as human behavior. And those folk tales classified as wonder tales are what are also known as fairy tales.

Remember...

- Cumulative tales are stories with little plot. They focus on rhythm and repetition.
- Animals behave as human beings in Talking Beast Tales.
- Those nonsense stories are known as Drolls or Humorous tales.
- Realistic tales reflect the real world in a somewhat exaggerated way.
- Religious tales are basically didactic.
- In Romances, magic and impossible tasks are presented. Lovers are separated and then reunited.
- Tales of magic are also known as fairy tales or wonder tales.
- Pourquoi tales explain animal traits or human behavior.

To check your understanding of the different types of folktales, do the following exercise. The answers are on page 33.

Instruction: Identify what type of folktale is being mentioned in the following summaries.

1. **Cinderella:** Cinderella is an orphan girl that lives with her stepmother and stepsisters. The prince organizes a ball and invites the people of the kingdom. Cinderella goes with the help of her fairy godmother. She loses a slipper in the ball. The prince goes out to find the owner of the slipper (Cinderella) and marries her.
2. **The Gingerbread Man:** An old woman bakes a cookie in the shape of a gingerbread man. It becomes alive and starts running saying “Run, run as fast as you can! You can’t catch me, I’m the gingerbread man!” A pig then joins the chase, then a cow, and even a horse. All the time the gingerbread man keeps saying “Run, run....” At the end a fox eats him up.
3. **The Three Sillies:** A woman finds a mallet in her ceiling. As she sees it, she starts imagining that it will kill her child (which by the way is not even born). Both of her parents join her in mourning for the death of the child that is not even born. Her future husband finds her and her future-in-laws crying. He decides he must find three sillier persons than these before marrying his silly girlfriend.
4. **The Three Bears:** A girl called Goldilocks goes into the forest and finds a house. Three bears (the father, mother and child) live in it. They had gone out for a walk. Goldilocks enters the house, tastes the food, uses the chairs and then goes to sleep in one of the beds. When the bears appear, Goldilocks runs away.
5. **The Red Shoes:** A little girl is given a pair of red shoes. Her mother dies and she is adopted by a woman. The day of her christening, her adopted mother-almost blind, takes her to buy clothes. She sees a pair of red shoes and buys them fooling her blind adopted mother. In her christening the adopted mother finds out about the red shoes and makes the girl promise not to use those unchristian colored shoes. In her deathbed, the girl disobeys and goes to a party wearing the red shoes. Something happens and she cannot stop dancing. She dances to her house where she sees her adopted mother has died, she dances to church and no matter how hard she tries she cannot stop dancing. A man cuts off her legs and she is partially liberated from the curse. She truly repents and dies in peace.

Tall Tales and Folktales

After studying this section on tall tales, you will be able to:

- *Define what a tall tale is.*
- *Explain why tall tales are popular in the United States.*
- *Identify some of the most famous tall tales heroes.*

In the United States there are folktales known as tall tales. Tall tales do appear in other countries, but it is in the United States that unforgettable heroes have appeared in these types of stories.

American tall tales have humor, courage, and the spirit that the pioneers must have had to be able to survive the hostile environment.

There are some characteristics that make tall tales different from other folktales.

Basically they are the following:

- The hero has larger than life qualities.
- The problem is solved in a funny way.
- Exaggeration appears everywhere.
- Every day language of that place is used.

Some of the memorable heroes of tall tales are:

- **Paul Bunyan:** was a lumber jack whose strength, speed and skills outmatched those of a normal human being. He had a blue Ox called Babe that accompanied him in his adventures.
- **Pecos Bill:** was a cowboy that was raised by Coyotes. This gave him the ability to befriend animals. This “cowboy” rode a mountain lion and not a horse in most cases. When he rode a horse it was Widow Maker, a very, very wild horse.
- **Johnny Appleseed:** was a man who spent 49 years of his life planting apple trees. He was described as kind and gentle. He respected nature and the Native American Indians.
- **John Henry:** was an African-American hero. He was born as a giant; he was over eight feet tall and had enormous strength. He dedicated himself to working on the railroad until he died. He died after winning a competition against a steel-driving machine.



Remember...

- Tall tales are folktales that have exaggerated characters that do impossible feats.
- Tall tales are very popular in the United States.
- Heroes have exaggerated qualities.
- In most cases, problems are solved in a funny way.
- Everyday language is used by the characters.

Let's do the following exercise to see if you understood this section. Answers are on page 34.

Instruction: Write true or false for the following statements. Explain the false statements.

1. _____ Tall tales use exaggeration.
2. _____ Heroes are normal people with ordinary abilities.
3. _____ Characters use elaborate and complicated language.
4. _____ Tall tales are popular in the United States.
5. _____ Tall tales are considered folktales.

Characteristics of Folktales

After reading this section about the characteristics of folktales, you will be able to:

- *Mention the general characteristics of folktales.*
- *Mention the common elements that folktale plots have.*
- *Analyze how folktales help in the development of language.*
- *State why folktales have been modified throughout times.*
- *Analyze a folktale and identify all the characteristics.*

Folktales have some common basic characteristics. They are the following:

- **Structure of Plot:** These stories are basically simple and direct to its purpose. Action is quick with these stories. Characters are presented right from the beginning of the story. Their characteristics are given and the action is quickly established.

Repetition is an important element in the development of the plot. Three is a popular number used in folktales.

Chants, responses of riddles as well as poems are presented in the plot. An example is from **Sleeping Beauty** “Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?”

The setting is quickly established. The reader knows right from the beginning the time and place where the story begins. For example, the story can begin “Once upon a time in a small village, there lived...”

So, in the first sentences, the reader/ listener knows the time, place, characters and even the conflict. Description is limited to just the necessary elements.

The conclusion of the story is also brief. Immediately after the climax, the conclusion is stated in a few sentences.



- **Characterization:** The characters of folktales are flat. This basically means that they are presented as one-dimensional (i.e. completely good or bad). The characteristics are presented almost at the beginning and there is basically no change in the character's way of behaving throughout the story. Characters many times become symbols of goodness, evil, treachery, etc.
- **Style:** Students can experience a large range of language patterns through folktales. Folktales of different cultures have their own unique way of presenting their stories. The known "Once upon a time" becomes "There was a time and there wasn't time" in Persian folktales.

Sometimes folktales present the proverbs of the country expanding the student's cultural background. The Russian proverb "The morning is wiser than the evening" appears in the folktale **Vasilissa the Beautiful**.

Figurative language and imagery are also present in many folktales. Also storytellers many times imitate the sounds presented in the story. So as you can see, even though folk tales are basically short stories, its richness in language is not limited.

- **Theme:** While folktales do entertain their audience, they also present universal themes. At the beginning, many of these folktales reflected the people's discomfort because of the oppression they lived.

The values of the culture can be seen in these stories. The importance of love, courage, friendship is many times presented in folktales.

Nowadays, many people have expressed some concern about folktales. Some state that the role of women is limited with a male view of the world. In most traditional folktales, it is the male who goes on adventures, faces challenges and triumphs. Females usually play a passive role.

This limitation has been overcome by the introduction of new versions of folktales. We now find modern versions of **Cinderella** just to give an example. Some modern versions are **Ella Enchanted** written by Gail Carson Levine. This is the story of a young girl whose fairy godmother gives her the gift of obedience. Within this main plot, we get the Cinderella sub-plot. The other novel is **Just Ella** by Margaret Peterson Haddix. Ella wins the prince's heart after going to the ball. She is engaged to get married. But now she has second thoughts of marrying her prince Charming.



Movies are also giving a new twist to traditional tales. The movie **Ever After** presents a very independent Danielle who does not fit the traditional role presented from childhood tales. **Shrek** is also a movie that shows a different

view of traditional tales. The princess, as well as her future husband, Shrek, breaks away from the stereotyped views of these fairy tales characters.

Another concern expressed is that of the cruelty presented in folktales. If the original version of **Cinderella** is studied, many readers will object to the violence included in the stories. As time has passed by, these stories have been modified to fit into the world of children and young adults.

We must remember that originally, these stories were created for an adult audience and they reflected the reality of the people of those times.

- **Motifs:** Motifs are basically the patterns seen in folktales. In **Children’s Literature in the Elementary School, 7th edition** it is defined as “the smallest part of a tale that can exist independently”.

Examples are:

- The characters seen in folktales: wicked stepmothers, abused children, tricksters, and the younger brother.
- The supernatural beings: fairies, witches, giants...
- Magical objects: tablecloths that give food, mirror that speaks...
- Enchantments: prince turned into a frog, long sleep of over 100 years...

Motifs can also be seen in the plots of folktales. Number three as mentioned before is a popular number. Some stories grant three wishes to the character.

Remember...

- Plot is simple and to the point in folktales.
- Repetition is important in folktales.
- Setting is immediately presented.
- Characters and conflict are also presented right from the beginning of the story.
- Characters are flat.
- Many language patterns are present in folktales. Example “Once upon a time...”
- Figurative language and imagery can appear in folktales.
- Popular patterns or motifs in folktales are:
 - Abused children, wicked stepmothers, tricksters, fairies, etc.

To see how much you understood of the characteristics of folktales, read the story “The Three Little Pigs” and do the exercise that follows it. Remember, the answers to this exercise are on page 34.

Instruction: Read the following version of “The Three Little Pigs” After reading it, watch the animated story. The CD with the animated story will be available in CCC (Centro de Competencias de la Comunicación). You will need a computer and the Power Point XP program. Then fill-in the following table based on what you’ve read.

The Three Little Pigs



Once upon a time were three little pigs and the time came for them to leave home and seek their fortunes.

Before they left, their mother told them, “Whatever you do, do it the best that you can because that’s the way to get along in the world.”

The first little pig built his house of straw because it was the easiest thing to do.

The second little pig built his house out of sticks. This was a little bit stronger than a straw house.

The third little pig built his house out of bricks.

One night the big bad wolf, who dearly loved to eat fat little piggies, came along and saw the first little pig in his house of straw. He said, “Let me in. Let me in, little pig or I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house in!”

“Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin”, said the little pig.

But of course the wolf did blow the house in and ate the first little pig.

Then the wolf came to the house of sticks.

“Let me in. Let me in little pig or I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house in.”

"Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin", said the little pig. But the wolf blew that house in too, and ate the second little pig.

The wolf then came to the house of bricks.

"Let me in, let me in!", cried the wolf.

"Or I'll huff and I'll puff till I blow your house in"

"Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin" said the pig.

Well the wolf huffed and puffed but he could not blow down that brick house.

But the wolf was a sly old wolf and he climbed up on the roof to look for a way into the brick house.

The little pig saw the wolf climb up on the roof and lit a roaring fire in the fireplace and placed on it a large kettle of water.

When the wolf finally found the hole in the chimney he crawled down and KERSPLASH right into that kettle of water and that was the end of his troubles with the big bad wolf.

The next day the little pig invited his mother over. She said, "You see it is just as I told you. The way to get along in the world is to do things as well as you can." Fortunately for that little pig, he learned the lesson. And he lived happily ever after.

The End

The Three Little Pigs Activity

<p style="text-align: center;">Plot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there repetition in the story? • Is the number three present? • Are there chants, riddles, or poems? 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Characterization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do characters represent something? If so, what does each character represent? 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What language pattern is present in the story? 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Theme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What universal themes do you find in the story? 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Motifs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What motifs/ patterns are present in the story? 	

You have completed the first section of traditional tales. Up to now we have discussed folktales. Now we will move on to discussing fables.

Fables

After studying this section, you will be able to:

- *Define what a fable is..*
- *Mention the sources that helped in the development of fables.*

When the word fable is mentioned, it is usually Aesop's name that comes into most people's mind. But fables have an older beginning than that of Aesop's work. In Greece fables appeared approximately two centuries before the birth of Aesop. Fables were also being told in countries like India and Egypt even before Greece began creating its own fables.

The first printed versions of fables appeared in 1484 and later they were translated into Latin and English.

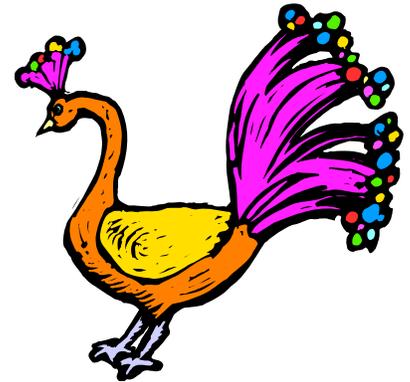
Children's Literature in the Elementary School, 7th edition mentions the sources that helped in the development of fables. One of these sources is the Jataka tales.

They are animal stories about the previous birth of Buddha. So you can better understand this type of literature, I will present to you a retelling of the Jataka **The Dancing Peacock**.

The Dancing Peacock

Once upon the time, many years ago, animals decided to choose kings to rule over them. Mammals chose the lion, the fishes chose the biggest fish as their king, and the birds chose the Golden Swan to be their king.

Well this Golden Swan king had a beautiful daughter. One day she asked her father to let her choose her future husband, instead of having him choose who she would marry. The king accepted because he loved so much his golden daughter.



The time came for her daughter to get married. Remembering his promise, the Golden Swan King called all the birds of the Himalayas Mountains to go to his kingdom so his daughter could choose her husband. Birds of all kinds came from near and far. Some came as far from Tibet. There you could have seen owls, eagles, swans, hummingbirds, just to mention a few of all the birds that came.

The king asked them to meet his daughter in the land of Nepal. There on top of a huge rock, the Golden Swan king told his beautiful golden daughter to choose her husband.

The Golden Swan daughter looked at all those beautiful birds. But as she looked at the crowd of anxious birds, she fell in love with the beauty of the peacock. His emerald-green color, his long neck as well as those beautiful feathers made the Golden Swan daughter decide to marry him.

So the Golden Swan king accepted his daughter's decision. The other birds went to the peacock to congratulate him for being the lucky bird. The peacock being so vain started to show-off. He started to dance and show his feathers. He was so vain that he didn't care that as he showed-off his feathers, the other birds could see his most private parts!

As the others birds laughed at such a spectacular show, the Golden Swan king became very angry and embarrassed of his future son-in-law's behavior. So the king cancelled the engagement and married his beautiful golden daughter to a royal nephew, who was modest and not a fool.

When pride controls your life
A fool is what you'll be like.

Did you like the story? I hope so. Let us then continue with the second source for fables.

The other source is the Panchatantra. These stories were didactic. They instructed the different princes of India. To better understand Panchatantra, I will present a re-telling of the Panchatantra "The Girl Who Married a Snake"

The Girl Who Married a Snake



Once upon a time there lived a Brahmin and his wife. They had no children. They both prayed every day to have the blessing of a child.

After many years, the Brahmin wife did give birth. But instead of a child, she had a snake. But the wife loved her baby dearly and took care of him and protected him.

Time passed by and it was time for the snake child to marry. The wife cried because no one wanted to marry her son. So the Brahmin went on a journey searching for a bride for his snake son.

When passing through a city, he met a very good friend of his. When his friend heard he was looking for a bride for his son, he immediately offered his daughter without meeting the Brahmin's son. The Brahmin took the bride to his village.

Everyone in the village tried to convince the bride not to marry a snake. But she said she would keep her promise. So she married the snake and loved him dearly and took care of him and protected him.

One night, when the snake's wife entered the room she found a strange handsome man. She was surprised. He said he was her husband. She didn't believe him until

he showed her the snake skin on the floor. So every night, the snake would transform himself into a handsome man and share with his wife. One night the Brahmin saw the transformation. He immediately went and threw the snake skin into the fire. The handsome man was freed from the curse and was forever a handsome man sharing his love with his wife. And they lived happily ever after.

Now that you have read a Jataka and Panchatantra story, you will do the following exercise of comparing and contrasting these stories with what has been studied up to the moment about fables. The answers are on page 13.

<p style="text-align: center;">Characters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many characters appear in each story? • How are the characters similar? • How are the characters different? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Jataka tale “The Dancing Peacock”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Panchatantra tale “The Girl who Married a Snake”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where does each story take place? • When does each story take place? 		
<p style="text-align: center;">Conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the conflict/ problem in each story? 		
<p style="text-align: center;">Lesson/ Moral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What lesson or moral is presented in each story? 		

A third source for the development of fables comes from Jean de la Fontaine. He was a French poet that lived in the 17th century. His fables, based on Aesop’s stories were written in a poetic form by using verses.

The following is an example of Aesop’s fables. It is based on the original version from <http://www.warroom.com/ant.htm>.

The ants work very hard in the withering heat all summer long, building their houses and laying up supplies for the winter. The grasshopper thinks they’re fools and laughs and dances and plays the summer away. Come winter the ants are warm and well fed. The grasshopper has no food or shelter so he dies out in the cold.

Now here is Jean de la Fontaine re-telling of this same story. Remember that de la Fontaine wrote these fables in a poetic form. The following is a translation from Michael Star.

The Grasshopper and the Ant

The Grasshopper having sung
All the summer long,
Found herself lacking food
When the North Wind began its song.
Not a single little piece
Of fly or grub did she have to eat.

She went complaining of hunger
To the Ant's home, her neighbour,
Begging there for a loan
Of some grain to keep herself alive
Til the next season did arrive,
"I shall pay you," she said
"Before next August, on my word as an animal.
I'll pay both interest and principal."

The Ant was not so inclined:
this not being one of her faults.
"What did you do all summer?
Said she to the grasshopper.

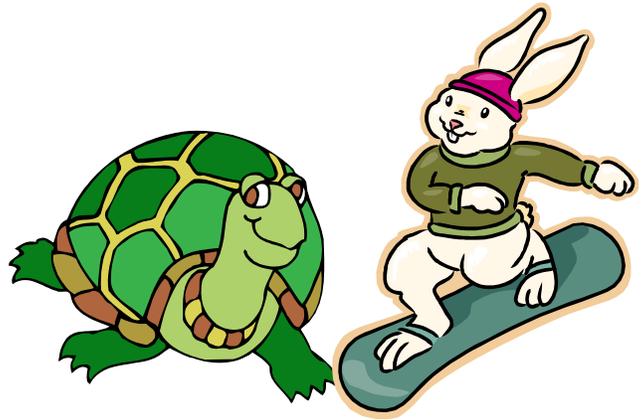
"Night and day I sang,
I hope that does not displease you."

"You sang? I will not look askance.
But now my neighbour it's time to dance."

Characteristics of Fables

After studying this section you will be able to:

- Mention the characteristics of fables.



The characteristics of fables are the following:

- Stories are short.
- The stories have a lesson. They're didactic.
- Animals and natural elements (i.e. rocks, the wind...) can speak as humans.
- Characters represent human characteristics or behavior. They have no name. (i.e. the fox; it represents slyness)
- Few characters appear in these stories. Usually we only find two or three characters in these stories.
- Plots usually present a single event.
-

Remember...

- Fables are:
 - Short
 - Didactic
- Fables have:
 - Few characters that represent an aspect of human nature.
- Plots are simple and normally present a single incident.

Exercise

Instruction: Read the following fable and fill-in the table. The answers are available on page 34.

The Shepherd's Boy and the Wolf

A shepherd boy, who watched a flock of sheep near a village, brought out the villagers three or four times by crying out, "Wolf! Wolf!" and when his neighbors came to help him, laughed at them for their pains. The Wolf, however, did truly come at last. The Shepherd-boy, now really alarmed, shouted in an agony of terror: "Pray, do come and help me; the Wolf is killing the sheep"; but no one paid any heed to his cries, nor rendered any assistance. The Wolf, having no cause of fear, at his leisure lacerated or destroyed the whole flock.

There is no believing a liar, even when he speaks the truth.

The Shepherd Boy Activity

<p style="text-align: center;">Characters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many characters does the fable present? What does each character represent? 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Plot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many incidents does the fable present? 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Moral/ Lesson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What message does this fable present? 	

We have just finished the fables section. Let's go on to myths.

Myths

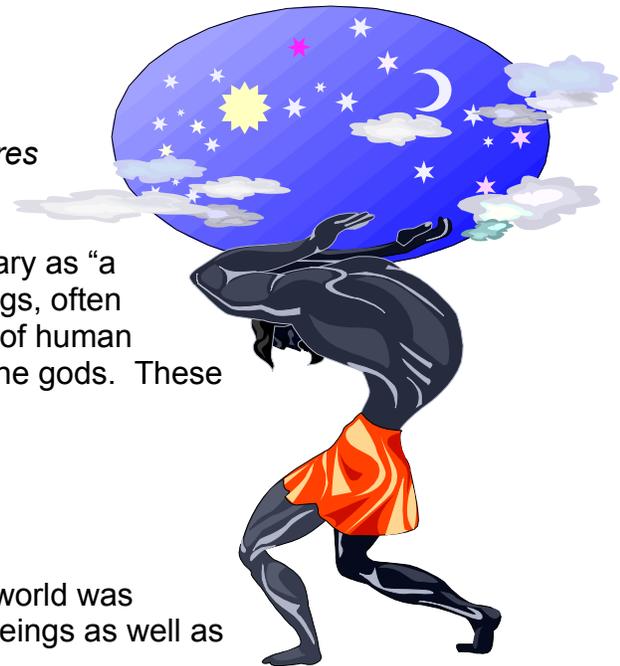
After studying this section, you will be able to:

- Define what is a myth*
- Identify the different types of myths*
- Compare and contrast myths from different cultures*

Myths are defined by Microsoft Encarta College Dictionary as “a traditional story about superheroes or supernatural beings, often explaining the origins of natural phenomena or aspects of human behavior.” They show the relationships of people with the gods. These stories are also short.

Myths can be classified as:

- Creation Myths:** These stories explain how the world was created. It also explains the creation of human beings as well as



the universe. Sometimes they are also known as origin myths.

- **Nature Myths:** These are the stories that try to explain why seasons change, why animals have certain characteristics as well as the movements of the celestial bodies.
- **Hero Myths:** In these stories, there is a lack of explaining anything about nature and humans. In these stories the hero must accomplish some tasks. The gods may help or make it difficult for the hero to complete the task assigned. When these stories are studied closely, they are very similar to the Wonder Tales.

Remember...

- Myths try to explain our world through gods/ goddess and extraordinary events.
- Myths are classified as Creation Myths, Nature Myths and Hero Myths.
- Creation myths explain the beginning of the world/ universe and how humans came into being.
- Nature myths explain the workings of nature.
- Hero Myths are about the extraordinary feats of humans.

Now that we have finished reviewing this section of myths, let's do an exercise. The answers of this exercise are on page 35.

Instruction: Read the following myths. Classify if the myths presented are creation, nature or hero myths.

1. **Pandora's Box (Greek Mythology):** Pandora was created by Zeus, the god. She was the first woman. Aphrodite (goddess of love and beauty), Hermes (the god's messenger) and Apollo (god of music and arts) helped Zeus with the creation. Aphrodite gave Pandora grace and loveliness, Hermes gave her the ability of persuasion and Apollo her musical skill.

Pandora was given a box which she was to put into safekeeping. She was instructed not to open it. But her curiosity was stronger than obedience. She opened the box. To her surprise and dismay, the box contained all the evils of the world. She tried to close it but it was too late. The only thing that remained in it was Hope.



2. **A Norse Myth:** In the beginning only the void existed which was known as Ginnungagap. Next to the void existed Niflheim (land of fog and ice) in the north and Muspelheim (land of fire) to the south.

Hvergelmir was a spring in Niflheim. The Elivager (seven rivers) flowed through this land. As these waters flowed through the land, the water froze in the void. In the north Muspelheim filled the void with molten material. The mixture of the Muspelheim caused Elivager to melt because of the heat.

A figure appeared. It was Ymir, a giant and his cow Audhumla. Ymir fed from the cow's milk. While sleeping, Ymir started to sweat and from his underarms appeared two giants (male and female). From his legs appeared a man.

Ymir continued procreating beings. His cow licked the ice from Elivager for nourishment. This licking caused the formation of Buri, a god. He had a son called Bor who in turn had three sons called Odin, Vili, and Ve.

Bor killed Ymir. Ymir's blood caused a flood that killed all giants except Bergelmir and his wife. Seeing this Odin, Vili, and Ve (Bor's sons) put Ymir's body in the middle of Ginnungagap. From his body they created the earth and sky. With Muspelheim's fire and sparks they created the stars, moon and sun.

After finishing this, they saw two logs lying in the beach. From these two logs, they created the first two humans- Ask and Embla.

3. **Hercules (Greek Myth):** Hercules under temporary insanity kills his family. He goes on to complete twelve tasks to purify his soul. He is able to complete each task. He had to:
 - a. Kill the Nemean Lion
 - b. Kill the Lernaen Hydra which was a monster with seven heads.
 - c. Catch the Erymanthian boar.
 - d. Scare away the Stymphalian birds.
 - e. Capture Eone, Artemis' stag.
 - f. Clean Augean stables. It had 3,000 cattles and never had been cleaned.
 - g. Capture the wild boar of Crete
 - h. Capture the man-eating horses of Diomedes.
 - i. Get Hippolyta's (Queen of the Amazons) girdle.
 - j. Kill Geryon, a giant with three heads.
 - k. Steal three golden apples from a tree guarded by Hesperides.
 - l. Drag Cerberus up from Hades.

Myths and Culture

Each culture has its own myths. The Greek, Roman and Norse myths have been present in much of the literature that we read today. Many of you have been exposed to the myths of these cultures. We will review these myths in the following paragraphs.

Greek Mythology

These are the ones most people know about. They were collected by Hesoid, a poet. They were collected by Hesoid around 8th century BC. Ovid adapted these stories into the Roman context. This work was known as **Metamorphoses**. Ironically people may know these gods by their Roman names, even though their origins are Greek.

Research has shown that the Greeks were the first people to see their gods as a reflection of themselves. Basically the only difference was that these gods did things more elaborately or on a higher scale. They have the same emotions, virtues and flaws as humans.



Greek and Roman Mythology Gods/ Goddess

A Summary

Greek	Roman
Zeus	Jupiter/ Jove
Poseidon	Neptune
Hades/ Pluto	Pluto
Hestia	Vesta
Ares	Mars
Athena	Minerva
Apollo	Apollo
Aphrodite	Venus
Hermes	Mercury
Artemis	Diana
Hephaestus	Vulcan
Eros	Cupid
Remeter	Ceres
Dionysus/ Bacchus	Bacchus
Persephone	Proserphine

Norse Mythology

Norse Mythology reflects the environment that these people lived in. In this area there is very cold temperature. So these gods had to fight the difficulties that nature presented.

These gods fight with snow monsters and other natural elements.

When Christianity came to these lands, the tradition of myth telling was almost eliminated because it was considered pagan. It was lost in all these parts except in Iceland. But in the 13th century, the poet, writer and historian Snorri Sturuson collected these stories in **Prose Edda**. It is based on **Poetic Edda**, an older work.

It is interesting to note that J.R.R. Tolkein **Lord of the Rings** is deeply influenced by Norse mythology. Did you know that?

Remember...

- Roman mythology basically borrowed its stories from the Greeks. They changed the names of the gods and heroes.
- Greek mythology was collected by Hesoid in the 8th century BC.
- It was Ovid who adapted Greek stories into the Roman context.
- Scholars state that the Greeks were the first people to portray their gods with the flaws and virtues of humans.
- Most of Norse mythology was lost as Christianity came into these lands.
- Snorri Sturuson collected Norse mythology in the work called **Prose Edda**.
 - This worked is based on **Poetic Edda**.

Now that we have reviewed Greek and Norse mythology, let's do an exercise. The answers are on page 35.

Instructions: Mention if the following statements are true or false.

1. _____ Greek mythology is based on Roman's one.
2. _____ Ovid adapted Greek mythology into the Roman context.
3. _____ Greek gods reflect the virtue and flaws that human have.
4. _____ In Norse mythology one can gods fighting against the harshness of nature.
5. _____ **Lord of the Ring** is influenced by Roman mythology.

If you're interested in learning a little bit more about the Greek and Norse gods, check the appendixes provided at the end of this module.

Now we will continue with the section on legends. If you have heard of Robin Hood or King Arthur, then you know what legends are. So let's begin.

Legends and Epics

After studying this section, you will be able to:

- *Define legends.*
- *Define epics..*
- *Identify epics from Mesotopia, Greece and India.*

Legends are defined as a story that has a mixture of reality and fiction. Basically legends start from a real incident that through time is transformed by imaginary events added by the narrator of the story. Legends are considered real by the people even though fiction has been included in the narration.

Legends are told as if they were true. In modern times, many of these events are not accepted as possible by the reader, but in the past when they were told, people truly believed them. An example is King Arthur. Now in our modern world round tables, knights and fighting supernatural forces is a good fantasy story, but in the past having a magician named Merlin was possible and accepted.

Epics on the other hand are “a long narrative on a cycle of stories clustering around the actions of a single hero” (Huck, 283).

Let's look at some epics that are popular to readers.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

This epic comes from Mesopotamia. It is an epic poem discovered in clay tablets in the library of Assur-Bani-Pal. Three important characters appear in this epic. They are Gilgamesh, Endiku and Utnapishtim. Gilgamesh is a Sumerian king, Endiku is a wild primitive man and Utnapishtim is a Noah- type figure.



This epic centers on the figure of Gilgamesh who is a very cruel king. The sun god sends Endiku, a very strong man, to fight against him for being defiant and cruel. In a fight, Endiku overcomes him and Gilgamesh is about to fall to his death. Endiku rescues him and this changes Gilgamesh forever into becoming a compassionate man.

The epic continues in these two-man adventures. Endiku later dies and Gilgamesh becomes obsessed in discovering the secret of immortality. In this

quest he goes on a journey where he meets Utnapishtim who lives on an island. This man survived a flood in an ark. And the epics continue until Gilgamesh learns that his immortality is in the greatness of his kingdom.

The Iliad and the Odyssey

Tradition says that Homer wrote these epics poems around 850 BC. Some scholars believe that Homer's creation is based on stories sung during his time and he joined them in a long story.

The *Iliad* is the story of the Trojan War which began because Paris, who was a Trojan, kidnapped Helen, King Menelaus wife.

The *Odyssey* is the events that occurred after the Trojan War ended. Odysseus returns to his home after a ten year absence. While returning home he encounters one adventure after another.

The Ramayana



This epic tale comes from India. It was composed by Valmiki, a sage in the 4th century BC.

It tells the story of Rama, his wife Sita and his brother. Rama who is the heir to the throne is banished from his kingdom by his stepmother. Rama as well as his brother and Sita roam for fourteen years and face many adventures. One of the adventures tell how Ravana, an evil demon kidnaps Sita.

After being rescued, Sita has to be cleansed. This was done through fire. By overcoming this trial, Sita shows her devotion and faithfulness.

Remember...

- Legends are based on a real incident that has been transformed by adding fictional accounts.
- Epics are a series of stories that revolved around one hero
- The Epic of Gilgamesh comes from Mesopotamia.
- The *Iliad* tells the story of the Trojan War.
- The *Odyssey* tells the adventures of Odysseus after the Trojan War ended.
- The Ramayana is an epic from India.

Now that you have completed this section on legends and epics lets do a match exercise. The answers are on page 35.

Instruction: Match the word with the best definition.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. _____ The Odyssey | a. Sumerian king that was very cruel. |
| 2. _____ The Ramayana | b. a series of stories about one person/ hero. |
| 3. _____ The Iliad | c. stories of what happened after the Trojan War |
| 4. _____ Gilgamesh | d. stories of India about a future king, brother and wife. |
| 5. _____ epic | e. the story of the Trojan War |
| 6. _____ legend | f. a fictional story whose origins are based on a true account. |

Congratulations! This completes our module of traditional tales. As you enter the fantasy section of our course you will see how many writers are influenced by the legacy of these stories. Lloyd Alexander of the Prydain Chronicles, T.A. of the Young Merlin series and others use elements of traditional tales to create their fascinating stories that attract children, young adults and adults alike.



Traditional Tales

Post- Test

Instructions: Choose the best alternative for the following statements.

1. Stories that try to explain the natural and spiritual events are known as _____.
 - e. legends
 - f. myths
 - g. folktales
 - h. tall tales
2. _____ is the hypothesis that states that all traditional tales derive from a single culture.
 - a. monogenesis
 - b. diffusion
 - c. polygenesis
 - d. evolution
3. Another hypothesis states that traditional tales have multiple origins. What they all reflect are the universal desires and needs. This is _____.
 - a. monogenesis
 - b. diffusion
 - c. polygenesis
 - d. evolution
4. _____ tales focus on repetition, not in plot.
 - a. Beast
 - b. Wonder
 - c. Cumulative
 - d. Pourquoi
5. _____ tales explain traits and characteristics of animals as well as human behavior.
 - a. Beast
 - b. Wonder
 - c. Cumulative
 - d. Pourquoi
6. In _____ tales, animals behave and speak as humans.
 - a. beast
 - b. wonder
 - c. cumulative
 - d. pourquoi

7. _____ are mainly about magic and the super natural.
- Beast
 - Wonder
 - Cumulative
 - Pourquoi
8. _____ are the patterns that appear in traditional tales; it is the smallest independent part.
- wishes
 - trickery
 - motifs
 - transformations
9. _____ are didactic tales. Usually animals speak and behave as humans.
- Legends
 - Myths
 - Epics
 - Fables
10. _____ try to explain nature and human behavior.
- Legends
 - Myths
 - Epics
 - Fables
11. _____ are stories about heroic deeds of a character.
- Legends
 - Myths
 - Epics
 - Fables
12. _____ are stories believed real, but there's no concrete evidence about these events.
- Legends
 - Myths
 - Epics
 - Fables

Appendix I

Major Greek Goddesses

Name	Role
Gaea	Mother Earth
Hestia	Goddess of Hearth and Home
Demeter	Goddess of Harvest and Home
Hera	Protector
Athena	Goddess of Wisdom and Weaving
Artemis	Goddess of the Hunt
Aphrodite	Goddess of Love and Beauty
Persephone	Maiden of Spring



Appendix II

Some Minor Greek Goddesses

A -C

Name	Role/ Goddess of (the)...
Achelois	Moon Goddess
Alcyone	Sea, Moon, Calm Tranquility
Alectrona	the Sun
Aletha	Truth
Amphitrite	Mediterranean Sea
Ananke	Fate and Necessity
Antheia	Vegetation, Lowlands, Marshlands
Apate	Deceit
Astarte	Fertility
Astraea	Justice, Innocence and Purity
Ate	Evil and Misfortune
Auxesia	Growth
Brimo	Death
Britomartis	Hunting
Brizo	Protector of Mariners
Carya	Walnut Tree
Castelia	Fountain goddess
The Charities	Beauty Aglaia- goddess of Splendor Euphrosyne- goddess of Mirth Thalia- goddess of Good Cheer
Chloris	Flowers
Cleone	Water goddess
Cotys	Sexuality and Fertility
Cotyto	Immodesty and Debauchery

Appendix III
Some Minor Greek Goddess
D-G

Name	Role/ Goddess of (the)...
Damia	Growth and Nature
Dendritus	Trees
Dike	Divine Justice
Dione	Oak
Electryone	Moon goddess
Eleos	Mercy
Enoida	Crossroads and Gates
Enyo	War
Eunosta	Flour mills
Eutychia	Happiness
The Fates	Known as Moerae or the Parcae. They determine the beginning of life, its development as well as its end. Clotho- spins the thread of Life Lachesis- measures the thread of Life Atropos- cuts the thread of Life
The Graeae	The three Gray sisters. They share an eye and tooth. They were wise. Deino- Dread or Terrible Enyo- Horror and War-like Pempredo- Alarm or Wasp
The Graces	The Charities

Appendix IV
Some Minor Greek Goddesses
H-L

Name	Role/ Goddess of (the)...
Halsodyne	Sea goddess
Harmonia	Harmony and Concord
Hebe	Youth
Hecate	New Moon; of the Crossroads
Hegemone	Plants
Helena	Moon
Helia	Sun
Hemera	Day
Hespero	Evening
Hilaera	Brightness
The Horae	Were the Seasons. They were Eunomia- Order Dike- Justice Irene- Peace Capro- Fruit was sometimes added
Hygeia	Healing
Iaso	Healing (also)
Ilythia	Childbirth
Iris	Messenger goddess
Kakia	Vice
The Keres	Known as the dogs of Hades. They are associated to Harpies and Erinyes. They have sharp claws, dress in red and drink blood.
Lactura	Corn
Lyssa	Underworld

Appendix V
Some Minor Greek Goddesses
M-T

Name	Role/ Goddess of (the)...
Mida	Oath
Mnemosyne	Memory
The Muses	Nine daughters of Zeus. They inspired creativity. Erato- Lyrics Euterpe- Music Thalia- Comedy Melpomene- Tragedy Terpsichore- Dance, Choral song Urania- Astronomy Clio- Historical and Heroic poetry Polyhymnia- Hymns Calliope- Epics
Nike	Victory
Odyne	Pain
Ossa	Rumor
Panatis	Weaving
Peitho	Persuasion
Penia	Poverty
Phemonoe	Poetry
Ploto	Sailing
Psyche	Soul
Scotia	Sea
Soteira	Safety
Speio	Caves
Tabliope	Gambling
Techne	Art
Telephassa	Light
Themis	Divine Justice and Law
Tritopatores	Winds
Tyche	Fame and fortune

Appendix VI

Some Norse Gods and Their Roles

Name	Role
Oden	Father of the gods. Creator of the world and human beings. He is also the god of death, battles, knowledge, magic and inspiration.
Tor	The strongest god. He is the ruler of the sky and thunder.
Frigg	Wife of Oden. Goddess of family, motherhood, and wisdom.
Balder	God of light and benevolence. Also known as god of innocence.
Frej	God of fertility and love.
Freja	Goddess of fertility, love, and magic.
Njord	God of trade, sailing and wealth.
Tyr	God of battle and law
Aegir	God of the sea
Bragi	God of poetry and music.
Eastre	Saxon goddess. She is linked to spring (the resurrection of nature)
Forseti	God of Justice
Hodur	God of darkness
Loki	Trickster god
Niord	God of summer
The Norns	Known also as the Fates. These are three goddess who are the keepers of destiny. They are Urd (Fate), Skuld (Being) and Verandi (Necessity)
Skadi	Goddess of winter
Uller	God of winter



Acknowledgements

This project has been one of my dreams since I began teaching Children's Literature (INGL 4326) and Literature for Adolescents (INGL 4327). This summer I had the opportunity of preparing this module which I hope will be useful for all of you who are using it. But this is not the work of just one person. The creation and completion of this project is due to the support given by of many people from the University of Puerto Rico at Humacao.

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If you have any questions or comments, you can communicate with me at cm_torres@webmail.uprh.edu. Your ideas will help expand and improve this project.

Answer Key

Exercise: Pre-Test/ Post Test

1. b
2. a
3. c
4. c
5. d
6. a
7. b
8. c
9. d
10. b
11. c
12. a

If you obtained...

10 points: Perfect! You know the basics of traditional tales.

9-7: Very Good! You know a lot about traditional tales.

6-4: Well... You have to read more about traditional tales. Begin reading or review the material of this module.

3-0. This module will greatly help you in understanding traditional tales.

Exercise: A Brief Overview

1. True
2. False. Literary tales authors are known.
3. False the monogenesis theory states that all stories come from one original source.
4. True
5. true
6. False. The Grimm Brothers believed in the monogenesis theory.

Exercise: Folktales

1. Tale of Magic/ Wonder/ Fairy Tale
2. Cumulative
3. Droll or Humorous
4. Beast Tale
5. Religious Tale

Exercise: Tall Tales

1. True
2. False. Exaggerated ability. Bigger than life.
3. False. Characters use everyday language.
4. True
5. true

Exercise: The Three Little Pigs

1. Plot: There is repetition in the story. The number three appears: three pigs, three houses. There are chants: “And I’ll huff and I’ll puff....”, “Not by the hair of my chiny, chin, chin”
2. Characterization: The first two pigs can represent laziness while the third one obedience and a hard-working person.
3. The language pattern that appears is “Once upon a time...”
4. The theme can be the importance of hard work or taking advice from elders.
5. The motifs that appear in the story are the number three and an evil wolf.

Exercise: Fables

1. There are three important characters in **The Dancing Peacock**: The Golden Swan, his daughter and the peacock. There are four important characters in **The Girl Who Married a Snake**. They are the mother, the father, the snake and the girl.
2. In both stories fathers are looking for a spouse for their children.
3. In **The Dancing Peacock**, the story takes place in the Himalayas and in exterior places. In **The Girl Who Married a Snake**, the setting is mainly in the snake’s house.
4. The conflict or problem in **The Dancing Peacock** is that the Golden Swan’s daughter wants to choose her own husband. In **The Girl Who Married a Snake**, the Mother wants a wife for her son. Another problem is that the mother wants her snake son to be treated as any other person.
5. The lesson or moral in **The Dancing Peacock** is not to be vain. Vanity makes you lose important things. In **The Girl Who Married a Snake** the message is that obedience has its recompense. The girl at the end was married to a handsome man.

Exercise: Fables

1. There are two characters in this fable.
2. The boy represents disobedience and being a liar. The wolf represents evil.
3. There is only one incident in this fable.
4. The moral of the story is not to tell lies. Lies can cause you problems.

Exercise: Myths

1. Nature Myth
2. Creation Myth
3. Hero Myth

Exercise: Myth and Culture

1. False. Roman mythology is based on Greek mythology.
2. True
3. True
4. True
5. False. It is based on Norse mythology.

Exercise: Legends and Epics

1. c
2. d
3. e
4. a
5. b
6. f

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